Editorial

This issue of *CODESRIA Bulletin*, the first for 2021, is released after a year that saw the global structures of knowledge production and dissemination disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Africa has so far defied the grim predictions that prophesied immense numbers of fatalities on the continent. The spectre of poor Africans dropping dead everywhere has refused to materialise. However, the pandemic is not over yet, and we know that its adverse effects on socioeconomic and political life on the continent, as elsewhere, are already alarming and will be felt for some time to come. CODESRIA has not been spared the impact. The Council's execution of its intellectual activities in 2020 was affected at the level of regular programming, especially given that higher education institutions, which are focal points for most of the Council's activities, were shut across the continent and the cessation of travel allowed for little or no fieldwork for research.

As the world enters into the second, even third, wave of the pandemic, the implications for the academic community and its engagements remain in flux and will shift as new circumstances emerge. The idea of 'waves' provides an important concept for thinking through the pandemic. In its first iterations, the waves were understood primarily in terms of the emergence of the pandemic and its subsequent re-emergence after initial interventions fell short. However, there is a second sense, grounded in more epistemic consider-

ations, and it refers to the phases of knowledge and policies that sought to understand and drive responses to the pandemic. Happening largely in the background, biomedical scientists have been working to find vaccines and advising on public health protocols germane to stemming the spread of the pandemic. It is expected that as we know more the epistemic basis of the interventions will become clear. What is obvious is that such interventions will require a better grasp of socio-political contexts and therefore necessitate partnerships beyond biomedical science to include the Social Sciences and Humanities in the effort to address the long-term impacts of the pandemic on society. The Council will continue to explore new ways of adjusting to the uncertainty the pandemic has created and to think through interventions to help the continent respond with longer-term knowledge and more effective policies. The emergence of new waves and variants of the virus on the continent mean that the possibility for the resumption of normal social life even in the medium term is questionable, thus necessitating long-term planning for effective knowledge production and dissemination.

The lockdown of the previous year and the consequent inability of people to engage in regular economic activity deepened pre-existing economic crises in several countries. This, of course, exacerbated internal social and political disruptions as well as economic marginalisation. As the pandemic persists, so does its impact on society and especially the poor. Their vulnerability has been highlighted by the initial international response to vaccination, which has been termed 'vaccine apartheid', where the distribution of available vaccines is reserved for the rich and largely in developed economies who have refused to temporarily suspend 'the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement to enable greatly increased, affordable supplies of COVID-19 vaccines, drugs, tests and equipment'.[1]

The context sketched above frames the reflections contained in this Bulletin. The articles in this issue address some of the concerns that emanate from the pandemic, albeit indirectly. The first, by Richard Atimniraye Nyelade and Dunfu Zhang, sketches the historical context of the origins of the notion of social distancing. They view the idea of social distancing as a strategy and illustrate its contemporary applications in the context of the pandemic. While it is perceived as a medical response to stem a pandemic, they document that its origins are rooted in negative racial histories and on stereotypes that include smell. The application

of physical and social distancing today, to scientists who need to travel for research, even on COVID, in different parts of the world, will eventually determine who will be first to produce knowledge about the implications of the virus, how that knowledge will be accessed and at what cost.

The next two articles focus on the work of Walter Rodney and indirectly also concern the historical contexts within which Africa's current challenges have emerged and ought to be located and understood. Walter Rodney's book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, was published about half a century ago and showed how Europe's historical interactions with Africa accounted for Africa's state of underdevelopment. This underdevelopment has deepened over the years and has become ever more complex and pernicious. Ian Taylor's piece examines Rodney's political methodology and Africa-centred epistemology that, in many ways, gave agency to Africans and disputed external prescriptions and methodologies as the only way of thinking about African development. Rodney's arguments, originally pioneered in the works of Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin, were later echoed in Samir Amin's book *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World* (1990), which proposed delinking as a strategy to undermine the exploitative tendencies that tied Africa to the global North and gave credence to the underlying Eurocentric framing of knowledge. Indeed, David Johnson's piece follows a similar train of thought, tracing the historical evolution of Rodney's ideas and demonstrating how they are useful for the younger generation of Africans and African academics who are confronting old problems in new ways.

This Bulletin also contains two articles on the recent elections in Ghana and the prospects for democratisation in the country. The articles, one by Clement Sefa-Nyarko and the other by Lloyd G. Adu Amoah, explore the basis of Ghana's stable, if also occasionally dysfunctional, democracy. Serfa-Nyarko explains this in terms of political structures that inhibit the emergence of social identities within political parties by punishing self-seeking impulses and practices in political engagements. Amoah, on the other hand, sees this as a broader political culture that was engendered by the 1992 Constitution. He examines the tendency of the two key political parties in Ghana to mobilise for elections only for them to occupy state structures for self-aggrandisement. This, he argues, has turned the parties into 'election machines' devoid of any serious focus on improving the livelihood of most Ghanaians. Serfa-Nyarko argues, in addition, that the task for checking what he appropriately describes as 'the

Gilgamesh threat' in Ghanaian politics rests with civil society as a catalyst for counterbalancing power.

The last two articles in the issue return to the theme of financing development and democracy in Africa. Richard Itaman discusses the origin and growth of the African Development Bank as an institution for financing development in Africa. He also unpacks the fact that although the bank is supposed to be an African bank for African development, its shareholders are powerful external entities that often work to undermine development interventions in Africa. This is significant, especially at a time when the bank will be required to do more to assist African countries to navigate the adverse economic implications of the current pandemic. In their piece, Jimi Adesina et. al. parallels the concerns over the power wielded by external entities. Their focus is on how aid is increasingly framed to craft conditions for governance in Africa, its deployment—or not—as a conditionality to rein in non-conforming regimes. In some sense, the article raises the important question about the often-

unspoken consequences of the 'Afrophilia credentials' of academics and policymakers on intellectual and policy recommendations that rely on aid as a method of 'disciplining democracy', to borrow the apt title of Rita Abrahamsen's 2020 book. It is fitting that the Bulletin concludes with a tribute to the late Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, himself a lucid analyst of African politics who constantly emphasised the notion and practice of emancipatory politics, a politics in which aid conditionality has no place.
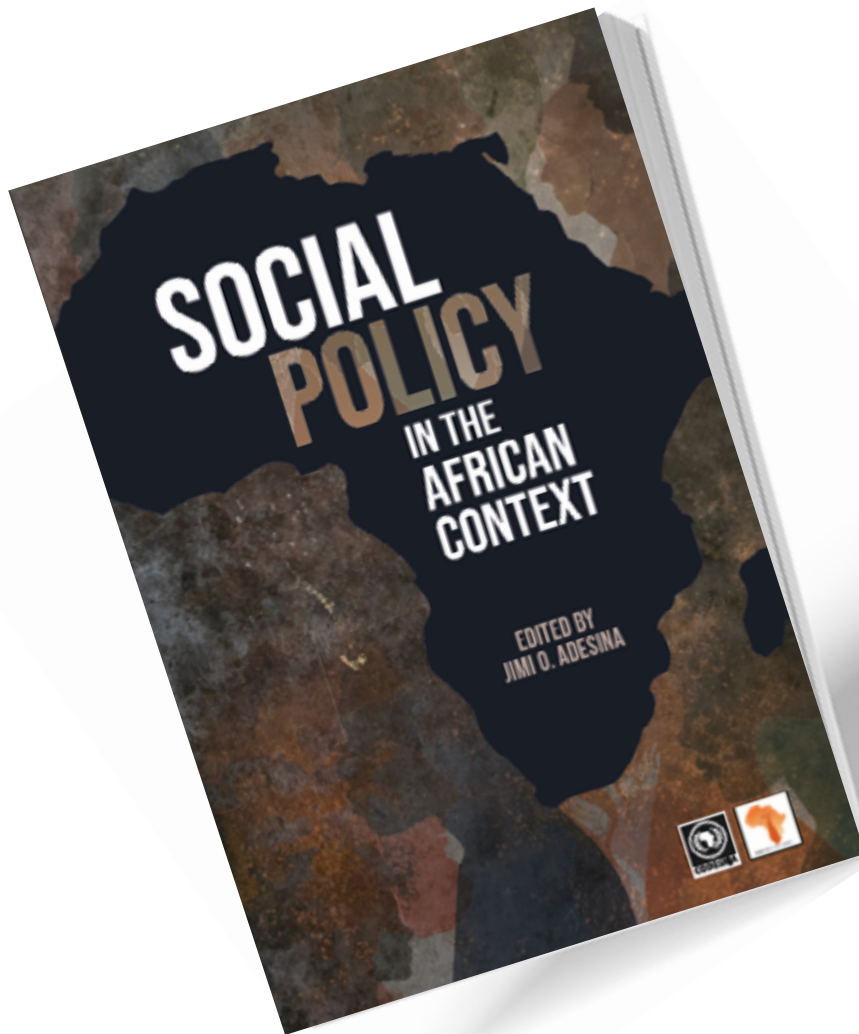
Note

1. http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/03/end-vaccine-apartheid-millions-die/

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The 'counter-revolution' in Development Economics in the 1980s fundamentally altered the way the state 'thinks', which is evident in the state's retrenchment and reconstitution of the state's relationship to its citizens. The combination of deflationary macroeconomic policies and a residual approach to social policy, broadly, and social provisioning, more specifically, fundamentally altered the post-colonial trajectory of public policy in Africa. Despite the neoliberal ascendance that nurtured the more residual direction of social policy, the contention for an alternative vision of social policy remained and advanced with vigour. Specific contributions range from the deployment of social policy in framing the nation-building project, endogenous mutual support institutions, land and agrarian reform as a social policy instrument, the gender dynamics of social policy, and the mechanism enabling the spread of cash transfer schemes on the continent.

Jimi Adesina is Professor and the DSI/NRF SARChI Chair in Social Policy at the College of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa (Unisa) in South Africa. A past President of the South African Sociological Association (2004–2006), Professor Adesina was elected to the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) in 2005. He served on the Board of the UN Research Institute for Sôcial Development, Geneva (2013–2019) and on the Board of RC19 of the International Sociological Association (2014 to 2018). His research interests include Sociology, Social Policy and the Political Economy of Africa's Development. He has published widely in these areas.

Éditorial

Ce numéro du *CODESRIA Bulletin*, le premier de l'année 2021, parait après une année au cours de laquelle les structures mondiales de production et de diffusion de connaissances ont été perturbées par la pandémie de COVID-19. L'Afrique a, jusqu'à présent, exorcisé les sombres prédictions d'un nombre incalculable de morts sur le continent. Le spectre de pauvres Africains mourants, partout ne s'est pas matérialisé. Cependant, la pandémie n'est pas encore terminée et, déjà, nous savons que, sur le continent comme ailleurs, ses effets néfastes sur la vie socio-économique et politique sont alarmants et qu'ils se feront sentir encore pendant un certain temps. Le CODESRIA n'a pas été épargné par son impact. En 2020, la mise en œuvre des activités intellectuelles du Conseil a été affectée particulièrement au niveau de sa programmation régulière, d'autant que les établissements d'enseignement supérieur, qui sont les points focaux de la plupart de ses initiatives, ont été fermés sur tout le continent, et que l'arrêt des voyages a résulté en peu ou pas de travail de recherche de terrain.

Alors que le monde entre dans la deuxième, et même la troisième vague de la pandémie, les implications pour la communauté universitaire et ses engagements demeurent en constante évolution, à mesure que de nouvelles contingences émergent. L'idée de « vagues » est un concept important de l'étude de la pandémie. Dans ses premières itérations, les vagues ont principalement été comprises en termes d'émergence de la pandémie et de sa résurgence après l'échec des premières interventions. Cependant, elles comportent un second sens, fondé sur des considérations plus épistémiques, et se référant aux phases de connaissances et de politiques qui ont tenté de comprendre et de produire des réponses à la pandémie. En arrière plan, les scientifiques biomédicaux se sont efforcés de trouver des vaccins et de donner des conseils sur les protocoles de santé publique susceptibles d'endiguer la propagation de la pandémie. Au fur et à mesure que nous en saurons plus, la base épistémique de ces actions devrait devenir plus claire. Il est évident que ces opérations nécessiteront une meilleure compréhension des contextes sociopolitiques et, par conséquent, des partenariats au-delà de la science biomédicale pour inclure les sciences sociales et humaines dans l'éffort visant à traiter à long terme les impacts de la pandémie sur la société. Le Conseil continuera d'explorer de nouvelles manières de s'adapter à l'incertitude créée par la pandémie et de réfléchir à des actions pour aider le continent à réagir grâce à des connaissances durables et des politiques plus efficaces. L'émergence de nouvelles vagues et variants du virus sur le continent signifie que la possibilité de reprendre une vie sociale normale, même à moyen terme, est discutable, ce qui nécessite une planification à long terme pour une production et une diffusion efficaces des connaissances.

Dans plusieurs pays, le confinement de l'année dernière et l'impossibilité pour les populations d'avoir une activité économique normale ont aggravé les crises économiques préexistantes. Ceci a, bien sûr, exacerbé les perturbations sociales et politiques internes ainsi que la marginalisation économique. Au fur et à mesure que la pandémie perdure, son impact sur la société et, en particulier, sur les pauvres s'intensifie également. Leur vulnérabilité a été accentuée par la première réponse internationale à la vaccination, appelée « apartheid vaccinal », où l'accès aux vaccins disponibles est réservé, en grande partie, aux riches et aux économies développées qui ont refusé de suspendre temporairement « l'Accord sur les aspects des droits de propriété intellectuelle qui touchent au commerce (ADPIC) de l'OMC afin d'augmenter considérablement et de manière abordable les approvisionnements en vaccins, médicaments, tests et équipements COVID-19 »[1].

Le contexte décrit ci-dessus relie les réflexions contenues dans ce numéro du *CODESRIA Bulletin*. Les articles abordent des préoccupations émanant, quoiqu'indirectement, de la pandémie. Le premier, de Richard Atimniraye Nyelade et Dunfu Zhang, dépeint le contexte historique des origines de la notion de distanciation sociale. Ils étudient l'idée de distanciation sociale comme une stratégie et illustrent ses applications contemporaines dans le contexte de la pandémie. Bien que perçue comme une réponse médicale à une pandémie, ils documentent l'enracinement de ses origines dans des histoires négatives de race et de stéréotypes ayant trait aux odeurs. Aujourd'hui,

l'imposition, dans différentes parties du monde, de la distanciation physique et sociale aux scientifiques qui ont besoin de voyager aux fins de recherche, y compris sur la COVID, déterminera, éventuellement qui sera le premier à produire des connaissances sur les implications du virus, comment ces connaissances seront mises à disposition et à quel prix.

Les deux articles suivants portent sur le travail de Walter Rodney et, indirectement, abordent également les contextes historiques dans lesquels les défis actuels de l'Afrique émergent, et doivent être situés et compris. Le livre de Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, publié il y a environ un demi-siècle, retrace comment les interactions historiques de l'Europe avec l'Afrique expliquent l'état de sous-développement de l'Afrique. Ce sous-développement s'est aggravé au fil des ans et est devenu de plus en plus complexe et pernicieux. L'article d'Ian Taylor examine la méthodologie politique de Rodney et l'épistémologie centrée sur l'Afrique qui, à bien des égards, ont donné un rôle aux Africains et, ont contesté les prescriptions et méthodologies externes à l'Afrique comme seule manière de penser le développement africain. Les arguments de Rodney, formulés à l'origine dans les travaux d'André Gunder Frank et de Samir Amin, ont ensuite été repris dans le livre de Samir Amin, *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World* (1990), qui proposait la dissociation comme stratégie contre des logiques d'exploitation qui liaient l'Afrique au monde occidental, et ont donné foi au cadrage eurocentrique sous-jacent du savoir. En effet, l'article de David Johnson va dans le même sens, retraçant l'évolution historique des idées de Rodney et démontrant à quel point elles sont pertinentes pour la jeune génération d'Africains et d'universitaires africains qui s'attaquent, aux vieux problèmes par de nouveaux moyens.

Ce numéro du Bulletin contient également deux articles sur les récentes élections au Ghana et les perspectives de démocratisation dans ce pays. Ces articles, l'un par Clement Sefa-Nyarko et l'autre par Lloyd G. Adu Amoah, explorent les fondements de la stabilité démocratique, quoique parfois dysfonctionnelle, du Ghana. Serfa-Nyarko l'explique en termes de structures politiques qui inhibent l'émergence d'identités sociales au sein des partis politiques en réprimant les impulsions et les pratiques égoïstes dans les engagements politiques. Amoah, pour sa part, les considère comme une culture politique plus générale engendrée par la Constitution de 1992. Il examine la tendance des deux principaux partis politiques du Ghana à se mobiliser uniquement dans les élections,

afin d'occuper les structures étatiques en vue de leur autopromotion. Selon lui, cette tendance a transformé en « machines électorales » les partis qui ne cherchent sérieusement pas à améliorer les conditions de vie de la plupart des Ghanéens. Serfa-Nyarko soutient, en outre, que la tâche de contrôler ce qu'il décrit, à juste titre, comme « la menace Gilgamesh » dans la politique ghanéenne incombe à la société civile en tant que catalyseur pour faire contrepoids au pouvoir.

Les deux derniers articles de ce numéro reviennent sur le thème du financement du développement et de la démocratie en Afrique. Richard Itaman discute de l'origine et de la progression de la Banque africaine de développement en tant qu'institution de financement du développement en Afrique. Il analyse également, bien que censée être une banque africaine pour le développement de l'Afrique, ses actionnaires sont de puissantes entités extérieures qui s'efforcent souvent de compromettre les actions de développement en Afrique. Ceci est significatif, en particulier à un moment où la banque devra davantage aider les pays africains à surmonter les conséquences économiques néfastes de l'actuelle pandémie. Dans leur article, Jimi Adesina et al. se préoccupent également du pouvoir exercé par des entités externes. Ils s'intéressent à la manière dont l'aide est de plus en plus conçue pour créer les conditions de la gouvernance en Afrique, et son déploiement, ou non, en tant que conditionnalité pour freiner les régimes non conformes. Dans un sens, l'article soulève l'importante question des conséquences souvent tues des « Références à l'Afrophilie » accordés à des universitaires et à des décideurs politiques sur la base de recommandations intellectuelles et politiques qui reposent sur l'aide comme méthode pour « discipliner la démocratie », pour reprendre le titre du livre de Rita Abrahamsen de 2020. Le Bulletin termine par un hommage rendu à feu Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, lui-même un analyste lucide de la politique africaine qui a toujours mis en avant la notion et la pratique de politiques émancipatrices, des politiques dans lesquelles la conditionnalité de l'aide n'a pas sa place.

Note

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Pandemic and Social Distancing

The Racial and Olfactory Origin of Social Distancing

Introduction

Among the measures to contain the new coronavirus, Covid-19, 'social distancing' has emerged as a buzzword. Politicians, journalists, commentators, news readers, experts and ordinary citizens use the term blithely. Social distancing, or maintaining a physical space between people, is generally presented as one of a number of public-health, unmedicated practices to prevent disseminating this highly contagious disease. Wearing a mask, isolating infected patients, quarantine, school closures, the prohibition of cultural, sporting or religious gatherings, total confinement of the population and absolute prohibition against leaving one's home are among the many other measures. However, scrutinising the term from a sociological perspective reveals that 'social distancing' is very different from the concept of 'physical distancing', which is in fact what these measures are all about.

Historically, the meaning of the term 'social distancing' is the differentiation between social classes or racial groups. A theory developed by the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1912), social distancing is the result of conscious or unconscious policies and behaviours that confer an inferior social status to individuals or groups who

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are considered to represent a risk—to 'us', 'our' community, 'our' nation. It cannot be determined with a ruler. Our socialisation leads us to distinguish the noble from the trivial, the precious from the unimportant, the pure from the impure. But among the causes of social distancing is smell.

