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إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**DRAFT VERSION
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**A critical discourse evaluation of the stumbling block to
decolonisation and democratisation processes in Africa:
A postcolonial reading of selected Wole Soyinka's non-fictional texts**

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Introduction

Africans are human beings and, therefore, they deserve quality life. The need for a nation to deserve quality life brings up the question of the definition of quality life. Without much polemicisation, quality life, as conceived, in this paper has to do with what is generally referred to as good living condition where social provisions that make human beings enjoy existence are available in abundance. These provisions and their constant supply in abundance have been seen to be the responsibility of governments of African states. Africans, therefore, deserve leaders whose goal of leadership must necessarily include the thought that human beings deserve growth and improved living conditions in all ramifications. Attention must be given to health, economy, development (infrastructural, physical, social and mental), water resources, food security and social security. African nations, after independence, have had to contend with problems of development and good governance (Giddens, 2006: 406) in the face of challenges posed by the newly emancipated states. The relics of colonisation, hospitals, pipe-borne water, electricity, the civil service, the military, the police and other social agents and functionaries, point to the fact that certain ideas supported the establishment of social institutions to cater for the human conditions of the colonial citizens. Therefore, one would expect a continuation of the sustainability of these structures and institutions with the goal of further development to improve the life of Africans. At independence, most African nations could afford basic amenities. But, ten years after, the nations began to lose the grips on the reins of development and advancement.

There are problems. The expectation of all would have been that, after the departure of the colonial administrators, the leaders of African states should be able to develop states under their leadership. The belief, then, is that leaders must have had adequate and required training from colonial leaders that would help them consolidate existing sociopolitical structures and, on the other hand, create new means to ensuring consistent development in all spheres of political and social growth. Existing political experiences point to the diversion in the realisation of the expectation.

African states have failed to be fully independent after the departure of the colonial administrators. Laymen refer to this failure as a manifestation of selfishness on the part of the affluent leaders, believing that access to the European and Western cultures, civilisations and education should have influenced governance tactics, strategies or methods of African leaders that would result in actual development. Moreover, they argue that if the exposure leaders have

from education and civilisation had worked, then, the experiences garnered from constant visit to Europe and America should have impacted on the judgement of the leaders in order to make them think of what could be done in the ex-colonies they now rule. These thoughts point to the fact that African citizens raise some expectations which should have been or should be met by their leaders. They expect the decolonisation of African states and the manifestation of democratisation. Nearly all African nations now yearn for representative democracy as practised in the United States of America. Examples of the vehement resistance against tyranny in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya point to this reality.

Theory and Methodology

Nearly all African nations have had 50 years of independence. That means fifty years after the colonial leaders left, it is not out of place for one to ask questions about the progress made so far. Little wonder, then, thinking within the confines of postcolonial theory, one is confronted with the problems associated with the gulf between the Centre and the Periphery. The thought that our continent is in need of new strategies to engender repositioning as a process of placing Africa in an enviable stead in the 21st Century also requires the re-examining of the relationship between the centre and the periphery. The distinction between the centre and the periphery remains one of the agitating theoretical issues in postcolonial studies. The place of postcolonial study in this paper is not with the intent of justifying the efficacy of the basic thoughts in the theory but its participation in the development of an interdisciplinary methodology of text analysis in the field critical discourse analysis is important here. While critical discourse analysis is concerned, among other things, primarily with the relationship between language and society and how language is used to construct social realities in texts, postcolonial theoretical information lends itself to the analyst to identify socially situated texts for the purpose of discovering salient ideologies.

