

COMMENTARY

Against Jump-Starting Western-Type Democracy on Africa's Socio-Political Tarmac

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Abstract

Democracy has been the most celebrated system of government today. This is so, to the extent that it has become the trademark of quality that every government sought if not more than to have it at the face figure. As good as it has been portrayed, it grew out of history and experience of a particular political milieu, of which, every reasonable society must have had its homegrown political system that is best adaptable to the political realities that gave birth to it, just as there are different dishes for different people at a different geographical location, each making a balanced diet. Interestingly, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Lecture sets an ideal for democracy. Taking expository and comparative methodologies, it is arguable that democracy so defined, grew on traditional African soil too, that tracing its birthplace to Greece is nothing true more than the mere etymological origin of the concept. That being said, must we take the label "democracy" before we can lay a claim to the legitimacy of government especially when we have our homegrown system of government that best adapts to our realities abandoned? This is nothing but an epistemicide. The system of government in practice in most parts of Africa today is a heritage of colonialism and decolonising Africa entails substituting it for African indigenous ones. This also includes the dissolution and renegotiation of African boundaries along nations rather than maintaining the hydra-headed boundaries created by colonialists for exploitation's sake.

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Introduction

The title of this paper is a metaphor for an anomalous way of starting a vehicle. This is necessitated by the inability of the vehicle to ignite in a normal manner hence jumpstarting becomes an alternative. For the case of an automatic transmission, the only alternative is to initiate it by passing an electric current from a charged battery to the discharged battery of the vehicle being started, using a booster cable connecting the two batteries or by simply replacing the battery. For the case of a manual transmission, other than seeking the aid of a spare battery, it could also be jumpstarted by engaging the engine with gear after a certain initiation into motion by pushing. It may even be an easy task if the vehicle has to be pushed towards a declined direction but it would be a very tedious task when it has to be pushed against a

highly inclined road.

The last situation best describes the situation of democratisation in Africa. This implies that Western-type democracy, in Africa, is a “malfunctioning vehicle” that is needed/suggested to be jumpstarted on the “inclined Africa’s political tarmac”. This is conditioned by several reasons: (1) the fact that many African countries are artificial creations of the European colonial masters to exploit the continent as opposed to the aim of developing it, (2) the legacy bequeathed to the African continent (neocolonial) remains a predicament and (3) that the African countries are not operating their own political culture but foreign, alien political cultures that do not conform with the realities of Africa, among others. As a result, Africa is still stumbling in the course of attempting to fix itself into the ideals of Western-type democracy as spelt by the Western World rather than governing themselves by their idiosyncrasy; a legacy bequeathed onto them by their forbearers which would have been a wiser alternative for African countries. Hence, are Africans practising “democracy” or “*crazy-demo*?” to mimic a Late Nigerian Hip-Hop Music Singer and Rapper, Oladapo Olaitan, Olanipekun, known as Da Grin. Must/need we jumpstart the malfunctioning democracy on Africa’s political tarmac when we have our ‘automatic’ functioning political system parked? Should we not rather kick-start ours?

To answer these questions, this paper shall embark on a concise but critical conceptual clarification of the concept ‘of democracy’ from the etymological point of view. It shall also look into some definitions of the concept as presented by renowned scholars in the field. After that, it shall present a brief historical background of democracy as the Western world would make us believe. This history shall be punctured in order to pave the way for a historical renarrative exercise, considering the predominant one as nothing but a Eurocentric-informed variant. In the next session, the paper shall trace a historical trajectory of a prototype of democracy as a system of government in practice on the traditional African soil before the colonisation of the continent. This shall be done by presenting the ideals of democracy and how traditional African governmental systems fit well into the reasonable part of these ideals. The paper shall conclude by making a clarion call on contemporary Africans to go back to their traditional system of government with a critical review to update them.

Conceptualising Democracy

Etymologically speaking, the term ‘democracy’ emerged from the lexical conjugation of two Greek words; *demos*’ meaning ‘people’ and ‘*Kratos*’ meaning ‘rule’, the two joined together mean ‘the rule of the demos or people. Based on the long history, popularity as well as flexibility of democracy, the term democracy has attracted different shades of meanings from different scholars. Its most popular definition was the one put forward by Abraham Lincoln (1863) in his Gettysburg Address which sees it as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people.” This definition sees democracy as necessarily people-oriented. Another definition is the one put forward by Tom Christiano, which says: that democracy “refers very generally to a method of group decision-making characterised by a kind of equality among the participants at an essential stage of the decision making”^[1]. This definition focuses on collective decision-making in the form of election and opinion poll conduction as a characteristic that defines democracy without which a government cannot be considered democratic. This is majoritarian in scope.