Since their first contact with black people, Western explorers and slave traders have used accusations of a bad smell to justify social distancing from and hatred of blacks. After observing the construction of olfactory stereotypes against blacks since the pre-industrial era, Le Guerer (1992) concluded that 'odour thus becomes an instrument and justification for or the sign of a racial, social and in the end, moral rejection' (1922: 27). Olfaction stereotypes were so engrained in Western societies that Simmel, one of the first sociologists to study odour, argued that human societies were prevented from uniting because of olfactory bigotry:

It would appear impossible for the Negro ever to be accepted into high society in North America because of his body odour and the forebody and profound mutual aversion that has existed between Germans and Jews have been attributed to the same cause (Simmel 1912: 36).

While revisiting the history of physical distancing and social distancing, this article attempts to show how the term 'social distancing' evolved and wound up being used without question. A sociological scrutiny of 'social distancing' reveals the anti-black, racism-loaded history of the term, and is a lesson in the importance of questioning buzzwords before embracing them.

From physical distancing to social distancing

Since time immemorial, physical distancing as a strategy to minimise contagion or preserve purity has been practised by human societies. One of the oldest written references to physical distancing occurs in the Bible, in Leviticus 15: 20–23. Following the Jewish tradition, it was alleged that menstruation rendered a woman unclean and might infect anybody who came into direct or indirect physical contact with her. She would need to stay in isolation for seven days to become pure again:

When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.

Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean and anything she sits on will be unclean.

Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water and he will be unclean till evening.

Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water and he will be unclean till evening.

Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening.

Besides its alleged function to separate the impure from the pure, physical distancing has also been practised throughout history for medical reasons. In the early history of human societies, ill people were separated from the healthy until they were well. Another early form of physical distancing was quarantine. During the fourteenth century, the 'Black Death' spread quickly through Europe and became one of the deadliest plague pandemics. The disease started in the Far East and appeared in Europe in 1346. Five to ten years later, the plague exploded in Europe. Millions of persons were killed and society was considerably transformed. Italy was one of the leading countries affected by the disease. Contagion doctrines developed there included two crucial 'forms of public health control ... municipal quarantine and isolation of the victims' (Hays 2009: 54).

In 1374, the Italian cities of Genoa and Venice started to determine the origin of incoming ships. The cities 'turned away any (ship) coming from infected areas' (Byrne 2008: 483). In 1377, the first maritime quarantine took place at the trading colony of Ragusa. The ships coming to Ragusa were ordered by law to anchor outside the port for a month, or forty days (a *quarantena*—the origin of the word 'quarantine'). In the meantime, the port officials scrutinised the travellers and cargo to detect any possible health menace. The quarantine law consisted of four requirements:

(1) That citizens or visitors from plague-endemic areas would not be admitted into Ragusa until they had first remained in isolation for one month;

(2) that no person from Ragusa was permitted go to the isolation area, under penalty of remaining there for 30 days;

(3) that persons not assigned by the Great Council to care for those being quarantined were not permitted to bring food to isolated persons, under penalty of remaining with them for 1 month; and

(4) that whoever did not observe these regulations would be fined and subjected to isolation for 1 month. (Sehdev 2002)

In October 1918, during the Spanish flu pandemic, Max C. Starkloff, a physician in charge of healthcare in St. Louis, Missouri (USA), implemented the closure of all public places and a ban on public gatherings of more than twenty people. His actions are credited as one of the earliest examples of physical distancing for medical reasons.

With the evolution of medicine and greater knowledge about managing disease in large populations, physical distancing has been perfected over time. The goal of physical distancing is to slow down the likelihood of touch between infected and uninfected people and thus reduce the health risk. Physical distancing is effective when the contagion is transmitted through coughing, sneezing, touching a contaminated surface or through airborne particles.

'Social distancing' was first named as a strategy to fight a pandemic by the World Health Organization in 2006, when avian flu started to kill people. According to experts from the WHO, avian flu had the potential to affect more than one billion people worldwide and in that case would leave authorities powerless to deal with the epidemic: stocks of antiviral drugs were insufficient in all countries and the first vaccines against the new disease would be ready, at best, in four to six months. The only weapon immediately available to slow this scourge was 'social distancing'. This term was used in WHO-recommended codes of emergency procedures to define all quarantine measures to minimise physical contact between individuals, such as bans on demonstrations and public meetings, restrictions on public transport travel, mandatory masks, etc. It was taken up by the media in articles reporting on how to behave in the face of a significant health crisis. An early example can be found in the French newspaper *L'Express* of 2 March 2006, in a text by Charles Gilbert, entitled '*On ne se touche plus*' (We no longer touch each other) (Xavier-Laurent Salvador 2020).

Three years later, with the emergence of the swine flu (H1N1) pandemic in 2009, the term 'social distancing' was further embedded in public usage. On this occasion, the WHO recommended social distancing and personal hygiene, as it did when the coronavirus pandemic broke out. Many countries then implemented containment measures for large populations over several weeks following these recommendations.

'Social distancing' has taken on the same meaning as physical distancing and yet its connotations are far more sinister. This is why a sociological intervention is necessary to shed light on these terms, which may help to avoid misinterpretation. We do this with a retrospective look at the racial and olfactory origins of social distancing.

The foetid smell of the ships

Although the victim of a disease had to go through the ordeal of isolation (or physical distancing), this practice was understood as a sanitary measure and was generally accepted by society. Even so, physical distancing brought prejudice, linked to race or social class. However, social distancing comes from the fear, hatred or disdain of a racial group or a social class, and its result is to diminish and marginalise them. Black people, starting with their history as African slaves, have been the most targeted social group for 'distancing'. One of the first stereotypes to justify this behaviour was the perceived or alleged foul smell of the slaves. The chattel slavery of Africans, who were hunted down like animals, shipped as cargo and sold as objects to slave-owners to work on plantations, is well known. When human beings are chained or incarcerated in large numbers in cramped spaces for long periods of time, having to relieve themselves in the same place, among the prone bodies of those suffering from dysentery, it is evident that they will not smell good. The smell emanating from the slave ships was notorious during the slave trade period.

> One particular focus was the stink generated by the cruel treatment of slaves on board the ships that transported them to the colonies. Ships became one of the key focuses of (…)

The smell of slave ships was often remarked upon. Aboard one slave ship John Rilands, heir to a Jamaican plantation was forced to share his room with twenty-five African girls whose stench at times was almost beyond endurance. (Tullett 2015: 315–316)

The living conditions on board ships were so horrible for the enslaved Africans that, recounting Thomas Clarkson's experience on his second transatlantic voyage, Tullett (2016: 316) wrote: 'Thomas Clarkson described how "voracious fish were supposed to have followed the vessels from the coast of Africa … being allured by the stench" emitted by the blood and putrefaction of dead and dying slaves.'

The stereotype of black people having an offensive smell was perpetuated by later writers. Giving an overview of some accounts, Tullett (2016: 314) writes:

> During the period between 1750 and 1800, writers specified particular nations of Africans who were more or less odorous. For example, Buffon's natural history argued that 'those of Guinea are extremely ugly and have an insufferable stench' while 'those of Sofala and Mozambique are handsome and have no bad smell'. Similarly, Bryan Edwards and Daniel M'Kinnen noted, in their history of the British colonies in the West Indies, that it was remarkable that 'in all the Mandingoes, they are less disgusting in features and more free from a fetid smell, than any other Africans'.

Buffon (1785) and Virey (1826) give some accounts in the same vein: the 'Negroes' (from Angola or Cape Verde) 'smell so bad when heated and that the air of the places they have been remain infected for more than a quarter of an hour' (Buffon 1785 in Le Breton 2006:

298). Moreover, 'when the Negroes are under heavy sun, their skin is also covered with an oily and blackish sweat. It stains their skin. Their clothes exhale a very unpleasant leek smell' (Virey 1826: 111). Slave-owners who noticed the powerful smell never questioned the horrific living conditions of the slaves in their ships, nor did they consider the deplorable work conditions on the plantations that inevitably resulted in strong body odour. Anti-slavery authors, such as William Dickson, acknowledged that 'some negroes have a fetid smell'. By adding 'some', Dickson is an exception to the trend towards generalisation that characterised writers of that period. Moreover, he added: 'So has every man, more or less, who toils and sweats much, in a sultry climate and neglects bathing' (Dickson 1792: 81–2). Despite the writings of anti-slavery authors, the negative olfactory stereotypes continued. Long (1774) believed that the odour was innate and immutable, but did not mention the brutal treatment of Jamaican slaves, such as obliging them to eat foecal matter and treating their injuries with urine.

Several modern Western authors, such as Faulkner (1948), Dollard (1957) and Brink and Harris (1969), referred to the 'stench of nigger', which probably derived from poor hygiene, such as not bathing or not keeping 'decent human standards', leading them to 'live like pigs'. According to Dollard (1957), blacks wore excessive quantities of perfume to avoid racist prejudice. By doing so, following Dollard's analysis, they reinforced white prejudice: whites ended up believing that blacks smelled bad because they used cologne to excess. By making some whites uncomfortable, the black 'smell' took on aggressive racial

characteristics that led whites to keep their distance.

The concept of the 'foul odour' of black people was not limited to the West. It also reached some Asian countries like China, where anti-black racism is rampant. In 'From Campus Racism to Cyber Racism: Discourse of Race and Chinese Nationalism', Cheng (2011) reported some Chinese netizens using 'extreme racist language', denouncing Africans' presence in Guanzhou: 'It is a racial invasion!'; 'Public safety is gone!'; 'Are they becoming the 57th ethnic group?'; 'China is not a camp for refugees; our resources are already scant.' He did not mention the reference to odour but it was there: 'Not obeying law and order is their nature, not to mention their body odour!'; 'Go home, you African dogs! You are here only to share our businesses and our women!' (Cheng 2011: 567).

Some Chinese women in romantic relationships with Africans have been humiliated by Chinese men who believed that they had been manipulated by a racial cliché that overstates black men's virility at Chinese men's expense. This led to some web users attacking 'Chinese women involved with blacks in obscene language from a nationalist perspective, saying they brought shame to "our country" and "our ancestors" by sleeping with "ugly and smelly" blacks.' (Cheng 2017: 567)

The widespread belief in black olfactory stereotypes was also echoed by Lan (2017) in her book *Mapping the New African Diaspora in China: Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging:* 'Many of our African interviewees reported unpleasant experiences traveling on the bus when some Chinese covered their noses at the sight of Africans or avoided sitting beside them.' (Lan 2017: 32)

The intersection of smell and racial preconceptions allows us to see the historical process of social differentiation and social distancing. Thus, social distancing was constructed by the time of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the form of aversion to and disdain or suspicion of blackness, and has been perpetuated across generations and continents.

From the slave ships to the generalisation of social distancing

A particular odour that indicates an individual's belonging to a community and serves to advance that group's cohesion can also repel others (Le Guerer 1992). 'Odour thus becomes an instrument and justification for or the sign of a racial, social and in the end, moral rejection', Le Guerer argues (1992: 27). Others may consider people with repugnant smells as 'skunks' from a sociological point of view. Scent sociologists, Largey and Watson, described what people would do, in general, when they came into contact with a 'skunk':

> If we encounter an individual skunk, e.g., a person with bad breath, it is commonly accepted that we may step back from the person to prevent further violation of our sense of smell. Usually, we mentally label such a person and we may extend our disgust by informing others that the person has a problem. Strangely enough, the person himself is seldom directly confronted about his problem because of the embarrassment it would cause the dishonored self to embarrass the dishonoring One. (Largey and Watson: 316)

Pierluigi Lanfranchi, in his article 'Foetor judaicus: Archaeology of a Prejudice' (2017), discusses notions of the 'Jewish stench', using

as an example a work by the Latin poet Venancius Fortunatus (c. 530–c. 600). In this article, Lanfranchi identifies the sources of what was called 'foetor judaicus' in the Christian and 'pagan' traditions of late antiquity, but which continued down the centuries. Lanfranchi repeats Schopenhauer's unfortunate phrase about Spinoza: 'He speaks as a Jew (...) so that we, who are accustomed to purer and more dignified doctrines, are overwhelmed by the foetor judaicus' (Lanfranchi 2017: 119).

In the scientific climate of the nineteenth century, several attempts were made to provide a 'scientific' explanation for the alleged Jewish stench. The German physician and hygienist Gustav Jäger (1832–1917) developed an elaborate theory of smells related to age, gender, race and even each individual's mental and emotional state. In his book, *Die Entdeckung der Seele* (The Discovery of The Soul), Jäger claimed to be able to easily recognise the smell of a Jew, even in an Aryan with a single drop of Jewish blood in his veins (Jäger 1878, vol. 1, 246–248). In 1890, it was alleged that Jews smelled like garlic, and garlic became a metaphor for anti-Semitism. The odour presumably would vanish after the Jew's conversion and baptism into Christianity.

Juliette Courmont, in her book *L'odeur de l'Ennemi* (The Enemy's Odour) (2010), describes the olfactory stereotype held by the French of the Germans after the First World War. This is evidenced by the rumours and theories that circulated and amplified the concept of the 'German smell'. This work collects evidence of this olfactory intolerance from sources of the time: newspapers, letters and the testimonies of soldiers. From the first year of the War, the French

spread the idea that a foul odour accompanied the German enemy. Following in the troops' wake, it would impregnate places occupied by the Germans far beyond the excrement with which they marked their presence. It would even emanate from their corpses.

Although aberrant, the olfactory denunciation of the enemy was too ubiquitous to be blamed on the bewilderment of a few. Reading intimate writings, correspondence and the press it is clear that the 'German stench' was not a propaganda tool, but an ingrained belief. It was also supported by the scientific world. For example, a recognised doctor, Edgar Bérillon, cited by Lefrère and Berche (2010), interpreted the mystery of the German stench as due to excessive sweating induced by the fear of lack of control of the situation in which they found themselves.

In his article, 'Grease and Sweat: Race and Smell in Eighteenth-Century English Culture', Tullett (2016) argues that the social 'use' of olfactory stereotypes, particularly their links with cosmetics, food and odorous spaces, determines the spread of explanations for and attitudes to racial scent. He argues that race ideas should not be considered static or described in terms of narratives that assume a divide between the body or culture, but that racial stereotypes should be understood as collections of traits, of which smell is one, with different evolutions.

In response to widespread twentieth-century stereotypes about bodily odour, many authors tried to educate readers by giving an objective analysis of the matter. Following the reading of a thesis advocating the notion of differentiation of racial instincts by accepting the

smell, Max Weber (1912) wrote of white Americans who could 'smell the blacks':

> I can refer to my nose: it found no such thing, despite very close contacts. I have the impression that the Negro, when he has neglected to wash, smells exactly like white people and vice versa. In the Southern States, I can also report on the current show of a lady sitting in her cabriolet, the reins in hand, beside a Negro; it is evident that her nose does not suffer. As far as I know, the smell of the Negro is a recent invention of the northern states designed to explain their recent 'distancing' of Negroes (Weber 1912, in Le Breton 2006: 300).

The suggestion that northern states' social 'distancing' of the 'Negroes' was 'recent', that is, in the early twentieth century, indicates that it predated the foul odour attributed to Jews and Germans. Hence, social distancing did not originate only from olfactory stereotypes, but also as a reaction to differences in skin colour. As a result some individuals viewed darker-skinned people as different or even subhuman beings.

The contribution of scientific racism to social distancing from blacks

Racism is an ideology that, starting from the postulate that there are races within the human species, considers specific categories of people as intrinsically superior to others. It is different from racialism, which, although starting from the same postulate, does not consider the races to be unequal. Racism was initially based not on scientific facts, but on Canaan's curse in the Book of Genesis and the 'Table of Peoples' that derives from it.

Racist ideologies have served as a basis for political doctrines that have led to racial discrimination, ethnic segregation and social distancing. Scientific racism has resulted in injustices and violence and, in extreme cases, genocide. According to some sociologists, scientific racism is part of the social domination dynamic.

The supposedly scientific concept of race emerged in the mid-eighteenth century among some naturalists. For the scientists of that time, species were regarded as stable and created by God (fixism). On the other hand, there were 'varieties' within species that were unstable and were distinguished by climate and place. Agronomic practices could also produce these 'varieties'. But how did this explain that man, God's creature, normally stable, possesses variable and transmissible characteristics, such as skin colour? Should they be speaking of human species or human varieties? To answer this question, some scientists, anxious to defend the uniqueness of the human species, would mobilise a new concept, that of 'race'. It would define the stable and hereditary varieties within the human species, which were then detailed and classified.

This idea was supported in France, by Georges-Louis de Buffon, and in Germany, by Friedrich Blumenbach and Emmanuel Kant. It was also accepted in England, by Charles Darwin, the father of the theory of the evolution of species, who used the word 'race' in his seminal work *On the Origin of Species* (1859). For him, species were, in fact, initially races, that is to say, unstable hereditary 'varieties' that were transmitted and fixed through time. To back up their claims, naturalists recorded measurements, of the skull, of facial characteristics, claiming that these

were a scientific method by which human races could be determined and categorised, according to their beauty, and intellectual and moral capacities, etc.

At the start of the study of human genetics, there was an essential current of thought that took up the postulates underlying the racial theories developed by Gobineau (1854) and his contemporaries while integrating advances in the work on natural selection within species. The processes of biological reproduction, already explored in the work of Mendel (1822–1884), were revisited in the light of Darwin's theory of evolution, which held that natural laws of selection allowed the reproduction of the strongest species. In *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin proposed—as a starting point for his reflections— the observations of Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) on population dynamics. Malthus had claimed that, in all populations, births are far too numerous for the resources available. On the strength of this observation, Darwin theorised that the result was a fierce struggle for life that inexorably favoured those species that possessed the genetic characteristics best adapted to ensure their survival in a given environment.

Darwin's theory would find its social counterpart a few years after its publication. By applying his principles to humans, the proponents of social Darwinism tried to explain the existence of domination and subjugation in Western societies and used it to justify exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, patriarchy and racial segregation, as natural phenomena.

The application of Darwin's theory to the structures of society found a good fit in eugenics, which had its heyday in the first half of the twentieth century, when it was associated with a rereading of Mendel's laws of heredity. The father of modern eugenics was the British physiologist Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton defined eugenics as the study of the conditions for maintaining the optimal quality of the human species, examining the 'socially' controllable factors that could raise or lower the racial qualities of future generations, physically and mentally.

In his book, *Hereditary Genius* (1869), Galton proposed to attack recessive genes that carried 'unacceptable' defects and faults to prevent the human gene pool from dying. According to Galton, carriers of these 'bad' genes should be sterilised or prevented from reproducing. Largely tinged with an ethnocentric vision that fitted well with the 'civilising' mission of the great European colonial powers of the time, Galton's theory considered the modern European, which he humbly boasted was one of the most 'accomplished' specimens, as the human being with the best genetic capacities. Based on this observation, he considered the potential of a eugenic programme that would improve the human species.

The acceptance of this idea was remarkably rapid in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century, when there was a massive influx of immigrants who came to rebuild their lives in the New World. Wishing to reduce the 'social problems' caused by the increase in population and wanting to protect the specificity of the American genetic heritage, the United States government approved the creation of eugenicist associations as early as the 1920s and passed the Immigration Act in 1924, which severely limited immigration from southern and eastern European countries. Many American states openly adopted eugenic policies, citing, among other things, the 'decline of American intelligence', which was attributed mainly to black immigration from Africa. Thus, as Rifkin and Howard note: 'As a result of systematic and well-coordinated propaganda by eugenics advocates, tens of thousands of American citizens were involuntarily sterilised under various laws enacted by some states in the early years of the century' (Rifkin and Howard 1979: 57). Similar eugenic policies were adopted in Canada (notably in Manitoba and Saskatchewan) and in Europe, mainly in the Scandinavian countries and in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s.