The study of Wole Soyinka's texts to identify the contents of the political thinking templates of the postcolonial African leaders cannot be done without a bit of the study of the nature of the centre and the periphery before and after independence. One of the assumptions tested with Wole Soyinka's non-fictional texts is that African leaders have had their minds tutored to deliberately (thought this is a hard concept to be proved) to engender political leadership devoid of development concepts. In this paper, we have adopted methods of text analysis found in critical discourse analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough (1989) and

Teun van Dijk (1996). The choice of the models of both critical discourse analysts has been informed by some aspects of their works that could be fused together for the purpose of solving specific problems found in the subject under study. Fairclough's (1989) idea of Members' Resources (MR) agrees with van Dijk's (1996) concept of Long Term Memory (LTM). Fairclough's concept is deeply rooted in the provisions of social theories and their effects on text description, production and consumption. On the other hand, van Dijk's concept relies on the knowledge advancements in cognitive psychology and their effects on text. The deployment of the aspects of the concepts to analyse text affords the possibility of the relevance of postcolonial thinking as part of the definition of contexts of language use to represent a set of specific social ideas. These social ideas determine what constitutes the reactions behind some social actions that can help explain the reasons for the failure of African leaders to have evolved strategies of governance that will match up with the standards found on continents that house highly developed nations. We need a combination of information from socially-related concepts and cognitive psychological ideas to explain the ideologies found in the attitudes of African leaders as described by Wole Soyinka. This idea is at the core of our perception of the relationship between the centre and the periphery.

Before the independence of African states, it was clear that the centre was made up of the colonial administrators. Decisions about governance were taken by colonial rulers, using the British or French systems of government. Governance was a product of the colonial home government policies. In the British colonies, for instance, the system operated was the Indirect Rule. African traditional rulers were used to enforce British laws in the colonies. The African leaders then were members of the peripheral class with their long term memories partly rooted in their African social cultural backgrounds and the rest in the newly acquired colonial mentalities. The situation was such that the governed that constituted the periphery were made up of traditional African leaders and their subjects. If we exclude the colonial leaders from the picture what we had were two classes: the centre (African traditional ruling councils) and the periphery (the subjects). Now, with the colonial masters in the picture, we had a composite two classes: the centre (colonial masters) and the periphery (African traditional ruling councils and their subjects). Shortly after the Second World War, nationalist movements began and a new set of African leaders emerged. These were the educated and were prepared to take over from the colonial masters. The new leaders changed the picture. Gradually, as the 1960's approached, the centre and the periphery began to change identity.

Now that nearly all African states are independent, the responsibility of leaderships devolved on the educated African leaders. The centre is no longer contained by the colonial masters but by the educated Africans. The periphery is now made up of the subjects. The question that needs answering centres on the nature of the template of governance thinking that powers the activities of the ruling class at the centre. As mentioned in the introduction, colonial governments provided amenities to the subjects of their governments in the African colonies. Governance was about the welfare of the citizens. Laws were enforced without much corruption and standards of living were upheld to make human beings enjoy life uncomplainingly. The development of human and natural resources (although nationalist leaders would disagree) was done with the aim of ensuring economic and social growth. Fifty years after the independence of many African nations, problems of leadership remain fundamental issues in the annals of African history. Of what mental stock are the postcolonial African leaders made? This is the main question this paper seeks to answer. Wole Soyinka's non-fictional writings have been plain enough in pointing out that the process of decolonisation and democratisation in Africa cannot be achieved unless African leaders change. The depiction of the character traits of pre-independence political actors indicate that the newly evolved centre was constituted of the educated class that did not possess the same vision of political leadership as did the colonial masters.

The Non-Fictional Writings of Wole Soyinka

The writings of Soyinka have always been identified with revolt against existing political systems (Adeniran, 1994: 50). Available literature on his works shows that linguists and literary scholars of differing analytical and theoretical persuasions have had to engage the writer in order to demystify his language (Osakwe, 1992; Adejare, 1992; Adeniran, 1994; Ogunsiyi, 2001). What is common to many of the works on Soyinka is the comment on the 'masculinity' of his linguistic structures and the deployment of uncommon imagery to represent thoughts on matters of political import in search of social change. Soyinka's competence in the use of English has never been in contention but his struggles and revolts are constant thematic issues requiring the attention of text analysts (Ogunsiyi, 2001).