Joshua Cohen defines democracy as “a way of making collective decisions that connects decisions to the interests and judgments of those whose conduct is to be regulated by the decisions”^[2]. This definition focuses on the connection between the decision and the interests of the governed as a necessary condition for any government to be democratic. There are so many other definitions of the concept but we shall hold on to these few. Having made a sort of clarification of the concepts, the next section shall focus on a critique of the historical trajectory of democracy.

A Critique of the Historical Origin of Democracy

Democracy has become a “trademark” today for every government that wants to lay claim to the legitimacy of its governance. This resulted in having as many forms of democracy as there are the number of governments laying claims to being democratic. A brief history of democracy needs to be narrated here to provide a basis for the argument this paper is trying to make. however, before we present the prevalent history, Adichie, in her *Half of a Yellow Sun* says something, which informs the way the prevailing history was narrated. It goes thus:

There are two answers to the things they will teach you about our land: the real answer and the answer you give in school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books. They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park’s grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo Park.^[3]

It is in this spirit I will narrate the history of democracy. According to the popular history that was available to us, democracy, as a practice, has its birthplace in ancient Greece around 508 BC. This is traced to Sparta, a city-state polis in ancient Greece. History has it that there was a loose collection of city-states called *polis* existing independently. These *poleis* were majorly oligarchies except for Sparta which was democratic with some elements of oligarchy in their system. It was characterised by the division of power among four separate bodies:

1. two Spartan Kings form two different royal lines to do the executive roles;
2. the *Gerousia*, who is the council of elders selected for life from aristocratic families must not be less than 60 years old. Together with the king, they were charged with legislative roles;
3. the *Ephors*, who are the 5 people elected among the *Apella* for a single tenure of one year. They are vested with the power to check the Kings and act as the main executive body and lastly,
4. The *apella* were the Spartan Assembly Bodies.

This is a form of primitive democracy. Arguably, an organised form of government at this level might have existed in several areas of the world even before the 5th century BC without any imitation. Tracing its birthplace, traditionally, to Greece is baseless. It is a form of Eurocentrism. It may not be, and of course, it is not necessary to take, the same form as Sparta’s. We can now talk of pre-Babylonian Mesopotamia, the Indian Independent ‘Republics’ of Ganas and Sanghas, the Roman 4th Century BC governmental system, and, back to Africa, the Ashante, the Akan, the Benin, the Sokoto and

the old Oyo Empire.

The Old Oyo Empire was reported to have organised a highly developed system of government comparable to the present-day democracy before the inversion of the colonial masters. The colonial masters' testimony to this fact was not only verbal but also reflected in the salary they were paying to the Alaafin after the amalgamation. The Alaafin did exercise executive power, though not elected but selected from royal lines. He would form his cabinet of Oloye (Chiefs) which would necessarily be made up of elders from different royal lines. Apart from this, there did exist the Oyomesi, which were made up of representatives across the ruling lineages headed by the Bashorun. This is more comparable to the Upper Chamber of the legislative arm of contemporary democracy. Also, in existence was the Ogboni cult, which comprised of common men who, having attained an appreciable level of wisdom and spiritual strength, aspired for it. This is more similar to what is obtained in contemporary Lower chambers. The territorial defences were being ensured by the Oyo army force being presided over by *Areonakakanfo*, who together with his battalion resided at the frontier of the town. With this exposition, one can now reason along with a proverb popularized by Chinua Achebe thus: "Until the lions have their historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter"^[4].

Democracy has undergone serious metamorphoses across eras and places, ranging from the ancient era, as we just briefly explained, through the Medieval era which was chiefly dominated by religious beliefs, to the Renaissance and Enlightenment-era when the Church authority began to diminish and pave the way for scientific and philosophical ideas of philosophers like Niccollo Machiavelli (1469-1527), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Rene Descartes (1569-1650), Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), John Lock (1632-1704), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) among others, and down to the contemporary period especially after the Cold War.