Racism considers that properties attached to a group are permanent and transmissible, most often biologically. The racist gaze is an activity of categorisation as well as closure of the group in on itself. In 1925, sociologist Emory Bogardus initiated the Social Distance Scale. It was alleged to measure prejudice by asking participants to describe how comfortable they felt interacting with people of another race. It was a reductive attempt to cut the world into ethnic groups. The Social Distance Scale proceeds by taking all the complicated and ambivalent feelings an individual has about members of a social or racial group and assigns a number to those feelings. This number attribution reminds us of how slave-owners marked their chattel slaves with a number on the chest to indicate their ownership. The sad news is that the Social Distance Scale is still used by some social scientists (Waxman 2020).

In his article 'Social Distance and Its Origins', published in the *Journal of Applied Sociology*, Bogardus argues:

The measurement of social distances is to be viewed simply as a means for securing adequate interpretations of the varying degrees and grades of understanding and feeling that exist in social situations. The measurement exercise and its results indicate the main points for an intensive inquiry into human experiences. (Bogardus 1925a: 300)

In a social experiment involving 110 people in the US, one of the first questions Bogardus asked was: 'In how many groupings in our country may the members of any race, as a class, be admitted, as judged by the ratings of the 110 judges using the arithmetic mean?' The interviewees were asked to rank races by number, from which an index to the Social Quality Indexes would be calculated. The results are reproduced in Table 1.

Table 1: Highest and Lowest Social Quality Indexes (Samples)

Highest		Lowest	
Canadians	22.51	Turks	2.91
Scotch-Irish	23.05	Hindus	3.08
English	22.35	Mulattoes	3.62
Scotch	20.91	Koreans	3.54
Irish	19.38	Negroes	3.84

Source: Bogardus 1925a: 306

As could be guessed, 'Negroes' were among the people with the lowest Social Quality Index (3.84), along with Koreans (3.54), Mulattoes (3.62), Hindus (3.08) and Turks (2.91). The highest Social Quality Indexes were attributed to Canadians (22.51), Scotch-Irish (23.05), English (22.35), Scotch (20.91) and Irish (19.38).

The Social Distance Scale corroborates the Western way of subconsciously thinking about identity and inequity with tags, numbers and barcodes. It makes it seem as if people fit neatly into these groups and categories.

Bogardus reported one of his informants' testimony of his childhood experience, which led him to distance himself from black people unconsciously:

This was the idea I received from my elders and it was one I carried with me when I came to California. Here I found conditions very different. My parents lamented the fact that we would have to sit beside Negroes on streetcars and in theaters. My father declared he would never lower himself to the level of the 'nigger' like the Californians did—he simply could not understand the attitude of the westerner to the Negro. In different places I heard the southerner criticised by the westerner for his 'mistreatment' of the Negro. I was suddenly thrust into a new atmosphere and at first I did not know what to make of it, but gradually my ideas began to change to those of my associates. (Bogardus 1925a: 376)

The relevance of these personal and racial reservations, which so invariably and inevitably spring up to complicate and, to some extent, to fix and 'conventionalise' our spontaneous human relationships, is that they come to be expressed in formal social relations and end up in the political arena to become laws and by-laws.

The Social Distance Scale treats hatred as a simple factor that can be turned into a number, counted and averaged across a population or a race. It is a gross reduction of human nature. We assume that Bogardus wanted to increase understanding between groups. In his second article, 'Social Distance and Its Origins' (1925), he wrote that his experiments 'were conducted to find out just how and why these grades of understanding and intimacy vary' (Bogardus 1925b: 217). We can speculate that Bogardus wanted to do good but without questioning the terms he used and their impact on the people he studied. The number of feet or metres that separate people can indicate the gap between those who are perceived to be good or bad, indispensable or deplorable, prestigious or vulgar. Social distancing is a virulent symptom of the fear of the other.

Scientific racism was dealt a blow when, in June 2000, the geneticist Craig Venter, a pioneer in genome sequencing, cited McCann-Mortimer et al. (2004: 409), announced that 'the concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis'. He proved that the human genome is indeed a composite of many sequences, that individuals have several ethnic origins.

Conclusion

We need to address structural inequalities in this world. Otherwise, the devastation of pandemics now and in the future will be more dreadful. As politicians and scientists urge nations to practise 'social distancing', we should remember that, throughout history, the same concept has made some black people more vulnerable to the physical and economic effects of the coronavirus and other epidemics and disasters.

It is important to be aware of the extent to which institution- and government-sanctioned language may have negative connotations, such as racism. Before popularising words, governments and institutions should assess how these

terms have been used to justify negative social behaviour, such as racism and prejudice against certain social groups. It is crucial to think about terms proposed for everyday use, and educate people about the history of these terms.

The COVID-19 pandemic led public authorities to impose preventive measures such as 'social distancing'. Our research shows that this expression is pejorative in orientation, and loaded with historical racial stigma and discrimination against ethnic groups, and especially black people. Physically distancing ourselves, fostering isolation, erecting a wall, preventing ties and generating fear of the other is what we first think of when we use the term 'social distancing'. If we decide to continue with the concept of 'social distancing', we need to humanise it. Otherwise, we might find ourselves using it as in the past—to categorise, marginalise and exclude.

Acknowledgements

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Remembering Walter Rodney

The Continuing Relevance of Walter Rodney

In Memory of Prof. Ian Taylor

*P*rofessor Ian Taylor's article on the "Continuing Relevance of Walter Rodney" is published posthumously. Prof. Taylor submitted the article for publication in **Africa Development** on November 30th 2020. Though the peer review comments were shared with him, CODESRIA did not receive any response nor a revised version of the article. The silence seemed unusual, since Ian had a previous record of engagement with CODESRIA. His last publication with CODESRIA was an article published in **Africa Development**, Vol. XLII, No. 3, 2017 on "The Liberal Peace Security Regimen: A Gramscian Critique of its Application in Africa". His failure to respond to the peer review comments was therefore a cause of concern and the sad news of his illness, hospitalisation and eventual passing on February 22nd 2021 explained it all.

Ian Taylor's work hoovered in African studies in a way that colleagues and students admired and will continue to appreciate. In his email submitting this article on Walter Rodney for publication, he pointed out his strong believe in Walter Rodney's political methodology and Africa-centred epistemology which he noted will continue to have relevance in any study of Africa. Ian was unapologetically radical in his academic pursuits and his engagement was tied to the activism that informed this radicalism. With wide ranging interest in Africa, especially in Botswana where he taught at the University of Botswana for a while, Ian's interest started and expanded to other regions of the world without abandoning the African connection. He started in Hong Kong, for instance, and soon became a critical voice in China–Africa relations, his interest, of course going beyond the current avalanche of studies inspired largely by recent China–Africa relations that are driven by Belt and Road Initiative and encouraged by pilgrimages by African leaders to the Beijing Summit under the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) framework.

Ian had multiple institutional affiliations over the period of his comparatively short career. He however published with CODESRIA, something that identified him not just with the Council but also with Africa and Africans. His 2005 co-edited study **The Potentiality of 'Developmental States' in Africa: Botswana and Uganda Compared** is an example. His review titled "Laughter as the best Medicine: Coping with the Nigerian Tragicomedy" published in CODESRIA's **Africa Review of Books**, Vol. 14, 2018, was another example of his continuing engagement with academic work on the continent. This is important. The Council has pushed for African-centered perspectives on Africa. This focus often rubs non-African and non-black scholars of Africa the wrong way because the nature of knowledge production and the division of labour within it that make it almost abnormal for Africans to make this basic claim that is treated as normal for other areas of study. Ian was comfortable with this politics and it is for this reason that we share in his sad passing on. We hope this last article attests to the claims we have made of Ian and speaks to the value he attached to progressive politics that Walter Rodney advanced.

Godwin Murunga
Executive Secretary
CODESRIA

Although Walter Rodney was murdered thirty years ago, eight years after he published his classic book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (hereafter *HEUA*) (Rodney 1972), this Guyanese intellectual's thought is as relevant today as it was when the book first came out. With Africa now experiencing serious economic difficulties, after falsely being said to be 'Rising' in the mid-2000s (for a critique, see Taylor 2016), the structural reasons for the continent's stagnation remain as per Rodney's analysis. In his book, Rodney not only discussed how Africa had been subjugated and then exploited by European imperialists, but argued that this had led to the underdevelopment of the continent. *HEUA* became extremely influential, but also contentious, particularly in the Western Africanist academy dominated by non-Africans. When the book was published, one review went so far as to state that:

> Dr. Walter Rodney, a historian at Dar es Salaam University College, has written an important book. It is not important in the ordinary fly leaf publicity of the white *capitalist* sell books/make money publishing world, but *important* as an extension in the tradition of *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Black Reconstruction*, *The Black Jacobins*, *Native Son*, *Pan Africanism*, *Communism* and other landmarks pointing the way to the future. (Chaka 1973: 56)

The argument of this article is that aside from Rodney's solid political economy framework, his epistemological approach in *HEUA* may be seen to fit with the later development of Africa-centred, decolonial frameworks and that a re-evaluation of Rodney's immense contri-

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bution may be fruitful in light of his epistemology (and methodology). *HEUA* was pioneering in that it was among the first works to bring a new assessment to post-colonial Africa and the problematique of underdevelopment, and its approach consciously put the African experience front and centre (Howison 2011). Rodney's analysis went beyond the heretofore conventional (as per the dominant Western academy's) consideration of the study of African (and Africans') development and beyond the Western canon (Bloom 1994). Underdevelopment, as per Rodney's critical concept, suggested a process that deviated from the trajectory Africa might have followed had it not been brutally incorporated into the global capitalist system by the Europeans. Indeed, underdevelopment, according to Rodney, was 'not the absence of development, because every people have developed in one way or another and to a greater or lesser extent. Underdevelopment makes sense only as a means of comparing levels of development. It is very much tied to the fact that human social development has been uneven and from a strictly economic viewpoint some human groups have advanced further by producing more and becoming wealthier' (Rodney 1972).

With underdevelopment 'there are two aspects, two sides of underdevelopment: the basically external, international aspect, which from

the historical point of view of the emergence of the present state is the primary aspect; and the internal aspect, which from the point of view of future development is increasingly important' (Szentes 1971: 163). In short, 'poverty [is] not the result of some historical game of chance in which [Africa] happened to be the losers; it [is] the result of a set of economic relationships, rooted in the colonial era, that [has] served to enrich a minority by impoverishing the majority' (Adamson 2013: 12). Furthermore, Rodney noted that European rapacity in Africa had denied the people of the continent power:

> The decisiveness of the short period of colonialism and its negative consequences for Africa spring mainly from the fact that Africa lost power. Power is the ultimate determinant in human society, being basic to the relations within any group and between groups. It implies the ability to defend one's interests and, if necessary, to impose one's will by any means available. In relations between peoples, the question of power determines manoeuvrability in bargaining, the extent to which one people respect the interests of another, and eventually, the extent to which a people survive as a physical and cultural entity. When one society finds itself forced to relinquish power entirely to another society that in itself is a form of underdevelopment.

The colonial enterprise structured African societies so that they supplied exports 'on the best possible terms, from the point of view of the mother country', which delivered only a minimal and declining return to the local workforce (Amin 1972: 524). This was underdevelopment in action.

Rodney's Intellectual Development

In 1960, Walter Rodney entered the University of the West Indies (UWI) at Mona, Jamaica, to learn history. He graduated three years later with a first-class Honours degree and secured a scholarship to pursue postgraduate work in African History at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. There is little question that his decision to study African History was spurred by a desire to challenge the omnipresent Eurocentric historiography at the time (see Morrissey 1976; Campbell 1981). It was at SOAS that 'Rodney confronted the perception that history was at the core a reactionary discipline, characterized largely by archives and documents, with a natural bias towards the elite and linear thinking' (Vaught 2015: 8).

Equally, given the contemporary milieu, Rodney became acquainted with the principles of Black Power and Marxist thought. His connections in London with C.L.R. James later reverberated throughout Rodney's life and academic work (see Henry 2013). In London, Rodney attached himself to a study group that met recurrently in James' home to read and debate Marxism. Rodney recounts that these sessions gave him the opportunity 'to acquire a knowledge of Marxism, a more precise understanding of the Russian revolution, and of historical formulation', while developing 'a certain sense of historical analysis' (Rodney 1990: 28).

By the time he completed his PhD in 1966, his intellectual development had been further influenced by two noteworthy happenings: first, the post-Marcus Garvey resurgence of Black Power all over the Diaspora and the escalating Marxist critique among black radicals and militants against imperialism and neo-colonialism (see Bogues 2003; Waters 2018). Whatever the tendency, the dominant supposition was that confronting racial injustice and neocolonialism in Africa was *the* agenda. Thus it can be said that Rodney's analysis of the African situation, as exemplified in *HEUA*, was the outcome of these interlinked dynamics (see Lewis 1998).

Rodney taught at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in Tanzania between 1966 and 1967 and from 1969 to 1974. This was a period in which UDSM was perhaps the most influential university in Africa, with an intellectual ferment that was legendary (see Tandon 1982; Shivji 1993; Hirji 2010). Rodney threw himself into the debates (Shivji 1980). However, in 1968, Rodney ended his initial spell in Tanzania to teach at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica and it was during this time that *The Groundings with my Brothers* was published (Rodney 1969), a culmination of his dialogues with Rastafarians on Black Power (see Campbell 1987). *Groundings* may be seen as an effort to link Marxism and pan-Africanism into a single emancipatory movement (Ledgister 2008). Under intense pressure from the Jamaican and American intelligence services (see West 2005), the book got Rodney banned from Jamaica (see Gonsalves 1979; Payne 1983; Lewis 2000; West 2008), but *Groundings* became viewed as an exposition of Rodney's ideas concerning the functionality of an identity, anchored in history, for the liberation of black people in the Diaspora (Bogues 2009). Rodney subsequently returned to UDSM in 1969 as a Professor of History, staying until 1974. It was during this time that his magnum opus, *HEUA*, was published. *HEUA* integrated a Marxist perspective and an Africa-centred historiography to critically examine the destructive effect of Western cultural domination on African identity and self-definition. The historical materialism in *HEUA* was largely equalised with an appreciation of race in the wider background of cultural imperialism from the West (Chung 2012).

In 1974, Rodney returned to his native Guyana to assume a position as a professor at the University of Guyana, but the autocratic Guyanese government under Forbes Burnham thwarted his appointment. Rodney then became ever more involved in political activism, founding the Working People's Alliance to oppose Burnham (see Westmaas 2009). Harassment followed, and in 1979 Rodney was arrested and charged with arson after two state offices were found burned (Teelucksingh 2016: 171–185). On 13 June 1980, Rodney was assassinated in a car bomb attack, one month after returning from Zimbabwe's independence celebrations. He was survived by Patricia, his wife, and three children.[1]

Blame the Africans

Rodney's *HEUA* was a much-needed corrective to the then dominant 'modernisation thesis', which came from the United States and sought to influence how Africa was seen and saw itself. Owing its intellectual origins to the work of Darwin, Durkheim and Weber, and crystallised by the sociologist Parsons (1951), it was the American economist, Walter W. Rostow and his *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), who crafted this agenda. The intellectual history of Africa in defining itself had to engage in a continuous struggle between the broad vision encapsulated within Modernisation Theory (which effectively sees Africa and

Africans as a problem to overcome) and more critical postures emanating from scholars sympathetic to the continent (for an early review of the literature, see Chilcote 1984). This theme has been current throughout the discourses associated with Western interventions in Africa, whether in the New International Economic Order (NIEO) or Structural Adjustment Programmes. Rostow's thesis may in fact be seen as providing an intellectual foundation to the story of Africa's debate with its erstwhile 'partners'.

Modernisation Theory drew from Durkheim the belief that the world was divided into two broad kinds of social formations: the 'modern' and the 'traditional' (Durkheim 1984 [1893]). In contrast to the modern, traditional societies are backward-looking (if not primitive), and lack the dynamism required for economic 'success'. Traditional social formations are dominated by religious authority, which is frequently linked via a metaphysical cosmology to a rigid form of social structures predicated upon status based on inheritance. Such societies preclude the type of social mobility, or rather, the opportunities for social mobility that would spur innovative and efficient economic activity. Organised along lines of kinship, they also remain isolated from one another (Lerner 1958). At the same time, such vertically arranged societies allow for little control over arbitrary or capricious abuses of authority. According to the Rostow-inspired thesis, such characteristics were the hallmarks of societies that primarily revolve around agricultural production and rural life, which typified Africa. All of this is cast in a way that, of course, portrays Africans in a negative light.

In contrast, modern societies emerged from such traditional formations after going through a complex process of development, which was said to include the decline of magic as a basis for political authority (the demise of the 'divine right of kings', for instance) and a concomitant secularisation of wider society (Bauer 1971). With the Age of Reason, associated with the Enlightenment, came a spur for science and technology and an attempt to 'explain' the world scientifically. At the same time, reward systems based on merit rather than inheritance fostered a climate of incentives for innovation and efficiency (McClelland 1961; Hagen 1962). Associated with this broad historic thrust were a limited form of government and the rule of law defined constitutionally. This social order served to enshrine property relations and consciously reified capitalist modes of production. At the same time, a capitalist 'work ethic' à la Weber stimulated economic progress (see Jomo and Reinert 2005).

Broadly speaking, the modernisation thesis holds that if Africa is to follow the North into development and higher (i.e. Northern) standards of living, then it has to seek to replicate the North's historical trajectory, with particular emphasis on the development of an entrepreneurial class (Roxborough 1979: 16). In essence, the main foil to African development is cast as the 'character' of Africa's own societies. This retains powerful purchase in certain constituencies in the North: the infamous front page of *The Economist* (13 May 2000), declaring Africa to be 'The Hopeless Continent', blamed Africa's woes on its culture. In this trope, only by a deepened exposure to the economies and 'superior' cultures of the West can the traditional

social formations and values that 'hold Africa back' be broken down.

Such a view holds that as modern forms of society begin to develop in Africa (through interaction with the West) they will foster the growth of a more dynamic, efficient and explicitly capitalist mode of production and social organisation on the continent. That this is an inherently Eurocentric vision is apparent, and needs little comment: it was at the very core of one influential modernisation theorist (Eisenstadt 1966). And as Mazama (1998) noted, it was an exercise in self-glorification. However, its staying power in popular consciousness in Western societies has been remarkable.

Rodney's Contribution

The importance of Rodney's Africa-centred approach is that it underscores the fact that African peoples were deliberately removed from history by racist Europeans and denied even their humanity. This is what is known as the 'coloniality of being' (Maldonado-Torres 2007), which is the organised denial of humanity of those who became the victims of enslavement and colonisation. For Africans in particular, the denial of their humanity was a key tool in their subjugation and shoved them into a subhuman category, a position of non-being (Fanon 1968). It amounted to inferiorisation, i.e. 'the conscious, deliberate and systematic process … to mold specific peoples within that system … into "functional inferiors"' (Welsing 1974: 85).

In his pioneering work on Eurocentrism, Samir Amin (1985) argued that the belief in European superiority strengthened with the development of capitalism and ideas from the Enlightenment from the eighteenth century onwards, as

European economies began to rush ahead of the rest of the world. Prior to this, Europeans had not seen themselves as inherently superior to other peoples. Europe's ruling class paradoxically combined enthusiasm for their own countries' competency in the burgeoning capitalist economy with democratic ideas of *fraternité* and *egalité*. However, when confronted with the brutal realities of the slave trade and wars of conquest, 'The culture of the Enlightenment was unable to reconcile the fact of this superiority with its universalist ambition. On the contrary, it gradually drifted towards racism as an explanation for the contrast between it and other cultures' (ibid: 58).

It was at this moment that notions developed that somehow Europe (and Europeans) were fundamentally more dynamic than other people. This was cast in evolutionary terms:

> It was the exceptional historical sense underlying Hegel's manner of reasoning which distinguished it from that of all other philosophers. However abstract and idealist the form employed, yet his evolution of ideas runs always parallel with the evolution of universal history, and the latter was indeed supposed to be only the proof of the former. Although this reversed the actual relation and stood it on its head, yet the real content was invariably incorporated in his philosophy … He was the first to try to demonstrate that there is an evolution, an intrinsic coherence in history … This monumental conception of history pervades the *Phänomenologies*, *Asthetik* and *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Engels 1989 [1859]: 224).