Soyinka's writings depict him as a politician. His political belief, activity, and struggle are not like the popular ones that we see in daily affairs of our polity. He believes in humanism and promotes the pursuit of human dignity from that perspective. To him, politics should be

about improving the lot of humankind. Enhanced lives, happiness, provisions of social amenities, peace of mind and sound health are some of the benefits of governance he advocates. His writings could, therefore, be seen as saying that the improvement of the human condition is the only goal of true democracy. How this composite feature of democracy is represented in his text is the major problem this paper intends to solve. This exercise requires seeing a text as a site for social interaction where participants engage in activities that are intertwined at various social levels.

One of the practices in contemporary approaches to the study of how text producers engage in some intricately complex process of text production is to trace meaning to the influence the text producers' sociocultural world has on the representation of reality. Fairclough (1995: 138) points at Giddens' (1991: 31) thought on reflexivity as a way of discovering the inner core of the thought patterns of individuals' use of language in relation to the sociocultural awareness that influences the way language is crafted to make specific meaning. Our study of the life and works of Soyinka revolves around this insight. This insight does not preclude the problems of identity found at the centre of the postcolonial reading of texts on political agitations of a people under unfavourable hegemony (Ahluwalia, 2001:67). Soyinka's role in setting up resistance machinery, the *Third Force*, (Jeyifo, 2004: 7) is in response to the desire to confront counter democratic policies of the Nigerian political class. As an academic, one would expect that Soyinka's radicalism should be limited to the classroom but he is constantly confronted with the responsibility of leading protests and raising the consciousness of his audience to the need to direct intellectual prowess to maintenance of social order and ensure total emancipation of the oppressed in society. This observation fittingly places him in the frame of Gramsci's suggestion for hegemonic deconstruction via intellectualism (Ritzer, 1996: 283). Analysing Soyinka's written works of political ideological bent is premised on the assumption that the growth process of the writer from childhood up to the age of responsibility must have some fact to suggest the kind of messages inferred or discovered from the texts selected for analysis. One of the ways to understand a text producer's production strategy is to investigate his sociocultural background and how that leads to self-description and self-identity. Reflexivity from this perspective helps us see the reasons behind the writer's choice of genre, register, topic of discourse (field) and medium of communication (mode) and other relevant factors (Fairclough, 1995: 138; Gee, 1999: 40; Dijk, 2002:112).

In this paper we have depended on Soyinka's recent memoir, *You Must Set Forth At Dawn*, to exemplify the reality that African leader's mental construct on governance does not conform with their subjects' expectation of provision of physical and mental welfare materials that will translate to development. The memoir, published in 2006, is a detailed account of Wole Soyinka's personal experiences in the politics and life of Nigeria. The text, therefore, contains much of examples from Nigeria and that makes us use Nigeria's political experience as an example for the whole of Africa. Attention will be paid to the lexical constructs that depict the behaviours of politicians that have no connection with the basic tenets of governance. The text discusses issues around topics such as politics (pp.62 - 64), democracy (pp. 63 - 65; pp. 91 - 113), violence (pp. 92 - 96), racism (pp. 40 - 44), activism (pp. 44 - 47), international politics and intellectualism (pp. 304 - 323), culture and religion (pp.10 - 36), humanism (pp.294 - 303) and so on.

Lexical Indexicalisation of Political Actors

Lexical indexicalisation of political actors in text is a discourse practice that affords text producers to construct characters' identities to reflect mental constructs that text consumers need to deploy as text interpretation cues to detect not just the identity of a character but what powers actions. This cannot be done with the knowledge of the function of the subconscious and how that unconsciously influences habits of individuals or groups in some contexts. Bourdieu has used the term, *habitus*, to describe some sort of unconscious mechanistic manifestation of some habits in social context (Robbins, 2000: 26 - 7) and his explanation is close to what we mean here. Soyinka's ambition to draw attention to some of the reasons African nations are yet to achieve development has led him to coin some lexical items that indexicalise political actors of the independent era as unfit for the administration of the newly independent states. We examine some these lexical items and identify the relationship between the lexical meaning of the expressions and, how in political contexts, they point to the reasons Africa as a continent has been fertile ground for the growth of tyranny, economic profligacy, corruption and other anti-development factors. We discuss these issues by using two samples from *You Must Set Forth At Dawn* (henceforth, SFD).

