

Indigenous community-based political system and national stability in Africa

*Michael Chugozie **Anyae**¹, Sebastian Okechukwu **Onah**², Anthony Chimamkpan **Ojim**¹, Nneka Ifeoma **Okafor**¹, & Francisca Nkemdilim **Onah**³

¹Department of Philosophy,

²Department of Sociology and Anthropology,

³Social Science Unit, School of General Studies,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

*Corresponding Author: michael.anyae@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

Many African countries are sociopolitically unstable and economically underdeveloped despite their huge human and material resources. The problem borders on poor leadership, poor governance, and resource mismanagement, which can be attributed, among other things, to the countries' inability to overcome their state of liminality as they transition from externally imposed imperialist to efficient indigenised sociopolitical systems. The imposed systems often suppress the indigenous community-oriented systems, alienate the populace from governance and enable the emergence of exploitative elites that compromise the common good. Using philosophical hermeneutic analysis of African post-colonial history and Hegel's dialectical historicist theory of social development, this paper observes that the instability of many African countries stems from a disconnect between the people's sociopolitical orientation and the prevailing oppressive political system. The imperialist system is exclusive, creates the elite and the people divide, and contrasts with the indigenous African inclusive communal sociopolitical orientation. Its top-down command structure is suppressive, stunting public criticism, alienating the people and fostering the emergence of self-

serving leaders. The paper holds that a sociopolitical system based on people's consciousness, orientation, and aspirations elicits people's committed engagement in the pursuit of good governance and stability of the polity. It advocates pragmatic evaluations of the sociopolitical systems in African countries to align them with people's orientation. Considering the African orientation and commitment to community values, it recommends an indigenous community-based sociopolitical system that will overcome transitional sociopolitical liminality, promote active public engagement in governance and in the censorship of leaders, and ensure efficient resource management for national stability and economic development. Achieving this objective will require an eclectic hybridisation of modern and traditional governance systems to develop an efficient indigenous system suited to each country's contemporary realities and orientations.

Keywords: Africa's sociopolitical stability, indigenous sociopolitical system, community consciousness, dialectical social development, sociopolitical liminality, political participation,

Introduction

Before the advent of European colonisation, African societies operated diverse traditional sociopolitical systems, including democratic, monarchical, and oligarchic forms of governance. These systems functionally fulfilled societal needs, and political authority was derived from a "jural community" with moral obligations and mechanisms for dispute resolution (Skinner, 1998). The European colonial incursion in Africa destabilised these cultural sociopolitical systems. It imposed European values and oppressive

political systems that overthrew African indigenous sociopolitical systems and values. (Chinweizu, 1978; Anifowose, 2011; Eckholm-Friedman . & Sundberg,, 1995; Vansina, 1990). The imperial systems were primarily designed to protect the interests of the colonisers at the detriment of the indigenous people. (Chinweizu. 1978). Their top-down command structure suppresses African sociopolitical orientations and liberty, alienating citizens from the governance process. Unfortunately, after attaining national independence, African political

elites retained this imposed exploitative system, thereby perpetuating elements of the exploitative colonial system rather than fundamentally transforming them to support nation-building and inclusive governance (Nnoli, 1978). The indigenous political systems, however, continued to exist alongside formal state structures, creating dual political orientations and competing loyalties, as exemplified in northern Nigeria, where loyalty to the traditional political institution, the Sokoto Caliphate, often conflicts with loyalty to the modern nation-state. Although there are cases of co-existence of the two systems in some places, this co-existence has largely been characterised by conflict, hindering harmonious political development. For instance, in Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, as president, had bitter conflicts with traditional leaders for their being excluded from the government. In Burkina Faso, a traditional emperor, Mogbo Naba of the Mossi people, attempted to use his traditional army to dissolve an embattled government Territorial Assembly (Skinner, 1998).

The loyalty crisis between the traditional and modern national sociopolitical systems continued to destabilise nation-building across Africa. The diverse

cultural groups arbitrarily bound together as countries by the colonisers become centres of sociopolitical solidarities and sectionalism (Nnoli, 1978). Their struggle for the control of national resources, individual and sectional aggrandisement, and corruption, led to resource mismanagement, poor governance and people's dissatisfaction, thereby threatening national cohesion and stability. All over Africa, there are instances of sociopolitical uprisings, violent insurgencies, and toppling of governments, which have further fostered political instability. "In the first two decades of this century, 13 successful coups took place in Africa. But from August 2020 to November 2023, seven African leaders were toppled by their military"(Ero & Mutiga, 2023). In the Sahel and West Africa, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger face instability characterised by military coups and militant groups' uprisings. The brutal conflicts in Sudan caused massive human displacements, while in Central Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo has suffered over 25 years of war.