With this evolutionary framework and the belief that Europe personified History, Hegel felt able to assert that:

> At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is not a historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit … What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History. (Hegel 1956 [1824]: 99)

Thus dismissed by *Geist*, African history, as per Hegel, was nothing but a purposeless set of barbaric actions. Lest this view be waved away as belonging to the past, consider the comments in 1969 of then-Regius Professor of History at the University of Oxford, Hugh Trevor-Roper: 'There is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness'; and that Africa's past was merely 'the unedifying gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe'.[2] More recently, and more publicly, was Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 comment (in Senegal!) that:

> The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history … They have never really launched themselves into the future. The African peasant only knew the eternal renewal of time, marked by the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words. In this realm of fancy … there is neither room for human endeavour nor the idea of progress. (quoted by Ba 2007)

Such tropes are nothing short of the methodical denigration of peer structures of knowledge (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). As Adeleke (2000: 38) reminds us,

> European rejection and caricaturing of Africa, which predated Roper, was meant to legitimise Europe's impending rape and denouement of the continent. The alleged backward and primitive character of pre-European Africa justified the enslavement and sale of Africans across the Atlantic.

The comparison between an African-centred understanding of history and the racist Eurocentric framework could not be more stark (see Keita 1974). After all, as Henri Moniot commented on then-dominant readings of history: 'There was Europe, and that was what constituted history' (1974: 106).

Outside of Afrocentrism and some postcolonial/decolonial research, the writing of history has been at the centre of a hegemonic project based on European supremacism, with the European experience taken as a given, as per Modernisation Theory. Everything else is a diffusion from Europe (see Amin 1985). Thus:

> History became part of a broader academic culture designed to facilitate European control and domination of non-Europeans. Knowledge was carefully structured, and access to it strictly controlled, all in a bid to strengthen European hegemony. Knowledge became a veritable weapon for creating and nurturing in Africans and blacks in diaspora a mental and psychological disposition to acknowledge White superiority. (Adeleke 2000: 38)

Rodney's work challenged these distortions (see Wallerstein 1986). His approach put the African location as the methodology while rejecting the subaltern place to which it has been conferred by Eurocentric scholars (see Monteiro-Ferreira 2009). This is somewhat redolent of Cabral's concept of the African peoples' 'return to History' after an absence due to the suppression of their history by imperialism (Cabral 1973: 50).

Asante asserted that 'the placing of African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior' (Asante 1987: 6) clearly would incorporate key elements of *HEUA*, particularly chapters two and three ('How Africa Developed Before the Coming of the Europeans up to the 15th Century' and 'Africa's Contribution to European Capitalist Development: The Pre-Colonial Period' respectively). As a method of intellectual reflection (see Kershaw 1992) and action in which the significance of African interests, values and outlooks prevail (Asante 2001: 3) this approach is reflected in these significant sections of *HEUA*. Notably, Rodney sets up his stall early in chapter two, with a quote from J. E. Casely Hayford, a Gold Coast nationalist: 'Before even the British came into relations with our people, we were a developed people, having our own institutions, having our own ideas of government' (Rodney 1972: 51). Rodney notes that 'The moment that the topic of the pre-European African past is raised, many individuals are concerned for various reasons to know about the existence of African "civilisations". Mainly, this stems from a desire to make comparisons with European "civilisations"' (Rodney 1972: 53). In other words, in such dominant epistemologies, Africa cannot be studied without anchoring it in Eurocentrism. Rodney rejected this.

Indeed, in the first two chapters of *HEUA*, Rodney discusses Africa and its peoples before the trans-atlantic slave trade, demonstrating an abundant and multifaceted complex of interconnected civilisations at a high level of development. Like elsewhere, some societies centred around a basic division of labour and were communal in nature (Rodney discusses hunter-gatherers in the Kalahari Desert, the Kaffa cultivators, Galla pastoralists, as well as the Bozo fisherman and Fulani herdsmen). Equally, such groups often lived together with relatively more developed societies, with the Benin Kingdom being an example. The weighty commerce and advanced division of labour in Beninese society laid the foundations for an embarrassment of riches in arts and culture, including the much-lauded bronze heads (subsequently stolen by the British in 1897). Of course, to the north, the magnificent civilisation of Mali, with Timbuktu as its capital, was a focal point for education across the continent and beyond. Rodney also discusses Great Zimbabwe, a monument to the history and impressiveness of city building in precolonial Africa: 'One of the principal structures at Great Zimbabwe was some 300 feet long and 220 feet broad, with the walls being 30 feet high and 20 feet thick' (Rodney 1972: 77).

Today, the need to somehow demonstrate (even 'justify') that Africa had a civilisation looks somewhat passé. But we must consider the times in which Rodney was writing: 'It was not until the decade of the 1970s that African and Africanist scholars began sustained intellectual counter-attack' against the dominant view of a continent with no precolonial history or sophistication (Adeleke 2000: 37). The work of A. Adu Boahen and Basil Davidson may be cited in this regard (Boahen 1964, 1987; Davidson 1961, 1964, 1977, 1998). In this sense, Rodney had to deal with the same sort of prejudices that the Senegalese scholar, Cheikh Anta Diop, had to, whose work on Africa as the cradle of humanity and civilisation (Diop 1954, 1960a, 1960b, 1962) was met with outright hostility,[3] even hatred, from Western scholars (see Van Sertima 1992; Gray 1999; Asante 2007).[4] This was precisely because Diop dared challenge the dominant racist historiography of Africa: his work marked a rupture from this view (Andjembe 1989).

As with any Kuhnian paradigm shift (Kuhn 1962), Diop's new concept of African history had to overcome extant positions (Clarke 1989). Notably, Rodney's work also suffered the same fate when published (see Hirji 2017). Thus, one contemporary review asserted that 'Some scholars may be disturbed by the pro-Marxist and anti-West bias of How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' (Tooker 1975: 549), while another worried that:

> Rodney's book will trouble many professional scholars more because of its tone than its substance. Unlike those Marxists who write for other scholars, Rodney goes out of his way to be abrasive. There are constant references to 'bourgeois apologists' and 'capitalist parasites'. (Klein 1974: 323)

Notably, critique of Rodney often focused on his 'style' and not the substance of his arguments, something which black scholars continue to face (see Jackson 2000).

Rodney's goal in his methodical discussion of the complex precolonial African societies was not to offer up some mythological utopic vision of the continent but rather to demonstrate that the continent's diverse sociological character was not particularly behind that of medieval Europe in terms of development prior to the European onslaught and that a recognition of this reality has to be at the centre of analysis when examining the effect of imperialism on Africa. This is precisely what Amin, in his critique of Eurocentrism, also argued. Rodney noted that when the

Dutch first visited Benin City, they saw in it a mirror of their own conurbations. Rodney quotes one contemporary account that:

> The town seems to be very great … The king's palace is a collection of buildings which occupy as much space as the town of Harlem, and which is enclosed with walls. There are numerous apartments for the Prince's ministers and fine galleries, most of which are as big as those on the Exchange at Amsterdam. (Rodney 1972: 83)

Furthermore, Rodney's work did not aim to exchange one group of myths (white superiority) with another (the splendour of the African past) but to centre ordinary Africans and their accomplishments. In his work on African pasts, Rodney was clear about the need for a historiography that encompassed not only the kings and aristocrats but also the common people:

> Even within those kingdoms [Egypt, Kush, Ethiopia, Ghana, etc.] the historical accounts often concentrate narrowly on the behaviour of elite groups and dynasties; we need to portray the elements of African everyday life and to comprehend the culture of all Africans irrespective of whether they were resident in the empire of Mali or an Ibo village. In reconstructing African civilisations, the concern is to indicate that African social life had meaning and value, and that the African past is one with which the Black man in the Americas can identify with pride. (Rodney 1969: 53).

One way Rodney highlighted this was in his discussion of the material culture of Africa. Contrary to dominant views regarding precolonial Africa, local manufacturers created items of comparable, if not superior, quality to those of Europe, due to developments in native forge technol-

ogy. Indeed, smiths in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa were producing steels of a better quality and grade than those of their peers in Europe (Thornton 1990). As Rodney was keen to point out, before the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade, a relative level of parity between Africa and Europe existed. The consequences of the transatlantic slave trade, however, put a halt on such developments. The colossal loss to the labour force in the regions from which Africans were stolen meant that local industries were debilitated, with European products flowing into and thus underdeveloping the economy. Africa became increasingly shaped to favour the interests of Western capitalism, and African industries were stunted (Williams 1944).

The foundations for this were, inter alia, firstly, the colonial economies' forced integration into global capitalism in a subservient arrangement so that the colonial economy was defined not by the needs of the native populations, but by the demands and concerns of the economy of the metropole and its ruling class, often under monopoly conditions. The underlying logic and driving force of capitalism and capital is the accumulation of profits; in the words of Marx, the 'boundless drive for enrichment' and the 'passionate chase after value' (Marx 1976 [1867]: 254).

From this scenario, unequal exchange and disarticulation resulted. With regard to Africa, Samir Amin (1974 2010) has demonstrated that a dependency on foreign capital investments has caused structural distortions of the economies of the continent. For Africa, problematically, the economic structures that emerged from the colonial period as a result of the world division of labour distorted the continent in such a way as to create obstacles to development (Amin 1974). Amin,

in this respect, discusses articulated and disarticulated economies. Articulated economies are those that possess multiple sectors interrelated to each other so that development in one sector stimulates development in another sector. This situation characterises developed economies. On the other hand, disarticulated economies refer to underdeveloped nations where economic sectors are not closely interrelated. Hence, development in one sector is unable to stimulate development in the other sector (Amin 1974). As Shivji notes, structural disarticulation is where Africa exhibits a 'disarticulation between the structure of production and the structure of consumption. What is produced is not consumed and what is consumed is not produced' (Shivji 2009: 59). Rather, the economies are oriented outwards:

> One finds within each colony the same disjunction, the same disaggregation of the constituent parts of a colonised economy. Instead, the linkages are with the metropolitan economy, and are determined exclusively by the latter in its own interest—an interest which proves incompatible with the independence and any real development of the Third World. (Rodney 1972: 29–30)

To demonstrate his point, Rodney wrote of the clothmaking industry in Africa:

> When European cloth became dominant on the African market, it meant that African producers were cut off from the increasing demand. The craft producers either abandoned their tasks … or they continued on the same small hand-worked instruments to create styles and pieces for localised markets. Therefore there was what can be called 'technological arrest' or stagnation or even regres-

sion. … The abandonment of traditional iron smelting in most parts of Africa is probably the most important instance of technological repression. (Rodney 1972: 119).

As Rodney developed his argument, development assumes 'a capacity for self-sustaining growth' (ibid.), but the transatlantic slave trade prevented this, with well-known consequences. Rodney's data demonstrated how population growth in Africa was almost flat (between 1650 to 1900 it rose a mere 20 million, from 100 million to 120 million, compared to Asia's population growth of 257 million to 857 million during the same period) (Rodney 1972: 110). The later research of Nathan Nunn (2008) from Harvard University vindicated Rodney's assessment of the effects of the slave trade. In his study, Nunn demonstrates that if the slave trade had not occurred, then 72 per cent of the average income gap between Africa and the rest of the world would not exist today and that 99 per cent of the income gap between Africa and other underdeveloped countries would not exist. Compare that to J. D. Fage's assertion in his *Introduction to the History of West Africa* that:

> [T]he volume and distribution of the export slave trade do not suggest that the loss of population and other effects of the export of labour to the Americas need have had universally damaging effects on the development of West Africa. Rather, it is suggested, West African rulers and merchants reacted to the demand with economic reasoning, and used it to strengthen streams of economic and political development that were already current before the Atlantic slave trade began. (Fage 1969: 404)[5]

Rodney debunked Fage's argument in an early article of his based on his PhD thesis, subsequently published in 1970 as *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545–1800* (Rodney 1970):

> In one sense, it is preferable to ignore such rubbish and isolate our youth from its insults; but unfortunately one of the aspects of current African underdevelopment is that the capitalist publishers and bourgeois scholars dominate the scene and help mould opinions the world over. It is for that reason that writing of the type which justifies the trade in slaves has to be exposed as racist bourgeois propaganda, having no connection with reality or logic. It is a question not merely of history but of present day liberation struggle in Africa. (Rodney 1966: 117)

As Rodney showed, the (forced) African contribution to European development involved key sectors that already existed, such as shipping, insurance, establishment of merchant companies, agriculture, technology and the manufacture of machinery. These facts are ignored in Eurocentric accounts of the history of both Africa and Europe. Rodney's work is critical because:

> Rodney contended that since African history had been used as a weapon of domination, keepizng Africans at home and blacks in diaspora, ignorant of the glories of their past, and obscuring their true identity, it was the responsibility of black intellectuals to reverse this trend through critical researches into African history and culture. The result would illuminate the antiquity and wealth of civilisation in Africa, and reverse the psychological effect of Eurocentric propaganda. (Adeleke 2000: 44)

The last part of *HEUA* focuses on the vicious colonisation of the continent.

The legacy of slavery, the devastation of African industry, the contraction of productive technology, the stoppage of much intra-African commerce, the dislocation of African societies and the exploitation of the continent's resources (both human and natural) all nullified Africa's ability for autocentric growth while offering a colossal enhancement to capitalist development in Europe. *HEUA* is truly a pioneering piece of scholarship, with great empirical rigour. It is also a book of incalculable poise and poignancy.

Beyond *HEUA*, as mentioned above, in *The Groundings with my Brothers*, Rodney reflects on his position as an intellectual in relation to the movements for Black Power taking place in the West Indies at the time. The book urged intellectuals to attack the racist distortions of imperialism in the academy, challenge social myths especially prevalent in a multiracial, multiethnic Caribbean and Latin America, and identify with the people. A gathering of his public lectures held by Rodney in Jamaica and at the Congress of Black Writers in Montréal (see Austin 2007), *Groundings* provides a pedagogical agenda for intellectuals struggling to undo the epistemological misrepresentations of imperialism. And like HEUA, *Groundings* can be seen within the ambit of an Africa-centred framework, given that 'grounding' is more than just a method of training, education or knowledge production, but a position that centres Africa and the African experience. *Groundings* established the consequence of what Cedric Robinson (1983) denoted as black radical historiography and compels scholars to contemplate what is and what is not 'acceptable' (and why) in the politicised schemas of academia in which all intellectual work is situated.

In summary, the importance of Rodney's historical method is that it challenges the normative and hegemonic (i.e. racist) portrayal of Africa and Africans and marks a break from such a milieu. Thus, reading *Groundings* today requires that readers question pre-established concepts of African history. *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual* (Rodney 1990), a posthumous collection of his writings in which Rodney discusses his political and intellectual development and deliberates on the role of the African intellectual, is similar within this generalised thrust to critically engage in what might be seen as an African-centred reflexivity. As Mkabela (2005) notes, reflexivity in qualitative research is harmonious with the foundations underpinning this approach, in which scholars are anticipated to be 'centered' or located as an agent rather than as the 'Other' (Mkabela 2005).

Conclusion

Walter Rodney's work sought to centre Africa and Africans in any analysis of the political economy of the continent. His careful historiography was infused with an epistemology that melded Historical Materialism with Africa-centred analysis. Given that there is now a growing awareness of just how Eurocentric political economy and international political economy are (see Hobson 2013; Mantz 2019), this is important for a critical analysis of Africa today. Indeed,

> Rodney is relevant today because his methods still enhance the development of a framework with which we continue to use for making judgments about the conditions facing African people throughout the Diaspora. In hindsight, Rodney's mastery

of the materialist tradition never resulted, as is too often the case, in a denial of racial identity and a role for nationalism in Pan-Africanism. He recognised Black or cultural nationalism as basic elements that stood at the core of African people's search for self-definition, self-determination, and human dignity. (Young 2008: 494)

As Rodney demonstrated in *HEUA*, it is axiomatic that colonial rule disrupted the natural evolutionary course of Africa's socioeconomic and cultural development and thereby disastrously undermined its economies (Rodney 1972: 278). Before imperialism, as Rodney notes, parts of Africa were more developed than parts of Europe. It was the introduction of European rule that led to the decay of African institutions, making them unworkable and twisted: from civilisation to barbarism, as Diop (1991) may have put it.

To reiterate, Rodney's work points out that the colonial experience socially isolated African communities from one another and devastated the continent. In Africa today, countries like Nigeria have been 'independent' since the 1960s, but they continue to have a subordinate and dependent relationship with the West (and, increasingly, with countries such as China). These countries, termed 'post-colonies' by Achille Mbembe (2001), have undergone a process of decolonisation, but colonial powers still exert a powerful influence (Feldner 2018: 516). Given the ongoing conditions of unfettered neoliberalism under globalisation, Rodney's work remains ever relevant (see Canterbury 2001).

Finally, Rodney's work highlighted a key problem for Africans in that an unconscious adoption of Eurocentrism naturalises the Western

experience, thus obfuscating (if not destroying) African agency. This has meant that Africans' 'failure to recognise the roots of such ideas in the European cultural ethos has led [them], willingly or unwillingly, to agree to footnote status in the White man's book. [They] thus find [themselves] relegated to the periphery, the margin, of the European experience' (Mazama 2003: 50). If the current decolonisation movement aims to challenge the supposed universality of Western epistemologies and the problem with their unthinking application to the study of Africa, then it is the contention of this article that African scholars should consider anew Rodney's work and incorporate aspects of his approach in further research.

Notes

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1.   For an overview of Rodney and information about the International Commission of Inquiry into Rodney's murder, see https://www.walterrodneyfoundation.org/.

2.   The statement was initially made during a series of lectures at the University of Sussex, which were transmitted by BBC Television. The lectures then appeared in print in *The Listener* in 1963 and then became a book: Roper 1965. For a discussion of Roper's racism, see Fuglestad 1992.

3.   Note that in 1954 Diop's doctoral thesis on the Egyptian origin of African civilisations at the Université de Paris could not find an examining committee willing to examine it and it was thus rejected.

4.   The controversy around Diop's contribution to the *General History of Africa* (UNESCO)

being a case in point. Diop's work generated such indignation that a special conference was even organised in 1974 in Cairo to debate it. The report, written by Jean Devisse, was published in full in volume two of the *General History*—see Maurel, 2014.

5. Note that this was not some arcane debate, but went to the heart of accurate knowledge creation about Africa: J.D. Fage was later a general editor of UNESCO's *The Cambridge History of Africa vol. 2: From c.500 BC to AD 1050*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Throughout the whole process of putting together the eight-volume collection, African scholars had to struggle to be heard. To be fair to Fage, he did pioneer, alongside Roland Oliver, the discipline of African history in the West, launching the *Journal of African History* in 1960, the first history journal to embrace a multidisciplinary approach to Africa's historical past, particularly the pre-colonial period, with articles by archaeologists, anthropologists and linguists, alongside historians.

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Reclaiming the African Past and Present with Walter Rodney

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On reading a book manuscript submitted for publication by Walter Rodney, the General Manager of Tanzania Publishing House expressed his limitations in judging its quality as a work of history telling. As such, he proposed sending the manuscript to an authority on African history for review. There is nothing surprising about this. It is what publishers do; they send manuscripts under consideration to be reviewed by specialists in the field. What is unusual, audacious, is Walter Rodney's response to the publisher. Part of which reads:

> "The main request you made is that the manuscript should be passed on to an African historian, because you felt yourself unequal to the task of judging its worth as 'serious history'. It is an ideological challenge. Unfortunately, there is scarcely anyone about, who combines my own world-view with data about the African past. My procedure has been to try as hard as possible to let the work be scrutinised by progressive individuals. To pass it on to a serious bourgeois historian would be a sheer waste of time. Under the circumstance, I will have to be the authority for whether a given fact, date, name, etc., is correct. Beyond that, it is a matter of interpretation, logical and internal consistency. The text aims at a stratum of literate Africans in universities, secondary schools, the bureaucracy and the like. They will have to judge whether it makes sense in the light of present conditions in Africa."