Democracy in Africa

More often than not, questions are being raised concerning why Western-type democracy has not worked in many African countries. Why must we maintain democracy as a form of government if it refuses to work? Apart from democracy, are there other better alternatives? Why must Africans retain the artificially created boundaries as countries? Why Nigeria? Why Democracy? These questions, and many similar ones, are necessarily pointers to the fact that the system has not been working. It is an indisputable fact that democracy has been a sort of government that worked in many European states America and even some African countries. The question one may likely ask is; why has democracy refused to work in many African countries including Nigeria? Is it that it is not adaptable to our culture? There are two major reasons for this. The first reason is that Nigeria, like many other African countries, is the union of many ethnic nationalities that were married together by colonial masters without any consideration for the compatibility of ethnic differences. The other reason is that, after the independence, the style of government bequeathed to Nigeria does not conform to her realities. Anyiam-Osigwe's answer to these questions, in his, *As It Was in the Beginning*, is informative. According to him:

At the background of the African contradictions is the underlying limitation that neither the Western model of

democracy driven by capitalist economics nor the socialist concept of a workers' state effectively provides the impetus for the sociological and psychological conformity with the primordial disposition of the Africans. The failure of the Western model of democracy in Africa alongside the loss of identity engendered by the sociological transvaluation impacted by colonialism has left the bases for community in Africa in a precarious and fragile state.^[5]

Most African countries are artificial creations of Western colonial masters who invaded Africa not to develop it but for exploitative reasons. Based on the information available to us, the earliest recorded encounter between Africa and the Western world was harmonious. They did engage in commerce and diplomatic exchanges as equals. This relationship was dated back to around 1400SE. They said good things about the places they visited. These include Benin, Ashanti and Dahomey among others. All of a sudden, the story changed as they discovered the American continent as fertile arable soil for plantation hence their demands for raw materials from Africa were substituted with the need for human labour.^[6] To justify their actions, their scholars began to be painting several derogatory pictures of Africa. This is technically termed Eurocentrism. As if that was not enough, imperialism hence balkanisation and colonisation of Africa among the European powers resulted.

Let us now narrow our searchlight to Nigeria. Chief Obafemi Awolowo notes that Nigeria, as a geo-political entity, is an artificial creation of British Imperialism. The colonial masters arbitrarily lumped peoples of diverse linguistic and ethnic nationalities together into a state and foisted an alien mode of government on them.^[7] Historically speaking, Nigeria is an entity created by the British colonial masters under the initiative of Lord Lugard by the 1914 amalgamation which brought about the coexistence of three major ethnic groups: the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo, and about 250 other smaller ethnic groups with the multiplicity of languages running into hundreds.^[7] This makes Nigeria the most populous Black Country in the world. But has this population been a glory or a curse?

As I have pointed out in one paragraph above, Nigeria is made up of several ethnic groups. These ethnic groups are not ordinarily different from one another but in most cases, also have contrary ideologies to the extent that one could even wonder about the kind of formula employed by the colonial masters in the course of the balkanisation of the continent and amalgamation of the states. To refer to the country called Nigeria as a nation is a prayer yet unanswered! Funny enough, there was a Yoruba nation that shared the same language, history as well as religion. While a good part of them are Nigerians, their brothers are Benenuas, Ghanaians, and Togolese. Nigeria is perhaps, worthy to be described as a marriage of inconsistencies. Colonial imperialists left but its effect is still strongly felt as ever before. This is so because independence was granted in theory but not in practice. The post-colonial situation has not fared better because the political independence only brought some changes in the composition of state managers while the lop-sidedness of the state character remained the same as it was under colonialism.

A psychologist, while analysing why our situation is as if we were still under colonial masters, used a metaphor of kid-elephant and its chain analogy. According to him, when a newly-born elephant is tied to a tree by a chain of one meter long over a particular period, it limits the movement of the young elephant to the length of the chain on its leg. Later, the chain was elongated for another one meter and later extended by one more meter. All these were done at a uniform interval of time repeatedly and each time it was elongated, the young elephant could expand the limit of its movement

until the chain became steady for a relatively longer period without further extension. While the elephant was unchained, every time the elephant tried to move and reach the limit it used to stop, it would restrict its movement to that place. Why? It is because the chain has transmitted into its mind the longer time it stayed to the effect that while it was removed from its leg though, the chain of the mind is not removed. The point I am trying to make is that colonialism is a chain which, though released from the leg, has been successfully transmitted into the mind before it was lost. That is what is felt as neo-colonialism in most African states up till today. The only antidote to it is what Ngugi wa Thiong'o suggests as the "decolonisation of the mind"^[8].