Many scholars and organisations hold that the solution to the problems of African sociopolitical instability and underdevelopment is the operation of

liberal democracy and free markets. Unfortunately, the emphasis has been on the election of public officers rather than the protection of human rights and ensuring self-determination. The adoption of democracy by many African countries has failed to ensure good leaders and governance, despite constant reviews of the electoral process after every major election, like in Nigeria. The approach failed to address the root cause of the African sociopolitical problem, which borders on people's expression of their cultural and political orientation and self-determination. The recent political crises and the collapse of democracy in many African countries call for a critical reassessment of the situation.

This paper observes that the sociopolitical instability and underdevelopment of many African countries stem from a disconnect between the people's sociopolitical orientation and the prevailing postcolonial political structures inherited from imperial rule. The prevailing imperialist system is largely exclusionary, creating a divide between the political elites and the people, and contrasts with the indigenous African inclusive communitarian sociopolitical orientation. Its top-down command

structure is suppressive, stunting public criticism, alienating the people and fostering the emergence of self-serving leaders, which leads to corruption, poor governance and resource mismanagement. The paper holds that a sociopolitical system grounded in people's consciousness, orientation, and aspirations elicits committed engagement in the pursuit of good governance and the stability of the polity. It advocates pragmatic evaluations of the sociopolitical systems in African countries to align them with people's orientation.

The paper aims at establishing a sociopolitical model, built on the African traditional moral communal bond of community service, that can elicit the African spirit of community service and active engagement in governance, ensuring responsible leadership and resource management for national stability and development.

Viable political systems for African countries need not be an anachronistic revival of traditional systems but a hybridised, realistic, pragmatic system based on contemporary challenges and aspirations. African countries' sociopolitical consciousness has evolved over the years through their historical

experiences, challenges and interactions with other cultures. Their exposure should inform the development of pragmatic sociopolitical systems that would eclectically blend relevant modern and indigenous political features to enhance efficiency.

There cannot be a single universal political system for all African countries because of the diversity of cultures and experiences. However, there are some sociopolitical commonalities among Africans. Given the importance of familial relatedness in African social consciousness, as evidenced by strong family, community, and ethnic ties, a sustainable indigenous political system should be community-based, anchored in community solidarities, values, worldviews, orientations, and structures. It conveys a sense of relatedness, belongingness, autonomy, and integrity. Structurally, it creates a political pyramid with communities forming the base, managing their resources and sending their leaders as representatives to higher political levels ranging from groups of communities as councils, regions and national solidarities. Each level of the structure manages its resources and contributes to the higher level of governance, in contrast to the highly

centralised structure prevalent in many African states, where the national government controls and redistributes most resources. This decentralised arrangement would reduce excessive concentration of power at the centre, which fuels conflicts arising from assiduous struggle to control the centre and generates persistent grievances over sectional marginalisation.

The paper recommends a re-evaluation of sociopolitical systems in Africa to align them with each country's history, culture and contemporary challenges, as well as an eclectic blending of relevant modern and indigenous political structures for efficiency. This could lead to a pragmatic re-aggregation of some African nations along people's cultural lines. The vision is to achieve a pragmatic indigenous political model, based on modern African community consciousness and orientation, that would elicit people's active political involvement, efficient resource management, and national stability.

The research used philosophical hermeneutic analysis and historicist social development theory to examine the problems of sociopolitical failures in most African countries. Georg Wilhelm

Friedrich Hegel's dialectical historical theory of social development provides the theoretical framework of the analysis. The concept of liminality in social transformation, as developed by Victor Turner, cultural hybridisation by Philipp Wolfgang Stockhammer, and the post-colonial theory of Frantz Fanon serve as ideological expositions of Africa's sociopolitical predicaments.