"There is scarcely anyone about, who combines my own world-view with data about the African past." Walter Rodney was 29 years of age when he wrote those words. He was 30 when the manuscript in question was published as *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. He was not laying claim to a unique world view or posturing as the most knowledgeable person on Africa's past. He was drawing attention to a rare mixture in the academy, which carried consequences. He knew beforehand the venerated authorities on African history in Britain and the US would respond with hostility. The very title would strike them as heresy, never mind its content, if they got that far. To the extent that these experts featured in Rodney's imagining of an audience for the book, he made it known that his aim was "to upset and not please the Deans of African History in London and Wisconsin."

A core constituent of the world-view Rodney saw as having no home in the corridors of academia, patrolled by those Deans, has a lineage to which he was exposed from an early age. Like Eric Williams before him, and CLR James before Williams, and the author of *Das Kapital* before them all, Rodney saw boundless relationships between the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, and the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production, to borrow the imagery and eloquence of Marx on the subject. Though my preference on the mercantilist aspects of this history is the poetry of the prophet, Bob Marley: "Old pirates yes they rob I,/ sold I to the merchant ships,/ minutes after they took I,/ from the bottomless pit."

Rodney stood on the shoulders of a black radical tradition that challenged hegemonic ideas on the absence of African participation in the making of history, as they explored Africa and Africans glaring presence in the making of the modern world. Significantly, he had the inclination, as well as opportunities, to ask and pursue more questions than they, on social processes within Africa itself. And not remain largely focused on transatlantic connections between Africa, Europe and the Americas. It was in 1963 at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, SOAS, that he fully embarked on these pursuits.

Founded in 1916 to help prepare British officials in the arts of colonial administration, SOAS evolved in the second half of the twentieth century into a leading centre for the study of African history. On the

other side of the Atlantic, major African Studies centres also emerged, at universities such as Wisconsin and Northwestern, as American power scrambled to understand and influence decolonisations in Africa. The founding fathers of these programmes, in which mothers, daughters and others were kept at bay, had their own creation myth, in which they became the founding fathers of the study of Africa, having secured their precincts from Black pioneers.

If Rodney further developed his world-view at SOAS, it was accomplished by navigating the interstices of an intellectual tradition that did not see capitalism as present in Europe's encounter with Africa. In fact, it is not apparent they saw capitalism present anywhere, at anytime.

A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545–1800, the book produced from Rodney's PhD thesis of the same title, contains building blocks that go into the making of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and other expositions by Rodney on the African past and present. Those who think Rodney's hostile reception from the Deans of African history in Britain and the US, began with *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, the book with an awful title and no footnotes, should look closer at their response to *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast* and other scholarship by Rodney on the European slave trade in Africa.

Before Walter Rodney, and that's a phrase which should always appear in any assessment of the study of the European slave trade in Africa, the dominant paradigm in the academy treated the European slave trade in Africa as just another form of commerce, directed by the invisible hand of the market. Africans

and Europeans met in the marketplace and exchanged goods, with benefits accruing to each other in an equal trading relationship. A sampling of how this worked is offered by a proponent, and a SOAS founding father of the study of African history, John Fage. In an article published almost ten years after Rodney's death, in the journal, *Past and Present* (Nov., 1989, No. 125, p. 103), he had yet another swipe at his nemesis, for suggesting there was unequal exchange which engendered underdevelopment in Africa.

Fage writes:

> The Africans might indeed be cheated – for example, being sold muskets which were not very good and which might burst when they were fired. But equally they could cheat the Europeans – for example, by passing off old, sick or mentally handicapped slaves as though they were in the pink of condition. The maxim *caveat emptor* worked both ways.

So, there we have it, Europeans sold Africans dodgy firearms and Africans sold Europeans dodgy human beings. What more balanced a trading relationship does Rodney require.

And it seems the practice of Africans cheating Europeans by offloading human cargo not fit for purpose, continued into Fage's African history kingdom. In the same article, he goes on to present Rodney as a dodgy West Indian historian, finding him driven by Black emotion and ideological affiliations. Quite unlike this Dean of African history, a white British middle class male, able to stand back from a history of empire in which he has no history, devoid of emotion and ideology, and clinically examine the reality of Africa, as he puts it.

For Rodney, the European slave trade created ruptures within African social formations, robbing large areas of its most able-bodied populations, eroding mercantile and manufacturing systems within Africa. In his analysis of contemporary African underdevelopment, he draws a connection from this era into the period of colonial rule. The processes he observed did not begin at the end of the nineteenth century with the Berlin Conference. Africa's internal dynamics at the level of economy and politics had already been compromised by the time the continent was partitioned into areas called Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, all the phoney phones, as Tajudeen Abdul Raheem, was fond of saying.

It is not an easy task for the younger generations before us in Africa to dwell on these legacies of slave trades, slavery, and imperialism, now sanitised as a cuddly toy named globalisation. I speak of a generation living with predatory and contemptuous ruling classes, that sit atop ever widening inequalities, and the accompanying immiseration of the lives of working people. Forget about glossy brochures in the City and Wall Street announcing a rapidly expanding African middle class, getting ready to consume their products.

I speak of a generation that has been gleeful about Covid border closures preventing political elites from travelling abroad for medical care, leaving behind non-existent or depleted health services. A generation that has travelled a new middle passage across deserts and Mediterranean waters, seeking escape to a Europe that awaits them with a nationalism grown malignant once more. A nationalism in which race and empire have long been at the heart of its constructs.

A generation, from Lagos to Harare, Kinshasha to Khartoum, Bamako to too many places, that has been shot at and killed by coercive agents as they begin to transcend fault lines of ethnicity, region, religion, and gender in the course of struggle. Struggles against the policies and manipulations of ravenous local ruling classes as Rodney described them.

Their exasperation with narratives on colonialism is understandable, but not one we should conflate with the founding fathers of African studies and too many of their sponsors and progenitors, who have tended to see colonialism as a modernising project, ruined by Africans who know not of good governance. Exasperation notwithstanding, there is no escaping the use of a rear-view mirror if analysis and action are to travel significant distances, into a future that brings alternatives and not rearrangements.

Walter Rodney had a profound grasp of Africa's integration into an international system of production in which the engines were kept outside the continent, from the sixteenth century into the early years of neoliberalism, the shorthand language we use to characterise a four-decade old multifaceted onslaught on the lives of working people around the globe.

His interests, however, did not end with these structural concerns. With Rodney, they generally ended where they began: with the lives of ordinary working people, how they sought to make their way in the world and how these structural arrangements impeded or assisted. Those interests led him to a penchant for social class analysis, now considered a throwback to a bygone age by many opinion makers, including some classified as progressives.

Frantz Fanon, who gifted us rare insights into the malleability of race in our time, provided important openings for Rodney's thinking on those who inherited office at independence in Africa. Often forgotten is how prescient was Fanon on the trajectory of the embryonic middle classes inheriting state power in Africa. They were barely entering office when he began anticipating tragedy down the road if they took command in the absence of grounding with the people, whose vitality and clamour for change gave substance to independence movements.

The mobilisations for political independence may have been all class affairs, but it was a particular class that held tightly to the reins of power when it came, reaping an inordinate share of social surpluses that filtered through the state. In too many instances there were feeding frenzies around the state, which became key to the consolidation and reproduction of a class with little basis in production, argued Rodney, in texts and speeches that are too little known. The pursuit of their interests, their self-aggrandisements, helped consign them to perpetuating relations of dependence in an untransformed colonial economy. Archie Mafeje, brilliant intellectual from South Africa and colleague of Walter in Dar es Salaam, once put it to me as: elites scrambling to eat the fruits of independence, then eating independence itself as the fruits dried up.

Walter Rodney always acknowledged he was a member of the class he critiqued in Africa and the Caribbean, the class that banned him from Jamaica and thought they would keep him out of his native Guyana by denying him employment. His education propelled him

into their ranks, but he signed up early for Amilcar Cabral's class suicide brigade. The revolutionary leader of Guinea Bissau's independence movement theorised that while having a major contribution to make toward meaningful national liberation, the middle classes could only do so by resisting the interests on their class and finding common cause with the working people to decolonising Africa.

I knew a die-hard cynic on the potential of the postcolonial middle classes in Africa and the Caribbean to effect progressive change, who once quipped that when Cabral spoke of suicide, he had a gun at hand, as leader of an armed insurrection against Portuguese rule. And what he really meant was: you had better commit class suicide or I will commit murder.

There was no gun at Walter's head when in the preface of his 1966 SOAS doctoral thesis, he thanked the irredentist masses of the West Indies for his inspiration to study Africa, and, moreover, for the finances that made possible his education. All that he accomplished in the next fourteen years, from deconstructing the messages on Africa's past and present controlled by the Deans of African Studies, to grounding with wananchi, the people, wherever and whenever he found them, makes pellucid that his preface was no radical chic before radical chic was fully in vogue. He behaved as though the labour of every toiler everywhere contributed to his education. And placing his extraordinary intellectual abilities at their service was no act of charity, as much as a vocation necessary for fashioning another world.

"Rodney's classic study of the impact of European capitalism on the continent of Africa continues to provoke, inspire, and educate – it resonates more than ever before."
Angela Davis
University of California, Santa Cruz

HOW EUROPE UNDERDEVELOPED AFRICA

Walter Rodney

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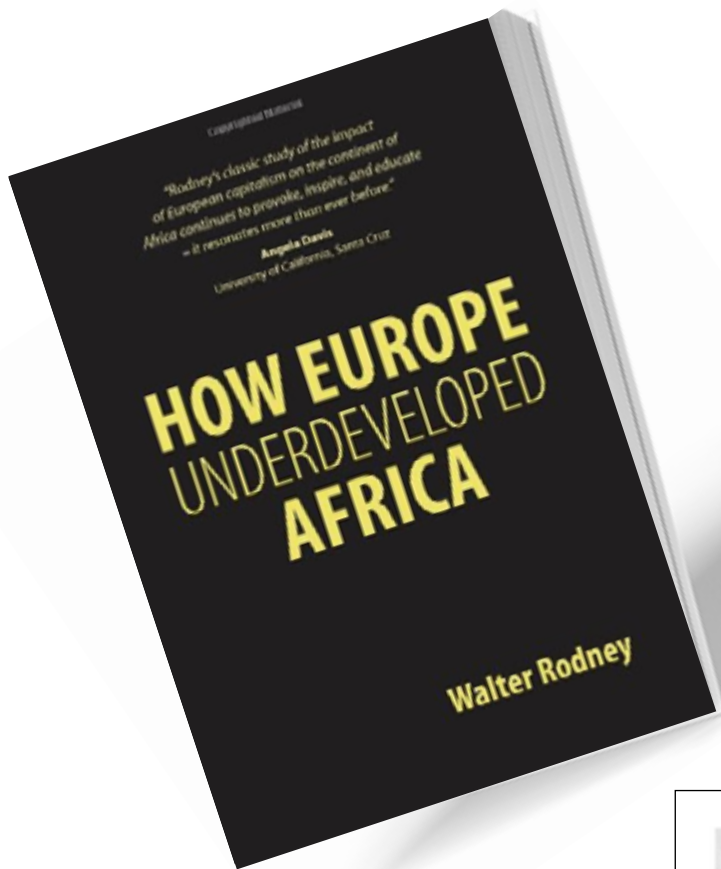
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Cornel West, philosopher, author, critic, activist and prominent member of the Democratic Socialists of America

"Walter Rodney's seminal and revolutionary text has nurtured generations of radical thinkers all over the world and has become prophetic in its scathing relevance for today's militarised globalisation and the new hi-tech corporate scramble for Africa."
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Democracy and Elections in Ghana

The Gilgamesh Dilemma in Counterbalancing Power in Ghana: Constraints, Opportunities and Possibilities

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Over a period of less than ten years, Ghana's apex court, the Supreme Court, has adjudicated over two major electoral disputes—in 2013 and 2021—between the two major political parties in the country, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). These rulings have come on the heels of almost three decades of successful institutional design, which was implemented in 1992 in the form of the Fourth Republic. The Fourth Republic was established to bring stability to the nation, after many bouts of chaotic identity-driven politics, coup d'états, foreign interference and general governance deficit, factors that had reinforced each other and had undermined the dignity of its citizens for decades. Today, although identity politics is still prevalent among certain socio-cultural groups (especially among Asantes in the Ashanti Region and Ewes in the Volta Region, who form up to 25 per cent of eligible voters) and socioeconomic inequality is still high (the Gini Index in 2016 was 43.5 per cent, meaning only about half of the population share all the country's wealth), Ghana's Fourth Republic is still a good example of a stable political regime in Africa. Its greatest weakness, however, lies in the Constitution's emphasis on checks and balances (in counterbalancing power) within the top tiers of government.

In this essay, I argue that this accountability arrangement has nurtured the 'Gilgamesh' problem of a top-level conspiracy that undermines systems of accountability in Ghana. I also critique the notion that Ghana's constitutional arrangement is cast in stone; on the contrary, each moment in the political process offers windows of opportunity to make changes as much as it shuts out other possibilities. In addition, civil society has a role to play in keeping governments accountable, and therefore the interplay between the various arms of government and the citizens must be nurtured constantly.

Until the 1990s, Ghana struggled to sustain political stability, swinging from authoritarian regimes in many forms (such as the pre-1951 colonialism, the one-party state in 1962, military dictatorships in the late 1960s and most of the 1970s and 1980s) to the civilian rule of the First, Second and Third Republics, which were mostly unsuccessful in achieving long-term legitimacy. Each era made trade-offs between social identities, opportunities, incentives and political participation. Its current institutional remedy—the Fourth Republic—follows what Reilly (2001: 7) referred to as centripetalism, since it encourages moderation in social identities in party politics and emphasises a unitary national identity. This is in contrast to, say, Ethiopia's ethnofederalism or Nigeria's federation, which legitimise distinct regional identities (centrifugalism) within the broader federal architecture. Also, unlike South Africa's post-apartheid institutional design, which was deliberate and originated from committee-room compromises, Ghana's Fourth Republic evolved organically from previous political, social and economic catastrophes. Since 1992, the country has had eight relatively peaceful transitions of political power and four changes of government.

So, what is the basis of Ghana's apparently robust design?

Two main drivers of Ghana's political stability have been its ability to successfully tame wide-ranging social identities within party politics (Sefa-Nyarko 2020) and to counterbalance power in response to motivational complexities. It has done this by institutionalising measures that address the tension between self-seeking impulses, principles and altruistic motives (Goodin 1996). According to Robert Goodin (1996: 19), institutions are 'organised pat-

terns of socially constructed norms and roles, and socially prescribed behaviours expected of occupants of those roles', which are simulated to exert power and influence. One of the three principles of a good institution, as proposed by Goodin, is a sensitivity to motivational complexity. As Mahmood Mamdani (1996) argues, the self-seeking impulses of individuals and groups can be resolved through counterbalancing power between government, civil society and ordinary people. Generally, the counterbalancing of power generates an organic system of accountability, and one of its *modus operandi* is the Kantian Publicity Principle—the assumption that only publicly defensible actions are permissible and that people would proudly admit their higher motives, but not their lower motives, in public (see Luban 1996).

The Government of Ghana's Fourth Republic has three arms—executive, legislature and the judiciary—each of which must check the other through legislation, constitutional instruments, judicial protocols and administrative processes (Republic of Ghana 1992). There is also civil society, which has established itself as a formidable force in creating equilibrium in the balance of power. Since civil society took shape in Ghana in the 1970s, it has perpetually exerted pressure on successive governments, from Kutu Acheampong's military-police alliance and throughout Hilla Limann's Third Republic to Jerry Rawlings' two military regimes—the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). Civil society has manifested itself in many forms, such as the media, occupational groups, student's unions, sector-specific groups, issue-based groups, think tanks and academia.

Public demonstrations and protests, such as the 1995 *Kume Preko* outcry against the introduction of Value Added Tax, the 1993 Stolen Verdict campaign and pro-democracy demonstrations that shaped institutional design in the 1970s and 1980s, found legitimacy in the 1992 Constitution (Article 21(1)(d)). The Public Order Act, 1994 (Act 491, amended in 2016) reinforced this constitutional provision, even if some of its clauses, such as the requirement of police clearance for public demonstrations, have been widely criticised due to the risk of abuse by public officials in order to intimidate protesters.

Citizens exercising their individual rights also have agency through their participation in regular presidential, parliamentary and local assembly elections. Furthermore, the downstream distribution of executive and administrative authority through the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462, amended in 2016), legitimised by Articles 240-256 of the 1992 Constitution, has expanded public participation in governance and counterbalanced central authority. Additionally, the inclusion of Article 55 in the Constitution, which forbids the expression of ethnic, religious or sectarian sentiments in party politics, has been widely credited for sustained political stability in Ghana (Arthur 2009; Sefa-Nyarko 2020).

International development agents like the World Bank and IMF, and bilateral agreements, have played a role, too. They have used what Pettit (1996) referred to as 'filters', or conditionalities, to counterbalance power in Ghana—and Africa in general—since the end of colonialism and the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s. When Ghana's economy was in near collapse in the 1980s, it was the conditionalities associated with the IMF's and World Bank's Economic Recovery Programme, and the infamous Structural Adjustment Programme, that complemented pressure from civil society for the country's return to constitutional rule in 1992. However, these conditionalities also compounded the crisis of breakdown and consensus in Africa, especially their capitalist, Eurocentric and often condescending and unrealistic motives (Grindle 2004; Kjær 2014; Mkandawire 2010).

But Ghana's 'institutional design' also reinforces power imbalances

Undoubtedly, as philosophised by Thomas Hobbes, some central authority is required in the architecture of the state (the Leviathan) to ensure co-ordination, leadership and the provision of public goods and services. Ghana has such authority and associated legitimacy set up in its three arms of government. But, left unchecked, the state often abuses its power to extract value from society in ways that exploit and undermine individual liberties. So who determines the level and scope of checks and balances, and how should these be verified?

An outcome in the ancient Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (c. 1800 BCE) well describes the dilemma of the current power imbalance in Ghana. In this story, the new hero, Enkidu, who is created by the sky god, Anu, in response to the supplications of the people of the city of Uruk to counter the tyranny of King Gilgamesh, eventually sides with Gilgamesh. They combine forces to topple the gods and further undermine the interests of the people. In other words, checks and balances that originate from within the state (at the top) are not enough to protect the interests of society (at

the bottom). Accountability must be claimed by society because the state will not willingly offer it, and even if it does, it is rarely in the interest of society.

Ghana's constitutional provisions of checks and balances are only as good as civil society and other non-state actors are active, enduring and vigilant. Although Ghana has a vibrant civil society, a lot more needs to be done because the tension between state and society engenders constant tussle. The Gilgamesh outcome prevails in Ghana's Fourth Republic because the three arms of government can work together to undermine public interest, and often have done so. Here are some examples.

First, the executive and legislature conspired to reduce the potency of the Right to Information Law, 2019 (Act 989) in exerting transparency and social accountability. The genesis of the RTI law was the inability of the Institute of Economic Affairs, a private entity, to access exchange rate data from the Bank of Ghana in the late 1990s. This moved it to sponsor the draft of the RTI bill for Parliament's consideration (CHRI 2019). This was an attempt by a non-state actor to enforce the operationalisation of the freedom of information provision of Article 21(1)(f) of the 1992 Constitution. The legislature and the executive received the bill in good faith in the early 2000s. However, by the time they passed it into law in 2019, thirteen exemption clauses had been inserted (Sections 5-17) that rendered the law toothless in extracting relevant public information for social accountability. Parliamentary and executive privileges, public safety and national security were some of the reasons cited for these exemptions. Even international actors appeared to be part of this conspiracy. For

instance, Section 8(1)(d)(i-ii) of the law disallows the disclosure of information relating to international transactions made by the state. According to this exemption, it is illegal to:

> reveal information communicated in confidence by a public institution to (i) another public institution in another country or another government, or (ii) an international organisation or a body of that organisation (Republic of Ghana 2019)

Even though civil society initiated the RTI process with specific social accountability interests in mind, the legislature and executive took almost two decades to pass it into law, and by the time this was done, the substance of the document had been watered down, making it an ineffective tool to tackle corruption in public spaces. Obviously, the government was incapable of checking itself.