The forces militating against decolonisation and democratisation are products of the conditioning found in the beliefs of African politicians. The conditioning operates against the will of the politicians themselves. Past African leaders have never come up with any explanation

to defend their behaviours while in power to justify their inability to work for the development of their nations to be at par with highly developed nations of the world. It is clear that the pre-independence politicians of Africa were not sure of where to direct their patriotism. The nature of the politicians is against the patriotic disposition of the colonial administrators. The excerpt below from SFD paints the picture in Soyinka's words:

The nationalists, the first generation of elected leaders and legislators of our semi-independent nation had begun to visit Great Britain in droves. We watched their self-preening, their ostentatious spending, their cultivated condescension, even disdain towards the people they were supposed to represent... Most of the time however, as we ran eagerly to welcome the protagonists of the African Renaissance, we were bombarded by utterances that identified only flamboyant replacements of the old colonial order, not transforming agents not even empathizing participants in a process of liberation.

The excerpt is an example of an account of the nature of pre-independent politicians. As stated earlier in the beginning of this paper, the failure of politicians to attend to the human needs of their subjects breeds tyranny. Tyranny is a system of government in which the tyrant is somebody who thinks only of his personal interest and of those close to him. We find in this excerpt that politicians of the pre-independent era as those that did not have the interest of the people or the emerging independent state in mind. They were interested only in their selfish interest and they would spend state funds on personal interests. Soyinka constructs a context that helps us to see that there was no genuine preparation for the independent state as for the indoctrination of the emerging political leaders to consider state interest first before personal interest. The discovery here is that Soyinka's construction of the characters of the first generation of politicians depicts these leaders as exhibiting traits of tyranny. The colonial administrators, while taking care of the governance affairs of African nations held their allegiance to the Crown uppermost on their priority list. What is the Crown that the African leaders aimed to respect? The representation of tyranny in the Soyinka's political discourse reveals some deeper understanding of the way the foundation of tyranny was laid at the time African nations attained the status of self-rule in 1960. Tyranny found fertile land to germinate in the

psychopathic nature of the new Nigerian politicians of the early independent politics, for instance. The taking over of tyranny, at least ten years, after independence in many African countries can be traced to the unnoticeable anti-democratic practices of the early nationalists. The following lexical items in the quotation above indexicalise the facts:

“Self-preening”

“Ostentatious spending”

“Cultivated condescension”

“disdain”

The lexical items as used in the excerpt to describe the attitude of the politicians show that the leaders that took over from the colonial administrators were concerned more of their personal interests, especially their identities. The lexical items raise the questions of the role of leaders as state builders versus the need to attend to self-esteem needs as individuals. The worry then is to ascertain whether the politicians were state builders or self-builders.

The idea that the early Nigerian political leaders were trained by the British is instantiated in the excerpt. The sentence, *“The nationalists, the first generation of elected leaders and legislators of our semi-independent nation had begun to visit Great Britain in droves”* points to that reality but Soyinka is quick to insert in that fact that the visit to Britain then lacked orderliness as depicted by the prepositional group, *“in droves”*. The disorderliness also opened up chances of the politicians’ exhibiting their capacity for profligacy.

The critical discourse value of the instance of difference in political vision enacted in this excerpt unveils the qualities of the pre-independence politicians of Nigeria and the preparedness they put forward to pursue the deliverance of the nation from colonial fangs. The major ideology unveiled in this text is that a tyrannical governance would have in place people who understand the meaning of power and position but lacking in the knowledge of democratic administration. These political actors are referred to in the text as *“the protagonists of African Renaissance”*. The idea of renaissance is one of the expectations of the citizens of the newly emancipated nation. The expectation extends further to the viewing of the newly elected leaders to be protagonists, meaning that in the new democratic order that was being awaited in the late 1950’s, leaders were supposed to be supporters of representative governance. The account in Soyinka’s political discourse indicates that the reverse was the case as the politicians are reported to engage in *“utterances that identified only flamboyant replacement of the old colonial order,*

not transforming agents, not even empathising participants in a process of liberation". The salient ideology here is that inherent on the mental composition of the politicians is a fragment of enslaving strategy taken off from the orientation provided by the British colonial masters to show that the emerging centre would not *really* be sensitive to the welfare needs of the peripheral class.