Methodological approach and theoretical background

The basic methodological approach in this study is a qualitative philosophical hermeneutic analysis of the historicist social development of African countries. The study draws on materials from published works on the sociopolitical and economic history of African nations, as well as discussions of cultural contact, liminality, hybridisation and transformation. The theoretical framework of the analysis is the theory of dialectical historical social development by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Hegel, [1807] 2018). In addition, the theories of liminality by Victor Turner (1974), cultural imperialism by Herbert Schiller (Schiller, 1976), and post-colonial decolonisation by Frantz Fanon (1967) provide important conceptual lenses for

understanding Africa's sociopolitical predicament.

Historicism theory holds that the nature of social systems is relative to human experience and consciousness. Hegel ([1807] 2018) argues that social development evolves through people's efforts to overcome their existential challenges. It takes the dialectical process of the thesis (awareness of existing realities), the antithesis (the limitations of the situation to self-actualisation) and the synthesis (revision of the thesis to accommodate the antithesis for enriched self-actualisation). He maintains that society evolves through its trajectory of self-improvement by confronting its existential challenges with new, higher resolutions through self-sublation. Self-sublation, according to Hegel, is a process of a substance (being) negating itself to accommodate its limitations (nothingness) to achieve wholeness (fuller self-consciousness and being). It is a process of relinquishing limiting traits to accommodate better new ones for an enhanced being. A society rejects limiting aspects of itself to imbue better new traits through self-awareness and sublation in an organic evolution that handles its challenges. A people's history, consciousness and culture are essential in

understanding their sociopolitical predicament and improvement. Solutions that do not blend with a people's historical and cultural values will be less effective. The theory of historical dialectics in social development provides the framework for the paper's analysis.

Liminality comes from the Latin word *limen*, which means "threshold". It refers to the intermediate state of affairs in a transformation process. In its original concept, it denotes the state of ambiguity or disorientation in the middle stage of a transformation. This concept of liminality was first developed by Arnold van Gennep (1960) and was later modified by Victor Turner (1974), pointing out a state of being neither here nor there, between and betwixt two statutory positions in a transformation process. Here, we use the term to describe the intermediate stage in the process of sociopolitical and cultural change in Africa.

Hybridisation was initially conceptualised in Chemistry by Linus Pauling in 1931. Its basic essence is to improve the efficiency of a substance for a purpose. Here, hybridity is conceptualised from cultural and intentional perspectives, which implies a "deliberate, provocative

juxtaposition and fusion" (Ackermann, 2010, p. 23) of foreign and African political systems to arrive at a pragmatic political blend for sustainable governance in Africa.

Cultural Imperialism, according to Herbert Schiller, is "the sum of processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote the values and structures of the dominant centre of the system" (Schiller, 1976, p. 9). In Anthropology, Sociology, and Ethics, cultural imperialism connotes a situation in which a politically or economically dominant community imposes aspects of its own culture on a non-dominant community (Tobin, 2007). Cultural imperialism highlights the suppression of African cultures by dominant Western culture.

Frantz Fanon's (1967) post-colonial decolonisation theory highlights the negative psychological, cultural, and political effects of colonialism, advocating decolonisation as a path to reclaiming human dignity, social justice and development. He argues that

colonialism created deep psychological scars and an inferiority complex, alienated people from their identity and culture, normalised violence and domination, and created social hierarchies. He calls for a conscientious sociopolitical and economic transformation along cultural values to liberate and engage Africa on the path of national development and stability.

Africa's historical sociopolitical predicament

Before the arrival of European adventurers, Africans had indigenous political systems that organised societies in related familial ties, ranging from small nuclear families to groups of villages, communities and groups of communities covering extensive geographical areas. The systems were in forms of democracy, monarchy and oligarchy, fashioned to satisfy societal needs and promote communal social relationships. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard's study of African traditional political systems identified two basic structures: the centralised monarchy and decentralised republican authority, which they categorised into 'A' and 'B' systems. The 'A' system consists of societies with monarchs and centralised authority. The 'B' system consists of societies with

decentralised authority administered through republican community resolutions (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, 1978). The latter system is often led by family heads, councils of elders/advisers, village assemblies, and age grades, organised along family lines into large villages, towns and clans, while the former is characterised by the leadership of Kings, Obas, Sultans, Emirs and their vassals. These traditional indigenous political systems, whether centralised or decentralised, are community-based and operated on the communal collective consciousness, feelings and aspirations of the communities.