Second, the constitutional requirement of Article 78 that mandates the president to appoint the majority of ministers of state from among members of Parliament (MPs) adds to the Gilgamesh problem. This is because the executive and the legislature often conspire to grease each others' palms, so to speak. Parliamentarians act to please the executive, in order to get ministerial appointments, and the executive is almost certain that Parliament will look the other way when it makes submissions to it. In almost all cases, budgets, bills and contracts that the executive submits to Parliament receive parliamentary approval, often with minor or no revisions.

For instance, in 2020 the infamous[1] Agyapa Minerals Royalties Investment Agreement, which was found to be capable of perpetually robbing the state[2] of its mineral re-

sources, received parliamentary approval without a hint of opposition from MPs. It was only when civil society rang the alarm about the inherent financial loss that would accrue to the state that the executive eventually abrogated the deal, which was meant to take its legitimacy from the Minerals Income Investment Fund, 2018 (Act 978). The deal had slipped through Parliament unopposed because of the close link between the two arms of government and legitimised opacity in some financial transactions of state (Kuditchar 2021). Even when the Auditor General and the Special Prosecutor attempted to intervene in matters of public interest in 2020, the former was hunted down and forced to go on leave,[3] and the latter resigned out of sustained frustration.[4]

The deal also nearly succeeded because, throughout the period of the Fourth Republic, the ruling parties often had the majority of MPs to do government's bidding. However, this majoritarian exercise of power could change. In January 2021, the 8th Parliament was sworn into office after neither the ruling NPP nor the main opposition party, the NDC, had a clear parliamentary majority–each had 137 of the 275 seats. But this expectation is too ambitious precisely because of the manifestation of the Gilgamesh problem.

The equal number of ruling and opposition MPs in Parliament ordinarily should be a positive sign for enhanced checks and balances in Ghana, for two reasons. One, citizen voters have become more discerning over time and have moved on from the usual ideological fixations to issue-based political decision-making, and now vote for presidential and parliamentary candidates from different political parties in one election. This political decision-making is termed

'skirt and blouse' in local parlance. It signals to politicians that elections are votes of confidence and not a mere census of political affiliation. Two, in the new Parliament, it will be harder for the executive to get its laws, budgets and programmes rubber-stamped, since it will have to convince ruling and opposition MPs about the socio-economic value of its programmes.

However, there are flaws in each of these two arguments.

First, voting patterns among almost a quarter of the voting population (Asantes in the Ashanti Region and Ewes in the Volta Region) have not changed since 1992, despite the provisions of Article 55. The votes gained by the NPP in the Asante Region since 1992 continue to increase—from 61 per cent (1992) to 66 per cent (1996), 75 per cent (2000), 75 per cent (2004), 72 per cent (2008), 76 per cent (2016) and 73 per cent (2020)—while in the Volta Region the NPP received an average of only 11 per cent over the same period. Conversely, the NDC claimed an average of 87 per cent of votes in the Volta Region between 1992 and 2020, and managed only 27 per cent on average in the Asante Region (Sefa-Nyarko 2020). In the 2020 election, classified as a pacesetter due to informed political decision-making, the NDC maintained its lead in the Volta Region with 85 per cent of votes, while the NPP got 15 per cent in that region (Electoral Commission Ghana 2020). Similar patterns of unflinching support have been recorded in the three northern regions and among some Akan groups, although voters in the cosmopolitan national capital, the Greater Accra Region, have remained the arbiters of change throughout the Fourth Republic. This suggests that institutional design, even in its most effective form, cannot displace informal arrangements, and Article 55 has been only partially successful in taming sociocultural identities in party politics.

Second, any top-down counter-balancing arrangement is counter-productive without the sustained involvement of ordinary citizens. MPs in the Fourth Republic have been found to easily agree on things that are of interest to them, like salary and bonus adjustments, which are often not aligned with wider society's interests. They have also been found to approve certain laws and contracts that have not stood up to public criticism, such as the Right to Information Law and Agyapa Minerals Royalty Investment Agreement. It is therefore foolhardy to believe that, on their own, MPs would be able to improve checks and balances. At best, governing and opposition MPs might collaborate to achieve goals other than those of public interest. At worst, they are likely to bicker, stalling government business and undermining the ruling government programmes, just as the Parliament of the Third Republic did under the Hilla Limann government. Rawlings' second coup d'état eventually toppled that government on the grounds that it was incompetent in meeting the needs of the people. Similarly, not working in the public interest could potentially spell doom for the Fourth Republic. Civil society ought to be consistent in showing interest in the affairs of the state, and explore legitimate means of contributing to public discussions, even as the party numbers in Parliament have the potential to strengthen collaboration among MPs or bring the country to a standstill.

The judiciary has not been unblemished either. The 2015 Anas Aremyaw Anas' exposé showed that the judiciary, just like all other arms of government in Ghana, cannot behave without the critical eyes of society on it. In this scandal, judges and lawyers were found to have conspired against unsuspecting victims on trial, taking bribes and aborting justice (Sefa-Nyarko 2015). Judicial reforms followed, which appear to be far reaching, but it cannot be assumed that they will institute greater fairness since the justice system is shielded and its processes are still shrouded in secrecy. There is no doubt that the judiciary still enjoys some legitimacy, as evidenced in the 2021 election arbitration between the NPP and the NDC at the Supreme Court. But this legitimacy is part of a process that must constantly be monitored. It is not an end in itself.

Implications

The formal structures of state are only effective and responsive to society if society itself is proactive in purposefully engaging with the state. Hayek (1989) has been critical of the state's capacity to be magnanimous and disciplined, which is true only if society fails to monitor, engage, disagree, contest and co-operate with the state when necessary (Acemoglu and Robinson 2019). Such collaboration between the state and society will not be delivered on a silver platter, as the state is designed to dominate society, and will do so if not restrained by society with focus and purpose. Ghana's institutional design has been largely successful because of the interaction between the state and society. But this status is not static, it has flaws, and as a work in progress it requires consistent discourse, appraisal and reform. As seen in this essay, an important driver of such reforms and self-reflection is civil society. But civil society itself is problematic.

The concept of civil society seems self-explanatory, as an autonomous and objective body that represents the interest of a constituency and functions independently of the state to exert principles of democracy, representation and accountability (Botchway 2018; Hutchful 1995). This is what Kasfir (1998: 1) referred to as the 'conventional view of civil society' (see also Whitfield 2003: 381). While this is true, it is a simplistic understanding of civil society, and ignores the complexities of engagements within itself and interactions with governments, donors, international development agencies and organised social groups in the pursuit of subjective interests.

The shape, form and process of civil society engagement in Ghana's state-building has evolved dramatically since the late colonial era. The modern nation emerged as an uncoordinated coalition of farmers, traders, school-leavers and an educated class negotiated with colonial authorities in the 1920s and 1930s. By the middle of the twentieth century, it had become a pawn in the hands of new African political leaders advancing a nationalist agenda. The debilitating socioeconomic conditions of the 1970s and the PNDC government's acceptance of the World Bank's Economic Recovery Programmes in the 1980s were catalysts for civil society to mobilise as non-state actors in various forms. In the Fourth Republic (post-1992), civil society has had a more stable and predictable role in political participation and governance than in previous epochs (Botchway 2018; Gyimah-Boadi 1991).

Nevertheless, the idea and practice of civil society are still in flux, and it would be naïve to as-sume that civil society organisations (occupational and functional groups) and civil society institutions (tertiary institutions, the mass media, faith-based organisations and issue-based advocacy groups) are a flawless collection of people and institutions who have an egalitarian agenda. Yet, without civil society and citizens in general, counterbalancing power is only a textbook exercise.

While the Gilgamesh threat remains in Ghana, civil society is the best catalyst for counterbalancing power, despite its shortcomings. The greatest strength of civil society lies in its decentralising tendencies. The media, for instance, ought to continue sharing information and engaging with public officials at all levels—community, district, regional, national and international. A similar strategy of society-wide advocacy, information-sharing and social accountability must be employed by all other non-state actors, lest the Gilgamesh problem infest their ranks too.

Notes

1. https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/agyapa-royalties-deal-to-go-back-to-parliament.html

2. https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/ghana-what-is-going-on-with-the-controversial-agyapa-gold-royalties-deal

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Ghana's Democracy and the 2020 General Election: Signs of a Fading Promise?

Introduction

Ghana's 2020 general election was unique because, for the first time ever, the presidential election involved a former President who had just lost power. Fresh from a thumping defeat in 2016, John Dramani Mahama stood again on the National Democratic Congress (NDC) presidential ticket.[1] Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) had beaten him for the presidency by an im-

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pressive 984,570 votes – five times the total number of votes cast for the other five candidates.

For some close watchers of Ghana's burgeoning democracy, the re-emergence of Mahama was a

convincing sign of Ghana's sterling democratic credentials because the 1992 Constitution was defining the rules of the political game (Lenhardt et al. 2015). In that sense, then, the 2020 election was part of the fairy tale run of Ghana's relative electoral good fortune that had seen three successive successful peaceful changes of power between the two dominant parties. While there had been no cudgels, loss of life, or loss of property in these changes of power between the NDC and the NPP, any eupho-

ria expressed over the health of Ghana's democracy may have been premature.

The Policy Pathology: Democracy without Development

The political processes that led to the 1992 Constitution being adopted and coming into force on 7 January 1993 had an unmistakably material rationale (Ninsin 1998). Given that Ghana had been through a long period of political and economic turmoil after 1966, this rationale makes sense. The 1992 Constitution was expected to provide the legal, moral and political base for a system of liberal democratic governance that would bring long-awaited prosperity to Ghana. Jerry Rawlings' campaign for the presidency in 1992 had emphasised just that – stability and consolidation. In other words, Rawlings was telling Ghanaians that voting for him meant that constitutional rule would further deepen the putative stability his military rule had wrought and promote even more economic gains. It thus can be argued that the 2016 general election was an unofficial referendum on the fruits of Ghana's democracy in its twenty-third year.

was mixed.[2] Indeed, over the period 2000–2020, the country's economy has not been able to record the consistent double digit growth rates seen in certain Asian Tiger economies and touted by neoclassical economics as the necessary basis for economic transformation and development. This state of affairs rankles because the John Atta Mills and Mahama administrations ran an economy in which oil had become a key part of Ghana's exports; a valuable commodity that was expected to deliver prosperity (Fosu 2017).

The lack of prosperity was a central pillar of 2016 general election campaigns. It is not surprising therefore that the NPP ran a campaign in which Mahama was described as an incompetent leader presiding over a corrupt administration and thus incapable of delivering the economic and social *nirvana* that Ghana so desperately deserved and desired. This toxic combination of corruption and incompetence (Pulse 2016) was not just in local view. At the 2014 World Cup football tournament in Brazil, in full view of the world, the Ghana Football Association delivered US$3million in cash to the national football team, the Black Stars (BBC Sport 2014).

Addo could deliver the long-awaited fruits of democracy. The election results showed that the overwhelming majority of Ghanaians considered Akufo-Addo to be the competent and incorruptible candidate for the task at hand (see Emmanuel 2015).

The 2020 Election and the Persistence of the Policy Pathology

Akufo-Addo's resounding victory in the 2016 polls meant he had been given one of the firmest mandates ever in the country's contemporary political history and set this West African nation on a firm and robust path to answering what Ghanaian academic Ninsin (2019) has described as the "welfare" question.[3] However, by the time the 2020 elections were held, the voters' view of which candidate was corrupt and incompetent had switched.

The failure of the Akufo-Addo team to properly credit a section of his inaugural speech set tongues wagging about incompetence, something that seemed to hang about for the entire four years he was President, despite his undertaking that the NPP had the men and the women that would give Ghanaians a decent standard of living (Akufo-Addo 2015).

His administration was also accused of corruption. Two scandals stand out – the Power Distribution Service (PDS) scandal (Mallory 2019), and the Agyapa Gold Royalties scandal (Amin 2020). Claims were made in both cases that prominent Ghanaians with family and friendship ties to Akufo-Addo had tried to use these connections to unfairly gain control of the strategic sectors of power and minerals at the expense of the larger interests of Ghana.

Figure 1: Ghana's Economic Performance in the first two decades of the 21st century
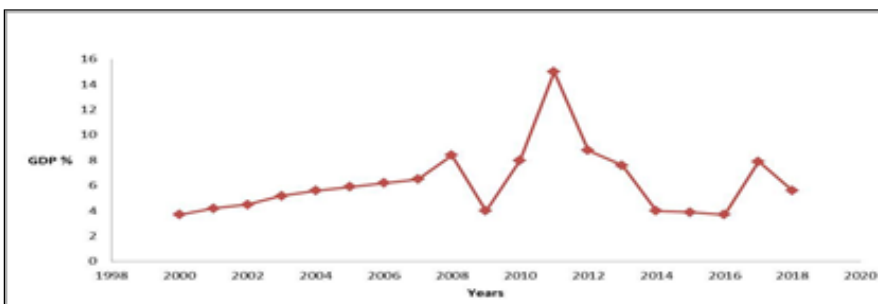
Source: Amoah (2020)

As Figure 1 shows, Ghana's economic performance in the second decade of the twenty-first century

If the 2016 election is seen as a kind of referendum, the question was whether Mahama or Akufo-

Akufo-Addo fought back during his 2020 campaign by touting some of his government's flagship policy changes, particularly the Free Senior High School policy.[4] By July 2020, GH¢3.2 billion (over US$5billion) had been spent on implementation on the SHS, the largest investment in a new policy introduced by the NPP government. The NDC under Mahama ran a campaign dubbed "The Rescue Mission". The 2020 NDC campaign manifesto sought to position the party as more welfare-orientated than the NPP, underscoring how important material security imperatives had become for Ghana's elections. The NDC responded to the NPP's education policy boast by raising the education stakes. It promised that, if it became the next administration, 50 per cent of tertiary-level study fees would be absorbed by government.

The 2020 election results vividly showed the waning patience of Ghanaian voters towards both parties. The NPP lost its 63-seat majority in the Ghanaian Parliament and the party was left with only one seat more than the NDC. This created the Fourth Republic's first hung parliament. Akufo-Addo received 467,165 fewer votes than in 2016, bringing his winning margin down to 517,405 votes. While there was no doubt that Ghanaian voters chose the NPP candidate, it did not give the party its much-needed control of the legislature.

Tackling the Sources of the Policy Pathology

It is not difficult to work out why Ghana's democratic promise is failing to materialise, especially with respect to meeting the legion welfare needs of the country's people. The pervasive party system that has come to control every facet of Ghanaian life easily comes up for critique.

Kwame Ninsin has drawn attention to what I describe as the 'party system perversion' encapsulated in Ghana's NPP-NDC party duopoly:

> since the 1992 Constitution came into force, the electoral system of winner-takes-all has provided a powerful impetus for one of the two major political parties – the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to control state power, entrench themselves in the architecture of governance of the country, and appropriate associated material resources to enhance their economic and social status (Ninsin 2018: 61).

To draw an analogy from anatomy, the party is the heart which, working through capillaries, veins and arteries (membership and structures from the regional to the unit level), seeks to realise the material, political, social and psychological interests of its members even to the detriment of the Ghanaian state. Almost reminiscent of the Nkrumah era, Ghana's two dominant parties   become supreme once in power; a supremacy that the 1992 Constitution has counter-intuitively made possible. Ninsin (2018: 61) puts it well: 'once in power the victorious political party exercises the panoply of executive and legislative powers available under the constitution to control the full range of existing economic, political and social institutions'.

Winning power by any means necessary, fair or foul, seems to have become the *raison d'etre* for Ghana's dominant parties for, in seizing the political kingdom, all things are added onto the party. As a consequence, these parties have become election-winning machines that are pump-primed every four years to win power using a mind-boggling amount of human and financial re-

sources beyond what the Ghanaian state has at its disposal. In other words, winning power has become an instrument for party members to achieve their material and other goals. The party membership card is the ticket for one's well-being. It seems that merely bearing Ghanaian citizenship is not enough. Ironically, it is the current democratic order that has made all this possible.

The upshot of all this is a morbid partisanship which makes enemies of members of opposing political parties and non-party card-bearing citizens alike. This partisanship trumps the patriotism which has become too costly to reveal, let alone actively practice. What all of this has done is to spawn an insidious socio-political atmosphere of deep mistrust, thick insularity, and manic self-seeking in which gathering the best talents and minds for national reconstruction has become a secondary consideration if contemplated at all.

This state of affairs was on display quite graphically on the dawn of 7 January 2021 when members of the newly elected 8th Ghanaian Parliament could not agree on which group should sit on the right of the Speaker and which on the left. It must be added here that, in 2012 and again in 2020, the Supreme Court of Ghana has been called upon to resolve election disputes.[5] In both cases, the parties who petitioned the courts (the NPP in 2012 and the NDC in 2020) found fault with the Electoral Commission of Ghana; a curious case of parties mistrusting the Commission only when they lose. What this hints at is whether key national institutions are autonomous and free from the manipulation and control of those who wield political power.

As the 2024 election approaches, the issues discussed in this paper and the ways they impinge on the viability of Ghana's democratic journey, especially in respect of its material deliverables, cannot be wished away. Many fundamental questions need to be answered. Can Ghana's dominant parties move away from their obsession with winning power and become vehicles for responding to Ghana's existential problems? Will merit become the foremost consideration for appointment to the highest strategic positions of state instead of party membership and loyalty? Will the perception that party members can get away with lawlessness be demonstrably dealt with? These are some of the pressing questions that need to be addressed if Ghana's democracy is to live up to its normative and material promise. Time will tell.

Notes

1. This was the first time an incumbent president seeking a second term in the Fourth Republic had been defeated, and this happened in the first round of voting. For more on the continuities and departures of contemporary Ghanaian elections see the insightful analysis by Frempong (2019).

2. In this decade Ghanaian democracy could be arguably described as fairly consolidated. In 2016 the 7th Parliament was in place under the Fourth Republic and the presidency had been occupied by five people.

3. See also Ninsin 2018.

4. Through this policy, the Government of Ghana took up the issue of fees for senior secondary education, something that had not been tackled prior to 2016.

5. At the time of writing, the Supreme Court of Ghana had set 4th March, 2021 as the date for it to hand down its judgment on the petition challenging the election of Akufo-Addo in the 2020 election.