Immediately after the independence, the ethnic crises gathered momentum which eventually resulted in the Nigerian-Biafran civil war (1967-1970). The main agitation of the Igbo people was, and remains till today, the clamour for secession while the Hausa/Fulani who have been the major benefactor of the political power since independence have been claiming "one Nigeria". However, is Nigeria truly one? The benefactors of the political advantage, especially the Northerners, will surely answer in the affirmative, just like every predator will not like its prey to escape, but the disadvantaged will never identify themselves that way but rather say, let me use Adichie's words: "I am a Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am *black* because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his *white*. But I was Igbo before the white man came"^[9]. Even though the Biafrans were defeated, it has not been that the people have relinquished their ambition to go. The agitations of the Niger Delta cannot be undermined.

As if that is not enough, recently, the Yoruba people, under different socio-cultural groups, have raised their voices. For what? They want an Oduduwa nation. It is not surprising that Hausa/Fulani may never nurse such an ambition because they have always been the benefactors. The question here is: Must we retain what Oyeshile refers to as the "mistake of colonialism"? (Oyeshile, 2011: 226) As I have pointed out earlier, Nigeria as a nation is a prayer. Oyeshile, in the opening remark of his monograph, says: "Nation-states we may call them, but recent ethnic conflicts in most parts of African states reflect that these states are far from attaining the nationhood status. Unending postulations regarding reasons and solutions to the unending crises in African states seem to have had no lasting effect"^[7].

Scholars have diverse opinions on what should be an enlightened solution to Nigeria's sociopolitical problem. Dominant among these theories are; conservatism, restructuring, revolutionism, and secessionism. The proponents of conservatism are so romanced by the artificially created entity called Nigeria, forgetting or pretending to have forgotten, the fact that some one and a half centuries ago, there was nothing like Nigeria meanwhile the geographical zone was not without occupants. What is more, the ethnographical archives convince us to believe that the occupants were living better, at least, than what is the case now. They are, perhaps, prejudiced or beclouded by their conservative ambition for the artificial entity called Nigeria which made them preach tolerance, unity in diversity, nationalism, and patriotism in the face of the inconsistencies that have resulted in many problems such as injustice in the power-sharing and allocation of resources, corruption, underdevelopment, etc. that ravage the system. It may not be surprising to find Nigerian Northerners, who have been the major beneficiaries of the coexistence, on the conservative side. It will not be too funny either if some foreigners as well as some Nigerians in the diaspora are sending their voices that; "Let not Nigeria do this

to Africa!" as reported by Professor Osundare. However, the most astonishing is that some Southern Nigerians, including great intellectuals such as Professor Osundairo, are also maintaining the conservative stance. What they usually appeal to as justification for their position is that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and population is power. But, has this population been a glory for Nigeria or a mere story? I question why we should remain as one since this unity has never been glorious for us more than a void boast of number, the passive, self-acclaimed giant of Africa, a toothless dog for that matter!

Closely related to conservatism is restructuralism. It is a position that the entity called Nigeria should be conserved only that the power relation should be restructured along the regions or geopolitical zones that make up the State in a confederal formula. To this end, each geopolitical zone will be able to exercise some level of autonomy over its resources both natural and human. It is noteworthy that restructuralism is easily admissible as a "half a loaf is better than none" for any bloody conservativist so much that they easily enjoy converts and supporters from each other. It is equally noteworthy that restructuralism has become a campaign strategy for such a politician as the former Vice President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, calling himself Mr Restructurer. However, I feel that the restructuring agenda, no matter how convincing it may be, is nothing but a scam and deceit; a sugarcoat for bitter quinine!