Through conquest, the European colonisers arbitrarily merged diverse African cultural groups into countries based on European economic interests and physical proximity of the territories, irrespective of their cultural affinity, distorting the African geopolitical map and ideology. The Berlin Treaty of 1885 ratified the scramble, parcelling and renaming of African peoples and their land by the industrialised powers of Europe (Chinweizu, 1978). Prah (1996) saw this as a distortion of the historical and cultural autonomy of Africans within the larger human family, creating new sets of identities that were legitimised by

colonial powers. The colonisers imposed foreign imperialist top-down command political systems on the territories to compel allegiance and control. They forcefully disrupted and suppressed the indigenous political systems through physical and psychological intimidation, economic deprivation and cultural defamation to establish their dominance, creating two parallel political systems in the territories: the imperialist and the subdued indigenous systems. (cf. Fanon, 1967; Onwudiwe, 2017; Bourne, 2015; Ezinwa, 2015; Odo, 2013; Anyadike & Okoye, 2011; Chamberlain, 2010; Rodney, 2005; Huntington, 1996; Ohadike, 1996; Prah, 1996; Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, 1978).

Eckholm-Friedman and Sundberg described colonialism in Africa as "a breakdown of the indigenous social order. The former political units were weakened, hierarchies broke down, and people were forced to participate in the projects of the intruders" (Eckholm-Friedman and Sundberg 1995, p. 204). Seeing colonialism as the destruction of the equatorial tradition, Vansina writes: "The equatorial tradition finally died in the 1920s. The conquest prevented the tradition from inventing new structures to cope with a new situation. Instead, the

colonial government invented them ... The people of the rainforests turned into cultural schizophrenics" (Vansina, 1990, p. 415). On the independence of the African countries, the African leaders sustained the imperialist political system in pursuit of modernisation and consolidation of their leadership positions against the traditional institutions (Nnoli, 1978).

Among the greatest obstacles to the progress of the new form of government and indeed the political development in Africa is the persistence of indigenous political systems, which were suppressed rather than completely displaced by the colonial and postcolonial state. The traditional indigenous systems remain the primary basis of the people's solidarity, creating strong sectional cleavages that threaten national cohesion. This implies that people's allegiance is more to the indigenous political institutions, and new political power seekers patronise them at their convenience (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Loyalties and allegiances thus remain divided, leaving the society in a state of liminality between indigenous and Western political structures.

The early African nationalists, like Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Julius

Nyerere, focused on attaining national independence, believing that it would bring political freedom, economic prosperity and national integration of diverse cultural groups. They adopted political systems similar to their colonisers to facilitate independence and as modernisation, not recognising that the European systems are products of their prolonged sociopolitical, cultural, economic and industrial evolution. They failed to effectively address the historical development and diverse cultural identities of Africans. The dominant paradigm was that there was a positive relationship among political freedom, economic development, as well as greater social and political integration (Skinner, 1998, p. 18).

The failure of the systems to handle the sociopolitical realities led to the resurgence of suppressed traditional community political consciousness, as sectional identities, threatening the stability of the countries. During the Cold War era, many African countries embraced Eastern, non-liberal-democratic postures to promote unity, nationalism and economic development. Some African leaders like Julius Nyerere espoused "African socialism where the state controlled the economy, insisting

upon the need for 'national integration,' in the face of a plethora of ethnic collectivities" (Skinner, 1998, p.19). Instead of addressing the underlying causes of community and sectional consciousness, many governments sought to suppress them through authoritarian measures, resulting in the widespread emergence of dictatorial governments across Africa in the latter part of the 20th century.

Lingering instability and underdevelopment in many African nations, coupled with the end of the Cold War, shifted political attention towards liberal democracy. Many African countries were compelled to democratise to participate in the international community. Sanctions were meted out to undemocratic countries. Democracy became an instrument of legitimisation of regimes. In many African countries, democracy has been all about electing public officers and not ensuring human rights and people's determination of governance. Governments and their political parties manipulate elections to remain in power. Elections have mostly serve the interest of the president and party (Gyimah-Boadi, 2021).

Indices of the failures of the political system

Some of the factors that indicate the failure of the extant democratic system in Africa are: Poor leadership quality and resource management, political instability, economic hardship, and lack of efficient basic societal infrastructure.