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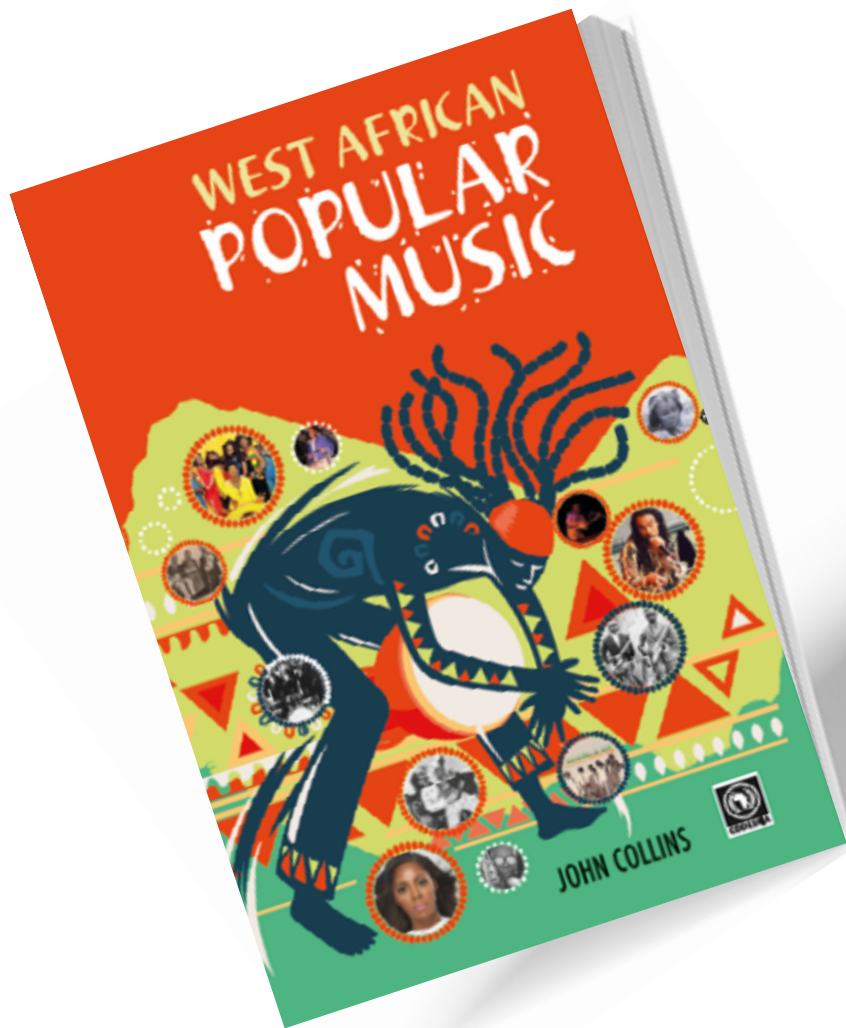
This textbook for African and other college students consists of four sections that deal firstly with the emergence of West African popular music from the 19th century and then its 20th century development in Anglophone and Francophone West Africa. The book examines West African popular music in its historical and social context and as such covers its relationship with traditional African resources, as well as the impact on it of the music and entertainment of the Black Americas. It also deals with the role of popular performance (both music and drama) in the independence struggle, in fashioning national and Pan-African identities and as a medium of social protest and political commentary. Other areas touched upon is the relation of West African popular music to urbanization, generational identity, changing gender roles and globalisation.

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Financing Development and Democracy in Africa

The AfDB and its Origins of Financing Development in Africa: Locating Money Finance within Industrial Policy

Introduction

The recent crisis at the African Development Bank (AfDB) may be alluded as characteristic of the deficient institutional environment on the continent. But such crises are not unique to the AfDB. A crisis of transparency has in the past arisen at the European Investment Bank, with objections raised by local communities and international organisations around some of its projects. However, it is remarkable that the quest for transparency at the AfDB was externally driven and unflinchingly pitched against internal interests, calling to question the sovereignty of the bank to pursue domestic interests within a constellation of external influences. Undoubtedly, such externally motivated drive for transparency does reinforce a pattern of claims of an institutional deficiency on the African continent and, allegedly explanatory for its underdevelopment, while occasionally utilised to impose policies that undermine development, as demonstrated in the Structural Adjustment Programmes.

Within the AfDB itself, such contestation is not new but has been at its heart, since inception in 1964. In his biography, former Nigerian President, Shehu Shagari noted, that the initial condition which the Nigerian government, as the major

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shareholder, attached to funding the Bank was that 'under no condition should the bank's equity be offered to non-Africans in the future', citing the 'liberation of Africa from European economic domination and exploitation' as motivation for this conditionality. However, the circumstances became unsustainable by 1981 owing to financing constraint, which led 'the bank to seek its Board of Governors approval of non-African equity participation'. Nigeria, which initially vetoed the proposition for two years, succumbed to pressure from the other African governments, including the then President of the Bank, Mr. Mogamba of Zambia threatening to resign should Nigeria continue to maintain its position (Shagari 2001, 372). Today, the bank's authorised capital is held by 81 member countries, consisting of 54 African countries with 60 per cent shareholding and 27 non-African countries with 40 per cent shareholding.

The foregoing contextualises historically the so-called crisis of transparency, as it is the objective of the rest of this article to further

broaden the discussion. Therefore, it unnerves a visceral of concerns around the role and significance of the bank for the future of the continent, while occasioning for a debate around the extent to which it is positioned for necessary bolder steps to innovatively finance development in Africa. Such debate allows for questioning the sufficiency of the current approach to financing development in Africa while exploring the possibility of an alternative approach by the AfDB and other continental financial institutions, extant or imminent. We argue that at the core of the crisis at the AfDB is Africa's dependence on the international community to finance its development. Development on the continent is here preferably located in the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU), as a most robust aspiration, built on a Pan African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

It may be necessary to further analyse the extent to which foreign interests may foster any re-alignment of the Bank's financing to meet Africa's development demands, not least where bolder initiatives may be proposed. The recent merger of the UK's Department for International Development (DfiD) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), which aims to link

aid to foreign policy objectives is a case in point for countries' interests at the heart of foreign investments. Recipient countries must therefore navigate resulting underlying challenges in the politics of international investments.

Insufficient financing strategy of the AfDB

The AfDB is made up of 3 constituent institutions: The African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Development Fund (ADF) and The Nigerian Trust Fund (NTF). Its latest annual report shows that it's High 5 priorities have delivered electricity to 16 million people; provided 70 million people with food security through boosting agricultural technology; provided access to finance to 9 million people through private sector investee companies; improved access to transport services to 55 million people; and access to water and sanitation for 31 million people. Also, following the approval of the bank's shareholders to raise and additional capital of $115 in October 2019, the bank's capital more than doubled to a total of $208 billion (AfDB 2019). The bank called this feat a remarkable show of confidence on its leadership as it maintained a AAA rating from the four leading international rating agencies – Standard's and Poor's, Fitch, Moody's and Japan Credit Rating Agency – a reflection of its prudent financial management amongst other signals. But such confidence has been short-lived, called to question barely 3 months later.

Despite relying on foreign capital from 81 countries, the AfDB is still massively underfunded. About 90 per cent of its capital is callable (i.e. unpaid). This is notably not the case in other development banks. Such an arrangement is in part, due

to African countries being unable to fully fund their shareholding, but also a reflection of poor creditors' commitments to financing, perhaps due to a governance structure that favours borrowing countries. A critical point of departure is to locate the so-called crisis of transparency within this inability of African countries to finance their development, owing to their low-income levels. We draw insight from the political settlements' literature, in which the functioning of institutions parallels the distribution of power in a society, itself deriving from existing income level or economic structure (Khan 2012). By implication, economic structures precede institutions (Reinert 2007) and the functioning of these institutions depends on the political settlement or existing social order. Here, existing relative power structure, domestic or external, need to be settled for institutions to function effectively. But the income for such settlement is largely deficient in Africa. As such, a more demanding issue than the crisis of transparency in the AfDB is to be located in its massive lack of income and underfunding of the bank leading to over-reliance on foreign capital.

Clearly, greater commitment is required from African leaders and institutions to achieve the original mandate of the newly independent African states of the 1960s; to finance development through more sustainable means than foreign capital. The bank comes short of this mandate. Not only is the AfDB underfunded and unable to meet the financing requirement of the continent, it is also more specifically incapable of responding to the call of the AU to lead the Agenda 2063. The AU Commission has made it clear that its Agenda 2063 needs to be supported by the AfDB, and the New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD), Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Among the flagship programmes in its First Ten Year Implementation Plan are the establishment of an integrated high-speed train network, structural transformation of its commodity-based production and integration into higher levels of the GVC, the implementation of the GrandIngaDam power project, the Pan-African e-Network, a single air transport market, a common African passport, the establishment of African financial institutions and the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) amongst others.

The AfCFTA is considered the most pursued and aims to significantly increase intra-African trade while strengthening the continent's voice and policy space within global trade negotiations. Despite aims to establish African financial institutions for accelerating integration and socio-economic development in the Agenda 2063, there is currently lack of a detailed plan to achieve this, how such financial institutions would emerge or even funded. Since these proposed financial institutions have not emerged, not least in the timeframes within which they were planned, the onus rests on the AfDB to lead on financing the Agenda 2063.

The need for money financing development in Africa

Increasingly, it is clear that the current model of financing development for Africa is insufficient to transform it structurally. But the sustainability of private debt and its impact on fiscal sustainability of Low Income and Developing Countries (LIDC) is found to be increasingly challenged by fluctuations in global financial mar-

kets. Despite low borrowing cost in global financial markets, low-income countries still borrow at relatively higher average interest rates of more than 7 per cent and as high as 10.75 per cent, with refinancing needs projected to rise by 2024 in addition to the difficulties in restructuring such debt (Bonizzi et al. 2019). Deteriorating conditions in global liquidity such as the surge in borrowing cost in the face of the current Covid-19 crisis have further exacerbated borrowing conditions. As such, African countries must look inwards for more sustainable debt options, instead of the impromptu constituting of special envoys to supplicate external benevolence with each crisis.

Therefore, the need for the AfDB and other proposed continental financial institutions to money finance, through issuing their own debt domestically, cannot be overemphasised. There remains the question of whether the AfDB is well placed to lead the call for money financing on the continent, given its systematic role as development bank or whether another financial institution or a Central Bank ought to pursue this initiative. Nevertheless, there is growing consensus that a currency-issuing country can raise as much debt as possible in its currency, as long as it has its central bank and sets interest rates (monetary policy) and does not issue debt in foreign currency (Mitchell et al. 2019). While there is largely, consensus on the foregoing for closed economies, open economies face a Balance of Payments (BOP) constraint and oftentimes the willingness to hold domestic securities like central bank bonds (Vernengo et al. 2019; Bonizzi et al. 2020), including underdevelopment of domestic capital markets. The import-dependent economic structures of African countries, amidst these constraints, mean money financing could lead to higher external debt.

However, money financing can be pursued for real investment located within strategically crafted industrial policy. The cost of domestic input including wages can be paid for through money finance. The central bank could then sterilise by selling bills to manage the exchange rate. This frees up more capital for imports in the short-term, while aiming to transform the structures of these economies in the long-term. In addition, the callable capital which already exists at the AfDB – in which there is a huge unrealised margin for borrowing simply guaranteed by sovereign states – can be used to money finance through issuing debt domestically. In this case, the callable capital for African countries can be realised while also giving room to the non-African shareholders to increase their capital, as such, increasing the total paid-up capital of the bank. What this means is that money financing can be pursued to a measured extent in Africa, but would require more strategic forward-thinking from Africa's financial institutions.

AfCFTA and the Surplus Recycling Mechanism

Achieving the potential of the AfCFTA further underlines the need for alternative financing approach to development in Africa. To begin, the AfCFTA ought to be better teased out beyond trade agreements, to concrete integration of economic and productive structures of its member countries, to avoid the uneven development that could emerge. As such, instead of funding pockets of country projects, the AfDB could focus on projects that cut across countries like the Desert to Power Program for solar projects in the Sahel signed in May 2018, promoting greater integration of production on the continent. One only needs to look at the European Union to comprehend the looming spatial deficit, where periphery economies are seen as liability to the core, with emergent political backlash. A worse situation is likely to emerge on the African continent with a union on the back of different levels of competitiveness and production capabilities. So-called xenophobic attacks in South Africa are an indication. Within a trade area, the problem of adjusting external surplus and deficit is bound to emerge, as obtains in any open economy, irrespective of whether it is facilitated via single or multicurrency.

Therefore, a concrete arrangement ought to be in place to correct the inflationary impact of current account deficit and deflationary impact of current account surplus that would emerge between African countries when the FTA is operational. One proposal for how the continent may address this problem is through a central clearing system, as put forward by Keynes in 1941, in what he called a Surplus Recycling Mechanism (SRM). Here, the burden of adjustment would be on the countries with a trade surplus to fund countries with deficit based on the simple banking principle in order to manage the noninflationary growth of the continent (Krimpas 2010). This fiscal approach to financing countries' surplus and deficits promises to be lower than the market cost.

For this type of current account adjustment to be feasible, a central monetary union may be necessary, which may fall outside the purview of the AfDB. However, the foregoing depicts what is necessary to en-

sure the AfCFTA works effectively for member countries. At the same time, it prompts the AfDB to reinvent its role to facilitate the emergence of a monetary union while setting the financing trend on what is possible for the AfCFTA. Another option is for the AfDB to reinvent itself into a lender of first resort, as such a fiscal authority on commercial – through directing external surpluses in one country into productive profit-yielding investment in another – rather than distributional criteria (see Krimpas 2010).

Matters arising

Statements cautioning debt on the basis of output on the continent have been too simplistic, as can be recently credited to the World Bank and IMF. Oftentimes, these statements ignore the complexity of sovereign debt, its source, the direction of funding and potential long-term returns. The issuance of debt is about fiscal policy, as such the constraints are not monetary but real. The problem only arises where the supply of money is out of sync with the supply capacity of the economy. But where there is large unused capacity or unemployment in the economy, there is scope for money financing via a Central Bank.

This subject has gathered significant interest in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Such growing consensus endorses fiscal deficit as opposed to concerns around rising debt levels, growing budget deficit and cost of servicing debt, as demand has to be stimulated during downturns, in line with Keynesian countercyclical fiscal policy. As such, governments in high-income economies have raised an unprecedented scale of debt to sustain firms and households, notably without a priori matching out-

put or repayment capacity to debt. The evidence that it is possible for governments to spend more than it generates in taxes or earns at any given time, is an auspicious start to the conversation.

Perhaps, African countries can take a cue by raising debt domestically to tackle the output and infrastructural gap for structural transformation on the continent. Even inflation causing wealth effect is curtailed through financing real investment, while at the same time guaranteeing exports in the long-run. Raising debt for infrastructure spending – transport, power, communication, etc – has a high multiplier effect on demand. It increases demand, creates jobs and productive capability. Fiscal spending (and credit) increase the size of the multiplier, and the persistently high growth rate in African countries over the last 20 years indicates a high multiplier effect from fiscal spending. As such, the multiplier on deficit money financing would be significantly high enough to cushion the effect of a future debt burden. Indeed, most African countries import even the most basic consumables, in which case the de-localisation of cheap consumer goods from the continent will necessarily be part of any country's or continent-wide industrial policy.

The call for money financing is reinforced by the fact that public debt through the capital market has the tendency to crowd out private investment. With a fixed exchange rate, money financing will lead to higher interest rates and can potentially crowd out the private sector. On the other hand, with a flexible exchange, money financing may lead to a depreciation of the exchange rate and raise the cost of key imported capital goods, which can also induce a crowding out.

While a carefully managed float (as described above) and inflation-induced tax increase is recommended, the direction of money financing towards real investment and infrastructure has the potential to minimise these negative effects.

The foregoing shows that it is more difficult for governments that operate a fixed exchange rate and surrender their currency sovereignty to another to money finance, as characteristic of Francophone African countries. This allows for touching upon the political elements of the level of money finance necessary for development, considered in some cases to be as deterministic of outcomes as much as the economic fundamentals discussed above. The negative effects of money finance can be curtailed with political will, and strategic international cooperation for developing countries. In the same vein, history shows that debt driven hyperinflation is more a function of politics, domestic and external, than perceived market forces.

Therefore, regional and political contestation such as currently within the AfDB could deter efforts by Africa's financial institutions from addressing more pressing problems of development. Too many interests with voting rights can undermine decision-making processes, especially where significant risks are involved. Having to seek external approval makes it near impossible to achieve bold initiatives, such as recommended here. With already stringent lending conditionality to African countries, representative Central Bank governors are expected to think these proposals too ambitious, more so in Africa where there is no deficit of cautionary tales deriving from the fragility of its economic structure. So, embedded institu-

tional structures for development can of themselves be the hinderance to necessary initiatives for achieving such.

Questions immediately arise around revisiting the linkages African financial systems have with the rest of the world, not least as it relates to the short-term nature of capital flows, the well-known undesirable impact of aid, to mention a few. Not disregarding the hollow case of Francophone African countries' recent calls for delinking the CFA Franc from the French Franc and ultimately Euro. These limiting relations comprise the present reality of Africa's financial system, of which the crisis at the AfDB is only the lesser manifestation of a considerably broader challenge.

Concluding remarks

It is obvious that the current institutional financing arrangement on the continent, adopted largely by the AfDB, is unable to deliver development. As such, African countries need to re-visit the financial (and oftentimes intellectual) dependency and innovate their way out of underdevelopment. This would include restrictions on capital flows while pushing the boundaries of domestic debt. There is the possibility of money financing domestic real investments within industrial policy. Afterall, the African character is ambitious. And the bank was founded on the mandate of realising that ambition. It is necessary to achieve that, through a robust continent-wide industrial policy, uninhibited by the current approach of financing development. Adopting the recommended SRM framework above would ensure effective functioning of a union, trade or monetary.

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Reflections on Aid and Regime Change in Ethiopia: A Response to Cheeseman

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In a [piece][1] published on 22 December 2020, that he [describes][2] as the most important thing he wrote in 2020, Nic Cheeseman penned a strong criticism of what he calls the 'model of authoritarian development' in Africa. This phrase refers specifically to Ethiopia and Rwanda, the only two countries that fit the model, which is otherwise not generalisable to the rest of the continent. His argument, in a nutshell, is that donors have been increasingly enamoured with these two countries because they are seen as producing results. Yet the recent conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia shows that this argument needs to be questioned and discarded. He calls for supporting democracy in Africa, which he claims performs better in the long run than authoritarian regimes, especially in light of the conflicts and repression that inevitably emerge under authoritarianism. His argument could also be read as an implicit call for regime change, stoking donors to intensify political conditionalities on these countries before things get even worse.

Cheeseman's argument rests on a number of misleading empirical assertions which have important implications for the conclusions that he draws. In clarifying these, our point is not to defend authoritarianism. Instead, we hope to inject a measure of interpretative caution and to guard against opportunistically using crises to fan the disciplinary zeal of donors, particularly in a context of increasingly militarised aid regimes that have been associated with disastrous ventures into regime change.

We make two points. First, his story of aid dynamics in Ethiopia is not supported by the data he cites, which instead reflect the rise of economic 'reform' programmes pushed by the World Bank and IMF. The country's current economic difficulties also need to be placed in the context of the systemic financial crisis currently slamming the continent, in which both authoritarian and (nominally) democratic regimes are faring poorly.

Second, we reflect on Cheeseman's vision of aid as a lever of regime change. Within already stringent economic adjustment programmes, his call for intensifying political conditionalities amounts to a Good Governance Agenda 2.0. It ignores the legacy of the structural adjustment programmes in [subverting deliberative governance][3] on the continent during the 1980s and 1990s.

Misleading aid narratives distract from rebranded structural adjustment

On the first point, Cheeseman establishes his argument early on by stating 'that international donors have become increasingly willing to fund authoritarian regimes in Africa on the basis that they deliver on development'. In support of this assertion, he cites a table from the World Bank that shows net Official Development Assistance (ODA) received by Ethiopia surging to USD 4.93 billion in 2018, up from just over USD 4 billion in 2016 and 2017, and from a plateau oscillating around USD 3.5 billion from 2008 to 2015.

These aggregated data are misleading because ODA received by Ethiopia from western bilateral donors in fact fell in 2018 (and probably continued falling in 2019 and 2020). The World Bank data that he cites are actually from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) statistics, which refer to all official donors (but not including countries such as China). If we restrict donor assistance to DAC countries – which is relevant given that Cheeseman only refers to the US, the UK and the EU in his piece disbursed ODA to Ethiopia fell from USD 2.26 billion in 2017 to USD 2.06 billion in 2018 (see the red line in the figure below).