Revolutionism and Secessionism are also comrades in the struggle such that those who advocate for the former also have the latter as their end only that they conceive that the former is an inescapable means to the latter. They come to this inference, perhaps, out of frustration and/or experiences. What is more, the advocate of the latter may also result in including the former as a solution of last resort if all their effort toward the peaceful realisation of their goals proves abortive. Revolutionism is a radical approach to political change that always results in city unrest, industrial actions, protests, political disobedience, and finally, if their prayers are not answered, civil war and rebellion. Pralhad V Chengte^[9] puts it thus: "Revolution as a term implies for a political analyst generally violent political change like a powerful overthrow of a regular form of government. It has various methods, though the *modus operandi* differs, it moves towards reform partially in the strict sense of the term." However, not all revolution has secession as their aim. At the forefront of the agenda in Nigeria is Omoyele Sowore, whose declaration in 2019, resulted in his arrest by the Federal government.

Secessionism is the political theory that proposes the independence of a political unit from a mother political unit. It is related to decolonisation with a significant difference in that the latter seeks independence through a legal withdrawal from a coloniser while the latter is an independence sought by a smaller political unit over its boundary. Examples of secession are the balkanisation of Pakistan from India, Bangladesh from Pakistan and Ukraine from Russia. The advocates of secessionism include Chief Adeyemo Sunday, popularly renamed after his native town Sunday Igboho. He is an activist advocating for Oduduwa Nation. His comrade in the agitation is Mr. Mazi Nnamdi Kanu who is leading an agitation for Biafran Nation.

We need to admit that Western-type democracy, as many African countries including Nigeria have it today, is a legacy of Western colonial masters. Meanwhile, many scholars still have the opinion that Western-type democracy can still work for us, that, as Offor puts it, "the failure of governments and the crises besieging most states in Africa is as a result of the fact that the basis of governance and the corporate existence of these states were never properly negotiated in a way that

would have addressed the problems of injustice presently afflicting them”^[10]. This is not the basis of the problem, I feel. Addressing the Nigeria problem in this way is like taking fish away from the water and then attempting to teach fish how to sustainably survive and flourish on land rather than taking them back into the water body or reintroducing water to them in their new habitat. This solution, I argue, is totally against the law of nature. It cannot work. It does not need to work. It is, economically as well as biologically, a foolish/unwise attempt. Africa, like many other continents of the world, has their unique socio-political culture. This fact needs to be recognised. As Emmanuel Eze^[11] puts it:

If this is the picture of the “return to tradition” tendency or programmes, in our political aspiration, there are many things worthy and appealing about it. First, it points to specific and historical instances where this system has worked—hence they are called “traditional”, they feel home-grown and second nature. Second, why borrow from elsewhere and adapt others’ experience and wisdom when you can revive and update yours and the glories? Third, given the uneven record of success in experiments with the modern, imported, why not try a new home-grown formula?

Eze^[11] even lends weight to this by quoting a President of Uganda, Museveni, as saying “I didn’t want to be Anglophone or Francophone because I have my phone and why not?”

Ideals of Democracy

Be that as it may, Ukpokolo states the generally accepted ideals and principles of any good government. According to him; “today it is generally demanded of any political culture that it expresses such values and principles as liberty, equality, democracy, justice, the rule of law and nationalism among others”^[12]. With significant intersections, Offor^[13] also highlights the ideals of democracy. These ideals shall be discussed in turn, and an African political point of view to interrogate them as follows:

Choice of Political Office Holders through Election This is one of the most outstanding characteristics of Western-type majoritarian democracy^[14]. An election is a formal group decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office^[15]. This is derived from the assumption that human beings are potentially equal for they are endowed with rationality. The absurdity here is that even though human beings are *potentially* equal, they are not *actually* equal sense. While nature has made some to be healthy, able, and strong, others are unhealthy, weak, and disabled. While some are wealthy intellectually and financially, others are poor. This deliberate exaggeration/reduction syndrome has been what informed and promoted the malpractices that besieged the practice.

This style derives its justification from the social contract theories which spell that people should submit their mandate to a body that would be monitoring their affairs for, and on, their behalf. This theory may imitate the reality in such a country like America which was a no man’s land where people migrated from different places to habituate the place. Perhaps, no system of government would suit the place and other places of the individualistic character better than democracy. However, as far as the reality of Africans is concerned, it is arguable that no such practice reflects African reality whereby

the basic unit of their society is family. If Africans have to be labelled democracy at all, it would rather be called consensual democracy. This becomes necessary because African societies are communitarians; it was an expansion in a family unit that led to a formulation of societies in African nations. Selection is the best alternative to the winners-take-all practice of majoritarian electioneering. In this case, the elders from different families, clans, or ethnic units would gather whenever selection is required. Apart from appealing to their rationality concerning who should rule, they also seek their accessorial advice through oracle divination. This group of elders is called Afobaje (kingmakers) in Yoruba culture. More so, when an issue arises, they would rather deliberate until a consensus is reached as opposed to conducting of election whereby minority opinions are always disregarded in the favour of the majority, even if the minority opinion is more enlightened.