(i) Poor leadership quality and resource management

Africa faces a persistent leadership crisis characterised by corruption, weak governance and ineffective resource management, which continue to hinder sustainable development and social progress. The sociopolitical systems in many African countries alienate the populace from having control over their leaders. It produces elites who alienate themselves from the populace upon attaining public offices. Many political officeholders prioritise personal interests and the advancement of their ethnic, regional, or communal constituencies over broader national development goals, thereby fostering widespread public distrust and a vacuum in effective national leadership. There is a severe dearth of strategic, adaptive, and transformational leadership capable of handling crises, managing changes and developing long-term sustainable

strategies for national development. Consequently, many African states continue to experience a profound leadership crisis characterised by weak institutions, strong individual rule, widespread corruption and lack of accountability. These challenges undermine national cohesion, economic development and fuel social unrest (Achebe, 1983).

(ii) Political instability

Political upheavals have occurred across much of the African continent, affecting as many as 34 of the 54 countries. For instance, between 1990 and 2024, many African countries witnessed a series of controversial, contested and cancelled elections and political scuffles. From the political hiccups in Algeria in 1991 to the most recent ones in Tunisia, Burkina-Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire, there are up to 64 election-related political upheavals. The political disturbances in Angola in 1992, the cancellation of the Nigerian presidential election in 1993, the election contestations in Zimbabwe in 2006, in Kenya in 2008, in Cote d'Ivoire and again in Zimbabwe in 2011 (Hirsh, 2011), and the prolonged unrest and the eventual split of South Sudan in 2011, have been

very remarkable events. Some of these upheavals turned violent.

There is a high frequency of violent toppling of governments among African nations. (McGowan, 2003; Ben Barka & Ncube, 2012; Munshi & Schipani, 2021). Between 1956, when African nations started gaining independence, and 2022, there had been up to 388 coup d'états. Out of these, 97 were successful, 152 failed, and more than 139 were mere plots (Mwai, 2022). Recently, within the past five years (2020 -2025) there were eight military coups in West and Central Africa (Mali in 2020, Guinea in 2021, Chad in 2021, Sudan in 2021, Burkina Faso in 2022, Niger in 2023, Gabon in 2023 and Guinea-Bissau in 2025). These figures are very worrisome because they indicate that there is a high magnitude of political instability in the affected places. These coup d'états arise from the dissatisfaction of the populace with political leaders. Such conditions provide opportunities for the military to intervene in political affairs, sometimes violently seizing power and tenaciously holding on to it.

(ii) Economic hardships

Africa is facing harsh economic challenges. The continent is the poorest

in the global gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. In the 2024 International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook calculation of countries' GDP per capita, Sub-Saharan Africa was the poorest region with \$1,580.0, while North America stood at \$64,580. Luxembourg recorded the highest GDP per capita globally at \$131,380.00, while Seychelles, with a GDP per capita of \$21,880.0 GDP, ranked highest in Africa. At the other end of the spectrum, South Sudan recorded one of the lowest GDP per capita figures globally at approximately \$421.86, while Nigeria's GDP per capita stood at about \$1,110.0 (International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook, 2024).

GDP per capita indicates the average economic output, income, or wealth generated per person in a country, calculated by dividing a country's total GDP by its population. It points to a country's standard of living, economic development and productivity. In most African countries, the disparity between the rich and the poor is wide. For instance, the income of many workers in unstructured businesses in Nigeria is less than \$200 per annum. The recently approved official minimum wage of about \$525 (N840,000.00) per annum is yet to

be implemented by most state governments. The continent faces a high level of unemployment and underemployment. There are poor economic enabling environments, facilities and infrastructure, hindering productivity. These situations often translate into widespread hardship, social tension, frustration, and desperation, which increase tendencies towards criminality and subversion of national interest. It is very disturbing that many African countries are facing grave economic hardship despite the bountiful availability of both human and natural resources.

(iii) Lack of efficient basic societal infrastructure

Schools, roads, hospitals, health care, industries, shelter, food, water, electricity, communication, various types of energy, job opportunities, and other necessities of human life are in short supply in Africa. Meanwhile, even the scant provision of some of these necessities is not sustainable. This lack of sustainability is largely due to a poor maintenance culture, corruption, an inefficient political system and inept political leadership. In many African nations, there are numerous cases of diversion, recovery, and re-diversion of public funds intended

for essential societal infrastructure into private pockets, often orchestrated by lax public oversight and a lack of accountability of public officers to the people.