Figure: ODA to Ethiopia (millions USD), 2000–2019
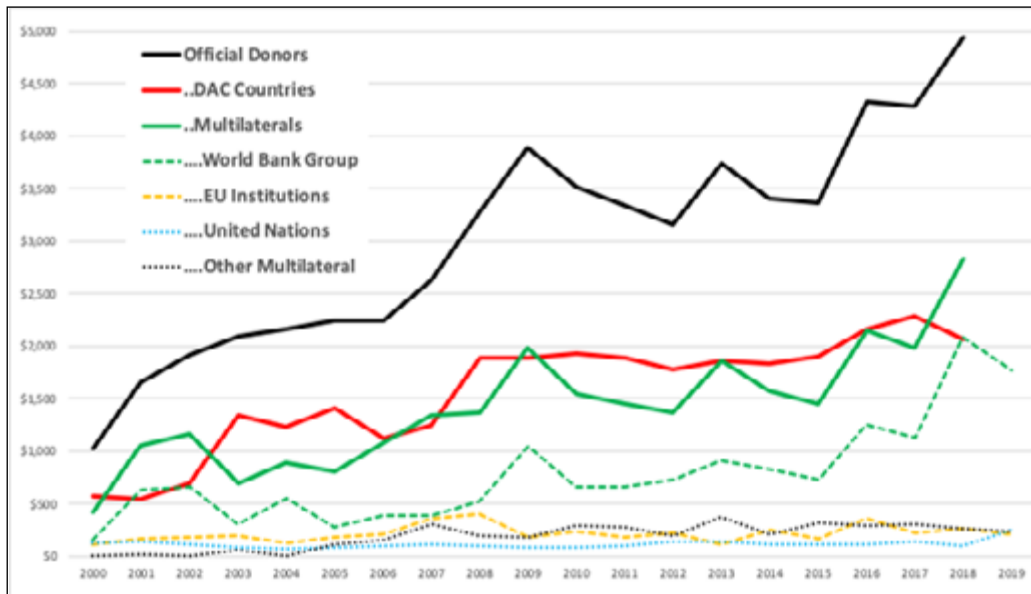
Source: OECD stats, last accessed 30 December 2020

There was a brief moderate increase in DAC country ODA starting in 2015 and peaking in 2017. Cheeseman might have been referring to this. However, contrary to his argument, it was likely that the reason for this increase in aid was primarily humanitarian, responding to the refugee influx from South Sudan[4] that began in 2015 and to the severe drought and famine risk in 2016-17.[5] It was also probably related to attempts to induce incipient political reform following the major protests in Oromia in 2014, aid for which Cheeseman would presumably condone given that conventional measures of democracy and freedom improved in 2018. Indeed, it is notable that committed ODA from DAC donor countries fell even more sharply than disbursed aid in 2018, from USD 2.49 billion in 2017 to USD 2.07 billion, reflecting the context in which these countries were negotiating hard with the Ethiopian government at the time.

Instead, the sharp increase in ODA in 2018 came entirely from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank Group, which increased its mixture of grants and loans to the country from USD 1.1 billion in 2017 to USD 2.1 billion in 2018. This subsequently fell to USD 1.8 billion in 2019 (the dashed green line in the figure).

Such ODA has been explicitly tied to the World Bank's long-standing goal of liberalising, privatising and deregulating the Ethiopian economy, thereby 'reforming' (or disassembling) many of the attributes that have allowed the Ethiopian state to act in a developmentalist manner. These attributes include state-owned enterprises, state control over the financial sector, and relatively closed capital accounts, in strong distinction to most other countries in Africa (including Rwanda).

For instance, in October 2018 it approved USD 1.2 billion from the IDA[6] in support of 'a range of economic reforms designed to revitalize the economy by expanding the role of the private sector ... to gradually open up the economy and introduce competition to and liberalize sectors that have been dominated by key state-owned enterprises (SOEs)'. The support aimed to promote public-private partnerships in key state-owned sectors, such as telecoms, power and trade logistics, as key mechanisms to restructure these sectors, as well as broader deregulation and financial liberalisation. It is also notable that the World Bank prefaced this justification by emphasising the political reforms that had already been embarked upon, and the promotion of 'citizen engagement social accountability' in Ethiopia.

In other words, contra the idea that western donors have been increasing their support for an authoritarian development model, they have been gradually withdrawing aid since 2017. The World Bank pulled up the slack in 2018, and in December 2019 both the World Bank[7] and IMF promised more funding[8] in support of ongoing economic reforms. The economic liberalisation has in turn undermined political liberalisation and has been a key source of political destabilisation.

The bargaining hand of these donors has been reinforced by the economic difficulties faced by the Ethiopian economy – in particular, a hard tightening of external foreign-exchange constraints. Balance of payments statistics[9] reveal that the government had effectively stopped external borrowing after 2015, a policy that it was advised to adopt in its Article IV consultations with the IMF in 2016 and 2017 as its external debt distress levels were rising. As a result, the government became excessively reliant on donor grant money as a principal source of foreign financ-

ing. Yet the country continued to run deep trade deficits, in large part because its development strategies, as elsewhere in Africa, have been very import and foreign-exchange intensive (think of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, requiring more than USD 4.6 billion to build, the bulk in foreign exchange). Significant capital flight appears to have taken place as well; for example, errors and omissions reported on the balance of payments were -USD 2.14 billion in 2018. In order to keep the ship afloat, the central bank burnt through over USD 1 billion of its reserves in 2018 alone.

This severe tightening of foreign-exchange constraints needs to be understood as a critical structural factor in causing the development strategy to stall. Along with non-economic factors, this in turn put considerable strain on the government's ability to stabilise political factions through the deployment of scarce resources, of which foreign exchange remains among the most important, especially in the current setting. Again, the point is not to apologise for authoritarianism, but rather to emphasise that the current situation is rooted deeper within a conjuncture of systemic crises that go far beyond any particular form of political administration.

Indeed, Cheeseman commits a similar oversight in ignoring the previous systemic crisis that the present is in many ways repeating. Later in his piece, he asserts: 'The vast majority of African states were authoritarian in the 1970s and 1980s, and almost all had poor economic growth.' This is an ahistorical misrepresentation of the profound global crisis that crippled Africa from the late 1970s for about two decades and which was the source of the poor growth he mentions. Then, as now, economic crisis was triggered throughout the continent

by the severe tightening of external constraints, which neoliberal structural adjustment programmes exacerbated in a pro-cyclical manner despite being justified in the name of growth. The combination crippled developmentalist strategies across the continent regardless of political variations and despite the fact that many countries were performing quite well before the onset of the crisis. Such historical contextualisation is crucial for a correct assessment of the present.

In this respect, there is a danger of putting the cart before the horse. Most countries that descend into deep protracted crises (economic or political) generally stop being nominally democratic, and yet this result becomes attributed as a cause, as if authoritarianism results in crisis or poor performance. Cheeseman cherry-picks two papers (one a working paper) on democracy[10] and development[11] performance in Africa (which, like all cross-country regressions, are highly sensitive to model specification and open to interpretation). However, drawing any causality from such studies is problematic given that states tended to become more authoritarian after the global economic crisis and subsequent structural adjustments of the late 1970s and 1980s, not the other way around. For instance, 16 countries were under military rule in 1972, compared with 21 countries in 1989 during the height of adjustment.[12] Faced with crippled capacity under the weight of severe austerity and dwindling legitimacy as living standards collapsed, many states responded to mass protests[13] against the harsh conditionalities of adjustment with increasing force. As such, economic crisis and adjustment plausibly contributed to the rise of political instability and increasingly authoritarian regimes.

Other factors included the Cold War destabilisation,[14] which western countries fuelled and profited from. In other words, the political malaise across Africa at the time was driven as much by external as by internal factors.

Aid as a lever of regime change

This leads us to our second point concerning Cheeseman's vision of aid as a lever of regime change. Cheeseman is at pains to emphasise that rigged elections and repression of opponents have contributed to the recent emergence of conflict in the Tigray region. While these are important factors, Ethiopian intellectuals have also emphasised that conflicts in contemporary Ethiopia have taken place against a history of imperial state formation, slavery and debates about the 'national question',[15] or what has sometimes been called 'internal colonialism'. These conflicts are shaped by the system of ethnic federalism,[16] in which ethnically defined states control their own revenues, social provisioning and security forces. They have been affected by foreign agricultural land grabs,[17] which interact with older histories of semi-feudal land dispossession. Most recently, there have been concerns that regional tensions over the Renaissance Dam[18] and agricultural land[19] may help draw neighbouring countries into the conflict.

In the face of this highly complex and rapidly changing context, no one person can identify the optimal response. It plausibly requires regular collective deliberation by people who are deeply embedded in the context. In particular, the brief political liberalisation of 2018 was followed by a sharp uptick of political violence on all sides, rooted in fundamental tensions between different visions

of statehood. Such situations cannot be solved simply by 'adding democracy and stirring'; they require deliberative governance.

Yet, Cheeseman's piece seeks a reimposition of the very political conditionalities that were a primary factor in subverting deliberative governance[20] on the continent during the first wave of structural adjustment and its attendant Good Governance agendas. Such conditionalities work by constraining the open contestation of ideas and the process of informed consensus-building. They undermine the sovereignty of key institutions of the polity and the economy. And by doing so they degrade the historical meaning of development as a project of reclaiming social and economic sovereignty after colonialism.

Indeed, as Thandika Mkandawire has argued, the previous wave of political conditionalities and democratisation reduced democracies to formal structures of elections and, by wedding and subordinating them to the orthodox economic policy frameworks established under structural adjustment, led to what he called 'choiceless democracies'.[21] Such 'disempowered new democracies' are incapable of responding to the substantive macroeconomic demands of voters, which undermines substantive democracy, deliberative governance and policy sovereignty.

In particular, the idea of a democratic developmental state is meaningless in the absence of policy sovereignty. The institutional monocropping and monotasking[22] of the type that Mkandawire wrote about does not merely prevent key institutions, such as central banks, from using broader policy instruments to support the developmental project. It also involves the deliberate

creation of unaccountable policy vehicles, such as Monetary Policy Committees (MPCs), which operate outside of democratic oversight but have considerable hold on the levers of economic policy. MPCs are in turn wedded to neoliberal monetarism. The message to such disempowered new democracies is that 'You can elect any leader of your choice as long as s/he does not tamper with the economic policy that we choose for you.' Or as Mkandawire wrote in 1994,[23] 'two or three IMF experts sitting in a country's reserve bank have more to say than the national association of economists about the direction of national policy.'

In such contexts, the prospect of a democratic developmental state is severely diminished. Ensuring significant improvements in people's wellbeing is important for the legitimacy of democracies. Yet the subversion of policy sovereignty significantly constrains the ability of new democracies to do so, setting them up for a crisis of legitimacy.

If democracy is to be meaningful it should involve the active engagement of citizens in a system of deliberative governance. Civil society organisations, in this context, are meaningful when they are autonomous institutions of social groupings that actively engage in boisterous debate and public policymaking in articulating the interest of their members. Yet, donor clientelism in Africa has wrought civil society and advocacy organisations that are manufactured and funded by, and accountable to, donors[24] not the citizens. This is a substantive subversion of democracy as a system of deliberative governance.

In this respect, we can call the kind of intrusive donor clientelism that

Cheeseman is recommending Good Governance 2.0. His advocacy for strengthening patron–client relations between western donors and African governments, and his urging that donors use crises as a way of forcing regime change and policy conditionalities, is ahistorical, counterproductive and morally indefensible. In particular, it does not take into account the destructive, anti-democratic role of western-backed regime change and policy conditionality across the Global South during the era of flag independence. Even recently, these donor countries have disastrous human rights records when pushing for regime change in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Their support for military dictatorships, such as in Egypt, has been a central pillar of foreign policy for decades. And several of these donor countries worked hard to uphold apartheid in South Africa. They have no moral high ground to push for regime change, and little record to ensure that they could do so without causing more harm than good.

Moreover, external actors attempting to enforce their narrow view of democratisation in contexts of deeply polarised and competing visions of statehood, and in the midst of economic instability reinforced by already burdensome economic conditionalities, austerity and reforms, could well be creating a recipe for disaster. As a collective of intellectuals from across the Horn has emphasised,[25] the people of Ethiopia in particular and the Horn in general must be at the forefront of developing a lasting peace. This would likely require a developmental commitment to supporting state capacity and deliberative governance, not undermining it through external interference and conditionalities.

Authors

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The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and USIU-Africa invite you to the Virtual launch of Prof. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza' s book titled 'Africa and the Disruptions of the Twenty-first Century'.

This collection of essays interrogates the repositioning of Africa and its diasporas in the unfolding disruptive transformations of the early twenty-first century. It is divided into five parts focusing on America's racial dysfunctions, navigating global turbulence, Africa's political dramas, the continent's persistent mythologisation and disruptions in higher education. The book explores the overlapping crises that affect the continent and how these issues have an effect on the global sphere. The book challenges readers to imagine new ways to think about the continent, and what could be done to secure its future.

The launch will take place on Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 4 p.m. EAT or 1 p.m. GMT. To register for the event, which will be held on Zoom, please click on the link below.

Prof. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza is Vice-Chancellor and Professor of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the United States International University-Africa, a position he assumed in January 2016. Prior to that, he held senior administrative and academic positions at six universities in Canada and the United States for twenty-five years. A renowned public intellectual, he has authored hundreds of essays and more than two dozen books, including works of fiction.

In case of any queries, please contact executive.secretary@codesria.org

Tributes

A Personal Tribute to Professor Wamba dia Wamba

I first met Professor Wamba in 1996 when I was an undergraduate at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. His wife was the advisor for our program. I had heard of Professor Wamba, and his reputation as a serious philosopher was known to me. But as I was an immature undergrad, he had no desire to have a conversation with me. I was therefore always and never able to find words that I felt were intellectual enough to have a conversation with the renowned scholar.

After returning to the States, and continuing my academic career, I became more grounded in African Studies and would come into contact again with Professor Wamba. Initially, this was through the works of his son, Philippe Wamba, especially his seminal 1999 book *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America*. Philippe's book spoke to my own experiences, as someone who was also born in Tanzania, to an African American mother and a Tanzanian father (in my case). Philippe Wamba's book would have a profound impact on my navigation of own my bicultural identity and being able to confidently stand in my Tanzanian identity, even with my American accent. The book would also help determine my research agenda for the next decade. Later, Professor

Msia Kibona Clark
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Wamba would step in to inadvertently guide me as I sought to assert that Tanzanian identity within CODESRIA.

When I briefly moved to Tanzania in 2013 as a Fulbright Scholar, I would finally meet with Professor Wamba again. I learned a lot from him. We spoke in person and via email about the history of Africa, and the history of resistance among Black peoples. Professor Wamba spoke to me about African resistance to slavery dating back to the fourteenth century with the Mande manifesto, the movements that led to the Haiti Revolution, and about Nganga Nzumbi and Quilombo dos Palmares in Brazil. I often felt like I did as an undergrad, in need of an encyclopedia to keep up, and somewhat embarrassed that I was not familiar with each reference. But as I had come to understand, an encyclopedia would not have helped me, because I was often witnessing knowledge being created.

My work had somehow gotten on Professor Wamba's radar and his willingness to reach out to me, and

to take the time to meet with me was wonderful. Within the discussion of the history of African liberation, Professor Wamba's message was, "the liberation movement has to go on. The various resistances on the African continent as well as elsewhere will probably come to the realization of the need for unity and for a politics from the point of people at a distance from the state."

We spoke a lot about my work around hip hop as protest music, and while hip hop was not necessarily his favorite genre of music, he understood the importance of liberation music. His encouragement, "I am impressed that you are able to include protest music in your lectures", was a validation that I truly valued.

The last time I saw Professor Wamba was at the 2015 CODESRIA General Assembly in Dakar, Senegal. I was excited to see him again and update him on my research on hip hop in Africa. He seemed very amused, but still very supportive. CODESRIA is a space that can also be intimidating, and at that meeting there were other East African giants, namely Mahmood Mamdani and Issa Shivji. Knowing many of the people at the meeting, Professor Wamba took the time to introduce me to several people, as very few people at the meeting knew who I was. On

the day the meeting broke out into regional sessions, less confident in my Tanzanian identity, I was a bit nervous about going to the East Africa sub-meeting. Some of the other attendees also seemed to question my presence. But, being there with Professor Wamba and having him basically co-sign my presence as not only a scholar, but as a Tanzanian scholar worthy of being in that space meant so much. It cannot be understated how much that meant to me.

The Wamba family remains very special to me. Professor Wamba started off as a larger than life figure in the mind of a wide-eyed undergrad, and then became a mentor and a friend. My interactions with Professor Wamba always made me think and reflect. I am grateful for the conversations that we had, and I am forever grateful for the influence that he and his family have had on both my personal and professional life.

Prof Ernest Wamba dia Wamba 1942-2020

Wamba-dia-Wamba is no longer with us!
Wamba-dia-Wamba n'est plus !

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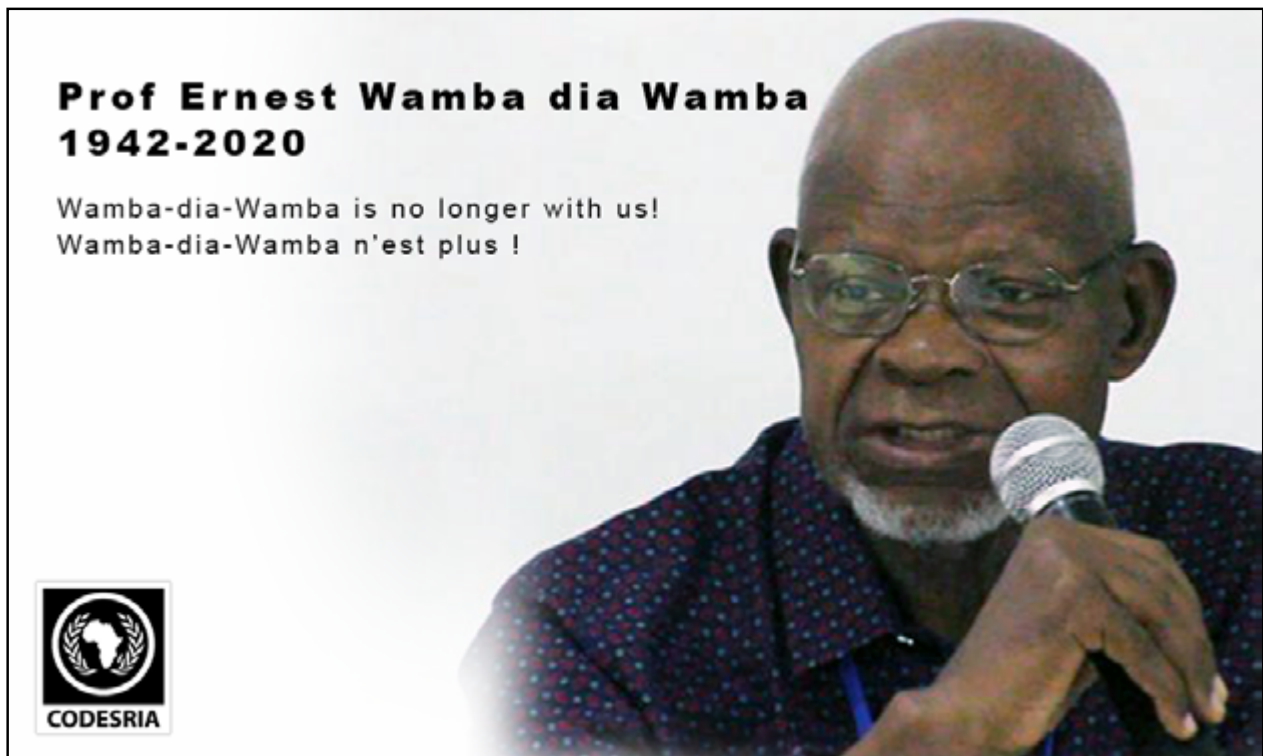
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Avec des articles issus de la 15e assemblée générale du CODESRIA

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