The excerpt presents an interaction within an on-going democratisation process that requires the entrenchment of transformation from a detested colonial hegemony to evolve preferred independent governance. It is a governance type that allows the choosing of leaders via election is a product of democracy. Therefore, reference to political leaders as "*elected legislators*" indicates that democracy was the preferred system of government in the 1960's when Nigerian attained independence. The use of the expression, "*only flamboyant replacement of the old colonial order*", describes the fact that the British colonial masters manipulated the handover of political leadership to stooges of the imperialist throne for the continuation of the detested hegemony. That is why the attitude of the political leaders in Britain does not show any sense of commitment to the enthronement of a free and liberal democracy. The statement that reveals tyrannical foundation is the last part of the sentence, **not even the empathising participants in a process of liberation**. The psychosocial quality that ensures inclusion as an element of liberal democracy is empathy. The non-availability of empathy in the elected politicians and the manner of leading a life of debauchery concluded the laying of the foundation for tyranny as an element of the system of governance in postcolonial Nigeria where the feelings and the views of the governed would be excluded.

As hinted earlier, the pre-independence politicians were prone to profligacy. The suspicion that the British left with their secrets of good governance to allow continuation of colonisation in guise of independence is seen in the way Britain accommodated profligacy and debauchery from the politicians. Soyinka puts it in these words extracted from SFD:

Some turned students into pimps, either for immediate rewards, or in return for influence in obtaining or extending scholarships. Visiting politicians financed lavished parties for one sole purpose - to bring on the girls! They appeared to have only one ambition on the brain - to sleep with a white woman. For that privilege, in addition to discarding the dignity of their position, they would

**pay more than the equivalent of our monthly student allowances.
We watched them heap unbelievable gifts on virtual prostitutes,
among whom both British and continental students could be
counted.**

The main aim of Soyinka's narration of the pre-independence activities of the politicians is to raise the consciousness for the understanding of the sources of the tyrannical features of the postcolonial Nigerian political experiences. His self-indexicalisation in the narration as an observer participant in the events is marked by the use of the first person plural pronoun, **we**, in all contexts concerning the activities of the Nigerian students and the politicians of the early self-rule era. "We" refers to the foreign students in England in the 1950's. These students are drawn from different African countries. The main concern of these students was to acquire higher education in order to return to their respective nations to participate in the 'transformation' of the newly independent states into truly democratic states. The experiences narrated in Sample XII shows, in the main, that the text consumer should pay attention to the characters of leaders with the cognitive knowledge of the expected behavioural patterns of true leaders. Leadership in democracy should be pivoted on knowledge based on the social development needs of the governed. Soyinka's description of the public attitudes of the leaders of the 1950's reveals lexical representation of facts that are characteristic of tyrants. The expression, "*some turned students into pimps and visiting politicians financed lavish parties*", reveals the profligate attitudes of the politicians. The differences between the lexical content of the word, student, and pimps found in the relational process clause - *///Some turned students into pimps///* - foregrounds the hedonistic foundation of the political activities of the early independent Nigerian leaders. These experiences are indexical of the tyrannical foundation for Nigeria's democracy.