Checks and Balances on Power. Checks and balances are ensured by dividing the government functions into different units whereby every unit would be carried out by a particular organ of government. This is done to avoid the overconcentration of power on a single individual because experiences have shown that whenever power is vested in single individuals, they tend to abuse it until they are confronted with limitations. In this wise, the Western-type democracy is characterised by having four major units of government: the executive (which also has its cabinet members), the judiciary, the legislative (which is bicameral in most cases), and the bureaucracy. The popular belief about the traditional African political system is that it was monarchical and so it was very prone to be autocratic or despotic. Contrary to this, even though the traditional African political system was monarchical, that did not make it as despotic as people think. This is so because there were organs that checked the king.

Citing the Old Oyo Empire as an example, the king (Alaafin) did not necessarily dictate but rubberstamp the consensus reached through the deliberations of the cabinets. This bill would be sent to the Oyomesi (an organ that imitates what is obtained at the contemporary Upper Chamber), who can approve or reject it as the case may be. In case, the Alaafin is becoming despotic, the Oyomesi, in conjunction with the Ogboni Cult (an organ that imitates what is obtained at the contemporary Lower Chamber), would call him into order. If it becomes perpetual, the Ogboni cult would either expatriate him or advise him to commit ritual suicide as the case may be. This happened during the tenure of Alaafin Sango who toppled the tenure of his brother Alaafin Dada and usurped the throne. When the Ogboni cult saw that things were not going well with them in the Empire as they supposed, they intervened and advised Alafin Sango to go into exile; the shame of which made Sango commit suicide by hanging on his way.

Prevalence of the Rule of Law. The presence and operation of the rules of law are one of the important characteristics of Western-type democracy^[14]. This is usually spelt out in a constitution. In most cases, it is written, hence rigid while in some cases, unwritten, hence flexible. This would serve as the framework through which governance is carried out. Besides this, the fact that the African community was built on the myth that the spirits of their past ancestors are believed to be part of their community, spells that the ancestors are believed to sanction the King for an arbitrary aberration in his ruling. Though in traditional African political settings, there was no prevalent written constitution, still the rules and regulations exist orally. This might be spelt out in taboos, folklores, folktales and *owe*. Their rulings must be based on these existing rules, rather than mob rules.

Terminal as Opposed to Permanent Reign. The Western-type democracy is based on a four-year tenure system of not more than two terms in the case of executive offices while the legislative candidate can infinitely seek re-election^[16]. In the traditional African political system, the seat is permanent except otherwise terminated by impeachment. The scenario of Alaafin Sango and his brother, Alaafin Dada, confirms this. Only a group of fools keep on changing the winning team. However, a critique can easily counter this opinion by referring to America and some other places where it has worked for them. Yes! It worked for them because the new team came in to inherit and operate on an existing working institution. Peculiar to Africa, it is not necessary. It is relatively costly and encourages corruption for the consciousness of leaving the office makes many steal for sustenance after their tenure. More so, the longer they stay on the seat, the more experienced they become which engenders effectiveness. Gadhafi is a good example here. Even though his government was eventually toppled, the Liberians are still regretting their action now. This equally is the reason Chief Olusegun Obasanjo attempted re-election even after two successful constitutional tenures, although it was denied. Traditional Africans' forefathers did die on the throne and that does not make an awkward government. That makes me ask the question of whether Nigeria would not have been better than this had it been that formal President Olusegun Obasanjo is still the president of Nigeria today.

Other ideals of democracy include respect for fundamental human rights and duties, accountability, liberty and freedom, justice and equality and nationalism among others, which are invariably present in the traditional African political systems too^[12].