At the level of foundation and expectation for an independent state, Soyinka's shaping of the public attitudes of Nigeria's early politicians shows that the goal of the founding leaders of Nigeria was devoid of a clear-cut ideological underpinning for the recreation of a postcolonial order that would see to the evolution of a non-colonial political dawn. However, the analysis of the excerpts reveals that the members' resources of the early independent politicians did not include facts about liberal democracy and the development of social conditions for the installation of independent and virile state. The lexical analysis has drawn attention to the preliminary symptoms of tyranny in the political leaders of Nigeria before actual independence

in 1960. It should not be strange that we find in some African leaders history elements of hedonism and tyranny in their personal lives: Mobutu, Bokassa, Eyadema, Abacha, and, currently, Mubarak and Gadhafi.

Conclusion

It is certain that the centre after independence remains attached to the colonial centre. The consequences of this are the doomed periphery destined to be poor in the midst of plenty. Why? The analysis of the lexical items helps us realise that as at the time of independence, the political elites were not prepared to confront the challenges of economic growth. The many years of colonialism have robbed African nations of their right to ownership of economic resourcefulness. Colonial administrative offices were vacated but control over trade and commerce had been usurped. By the 1960's, when the nationalists were celebrating the attainment of independence, little did they know that they carried with them beliefs that were enshrined in the conditioning programme designed by the colonial government to ensure the continuation of the execution of the colonial interest despite the self-rule. But, before independence resource control had been taken over without agreement with the masses of Africans. Bond (2006: 2) sees this as looting and describes the situation in these words:

... remind ourselves of the historical legacy of a continent *looted*: trade by force dating back centuries; slavery that uprooted and dispossessed around 12 million Africans; land grabs; vicious taxation schemes; precious metals spirited away; the appropriation of antiquities to the British Museum and other trophy rooms; the nineteenth-century emergence of racist ideologies to justify colonialism; the 1884–5 carve-up of Africa, in a Berlin negotiating room, into dysfunctional territories; the construction of settler-colonial and extractive-colonial systems - of which apartheid, the German occupation of Namibia, the Portuguese colonies and King Leopold's Belgian Congo were perhaps only the blatant - often based upon tearing black migrants workers from rural areas (leaving women with vastly increased responsibilities as a consequence); Cold War battlegrounds - proxies for US/USSR conflicts - filled with millions of corpses; other wars catalysed by mineral searches

and offshoot violence such as witnessed in blood diamonds and coltan (Colombo-tantelite, a crucial component of cell phones and computer chips); poacher-stripped swathes of East, Central and Southern Africa now devoid of rhinos and elephants whose ivory became ornamental material or aphrodisiac in the Middle East and East Asia; societies used as guinea pigs in the latest corporate pharmaceutical test ... and the list could continue.

Bond's long list here excludes the fact that the new African leaders took note of the looted items before embarking on the administration of the newly independent states. Today, Africa is one of the continents where Third World Countries abound (Millet and Toussaint, 2004: 1).

The basic conclusion of this paper is that African leaders must have their leadership belief system changed. The change must be in such a way that the template that conditions their response to the further impoverishing of the continent through the already designed structures of the world super-economies - The World Bank, IMF and the Paris Club - must be resisted. Facts from social research findings have indicated that developed nations are responsible for the poverty of Africa because African leaders themselves allow this to happen. Young (2003: 134) declares that 'some of the poverty, or at least some suffering, of the people of the non-western world is also the direct result of the actions of their own government' because they fall easy prey to the overtures of the lending agencies of the developed world in order to be politically subservient. It is a continuation of colonialism. Asian countries that have refused lending suggestions from such agencies have begun to evolve economic power never seen before. Malaysia, according to Millet and Toussaint (2004: 71), 'refused any agreement with the IMF in 1997-98, protected its domestic market and, after the crisis had broken out, took strict control of capital flows and exchange, and the government spent money on giving new impetus to production'. Evidences of Malaysia's return to strong economic feet are in the number and varieties of goods they export to African countries. Until African leaders, too, take a second look at the financial aids from these agencies, there may not be true independence (Millet and Toussaint, 2004: 72). Taking a second look requires African leaders stopping the stashing of money into foreign banks but allowing local industries and agro-allied industries to grow. They should evolve means of turning their nations from consuming peoples to producing peoples.

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