Evaluation and Conclusion

Western-type democracy is not compatible with the reality of Africans. As Eze^[11] points out, we in Africa must accept that we have left paradise. It will be a wise move for African States to realise this fact and endeavour to move back to their traditional political system that best portrays their realities. In doing so, it will require that they discard what Kwasi Wiredu called "the transatlantic imposition upon African people"^[11] including its label called 'democracy' and trace back the footsteps of their forefathers. Meanwhile, making sense from Francis B. Nyamnjoh's *Incompleteness*^[17], which makes a case for a *conversation* that stands at a no-man's land between *conversion* and *conservation*, the going back to tradition should not be done blindly. We can retain what we see to be good in Western culture because originally, culture is dynamic. In asserting this, this paper is also fully aware of, for example, such criticisms levied against Wiredu in his quest for the past whereby Eze asks whether or not:

Wiredu was being fair in his representation of the past, this system could be implemented in a modern environment to repeat its successes and fewer problems as we currently have and/or this quest for the past would do better than some unwelcome examples in recent memory: Mobutu's authenticity, Senghor's negritude and Nyerere's Ujamaa among others.^[11]

My answer to the first objection is that even though the traditional African's past, just like every political system of all ages,

was not perfectly glorious, it, still, would be a better action to move from the unknown to the known. To the second objection, I admit that what we have now are hybrid Africans but we need not be too pessimistic because with time, a balance shall be struck and this will be easily realised just like it is easy to descend a rolling drum of oil from halfway a hill than to keep climbing it. As per the failed attempts, it was so mainly because they attempted to apply their original political formula to the existing artificially created political platform. Once the foundation is faulty, nothing can be reliably erected on it. Africans are trying to jumpstart a Western-type system of government on their social and political tarmac which results in unnecessary yet unsuccessful struggles. Meanwhile, there is “*asa*” (convention), which is homegrown and easy to practice than “*ofin*” (constitution), which is alien.

The colonial masters have divided our land but our people with whom we make a nation remain undivided. For Africans to get it right, they need to; collapse the artificial boundary with which the colonial masters balkanised their nations; secede from the people whom they were lumped together inconsistently by the colonial masters, and; fall back to their original natural boundaries marked by ethnic and cultural differences. This is necessary because colonial masters are like bandits that invade one’s house with barrels of guns. It would be notorious to be maintaining bandits’ dictates long after they have completed their operations and gone knowing that these dictates were not to make Africans better but to pave the ground for the colonialists’ exploitative agenda. By collapsing the artificial boundaries, we could have as many sovereign nations as possible. Having done this, there could, then, be a thorough re-negotiation if at all some nations still have an interest in going together with one another. Such would be “confederal” in nature such that the power of being/remaining together would remain in the hand of the individual nations forming the coalition so that the secession would be easy if the case requires.

This paper also preempts that a critique may attack this position on the grounds of its call for secession, arguing that; Africans in the past have agitated for independence from their colonial masters with the hope that with independence granted, all their political problems would be solved but the present predicaments seem to have proven that Africans continents were better managed in the hands of the colonial masters than the indigenous Africans politicians. If this allegation is true, what then assures that secession would not exacerbate the African problem rather than ameliorate it? Well, the criticism is a sensitive one. But I would say that the colonial masters were so successful in many of their past African colonies by handing over the government to indigenous Africans who had been brainwashed by colonial mentalities and could not help but perpetuate the colonial legacy. In other words, independence in many African countries was on paper rather than in practice. Despite this, any deep-thinking African would never regret independence because, no matter how freedom can never be compared with anything.

Beyond that, I would say that independence was a necessary prerequisite, but not an independently sufficient condition, to Africans’ true political freedom. The freedom would remain unactualised and inactive unless and until it is accompanied by other necessary complementary conditions. A ‘successful’ secession is, I argue, a complementary part. Isolated secession only brings us face to face with other problems as; who will govern? What system of government to employ? All and all like that. However, a complete secession would take care of all these problems by looking inward into the tradition with a significant blend of the positive things that have been inherited from past experiences so far. Indian country is a good example. Amidst whatever scepticism and pessimism, the goal remains worth pursuing only that the principle of “putting

yam on fire while searching for a knife” shall be employed. To get there, one may not mind adopting a confederal system of government as a transitory medium especially when it is considered to be a necessary “training ground” for a safe landing into a successful secession as testing the depth of a river with one's two legs might be too risky. The end justifies the mean, as Niccolo Machiavelli says^[18].

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