Solutions to African sociopolitical challenges

The plight of African sociopolitics has attracted a lot of discussion. Many scholars have argued that democracy is the key to salvaging Africa from sociopolitical instability and underdevelopment. International communities and organisations have been insisting on African countries adopting liberal democracy and free markets to improve development and national stability (Skinner, 1998). The implementation of international financial institutions' policies, like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, open market and deregulation policies, by some African countries has had severe adverse effects, because they do not align with their social economy.

The modern trend of legitimising regimes with democracy has shifted emphasis to the election of public officers. It has been a problem to achieve credible elections in many African countries.

Many of the elections are marred by manipulations, intimidation, and violence. In recent times, high-profile electoral crises in Kenya (2007–2008), Zimbabwe (2000–2008), and Côte d'Ivoire (2010–2011) have collectively caused at least four thousand deaths and hundreds of thousands displaced (Sheriff et al., 2021, p.9). The post-election crisis in Tanzania in 2025 claimed so many lives. Using Nigeria as an example, Osiki (2010) writes:

Bribery, use of thugs and physical weapons continued to be part of the political development of Nigeria and the country's electoral politics between 1999 and 2007. Elements of money politics, use of thugs and dangerous weapons were effectively used by the political class to alienate the electorate and have a firm grip on the machinery of government. (Tar, 2010, p. 89)

Some measures have been suggested to improve democracy in Africa. They include:

- i. National dialogues on democratic principles and the rule of law.
- ii. Transparency and accountability in public service
- iii. Reputable moral integrity and economic stability of public office aspirants.
- iv. Moderation of the remuneration and privileges of political officers
- v. Strengthening of the electoral process to align with emerging challenges.
- vi. Active engagement of the civil society, the private sector and the populace in governance and the electoral process.
- vii. Engagement of international organisations and regional communities in monitoring and overseeing the political system and electoral process
- viii. Stringent sanctions for abuse of office

These solutions have achieved limited successes because they do not address the root cause of the problem, which borders on the alignment of the sociopolitical system to the people's orientation and social solidarities.

Skinner (1998) holds that a viable African sociopolitical system must imbibe the interests and cultures of cultural groups

within it. He states, "Without a compromise that would ensure 'ethnic justice', neither so-called 'liberal democracy', nor any other species of government will succeed in Africa. If 'liberal democracy' presently has any evolutionary advantages, it will have to adapt to local realities, and its contours will be shaped by indigenous African socio-cultural traditions." (p.17).

Clair (1965) notes there are conflicts between the modern and traditional sociopolitical institutions, and any effective modernisation of the sociopolitical system should consider the gains and limitations of both systems in developing an integrated system. Lewis (1967) argues that the political economy of African states should be based on agriculture to build economies and an ethnic-based coalition in government. Here, Lewis is advocating an integrative community-based grassroots social economy for national development. Peter C. Lloyd believes that the stability of African states needs the reorientation of the masses to turn their allegiance from the traditional leaders to modern political leaders. He notes that the widening gap between the masses and the exotic lifestyle of the new political class is inimical to national stability. He calls on

the new political leaders to recognise people's loyalty to traditional political institutions and to integrate them into governance (Skinner, 1998). Miller (1970), writing about Tanzania, calls for the harmonisation of traditional sociopolitical institutions and the modern political system to avoid cultural and ethnic conflicts. He observed that traditional institutions have a great influence on the people, and that the non-recognition of these institutions will doom national integration and development.

Discussion

The import of an indigenous community-based sociopolitical system

The manner in which Western political systems were imposed on African people, the forceful suppression of African indigenous sociopolitical systems and the exercise of political control and domination (Morgenthau, 1967) distorted the African political terrain and left the people in a sociopolitical disorientation and loyalty dilemma. Lemarchande (1988, p. 149) refers to this dilemma as a "perplexity". The perplexity arises from the dilemma of maintaining allegiance to familiar indigenous sociopolitical identities while simultaneously adapting to imposed and often dominant foreign

sociopolitical systems. For instance, the people of the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria, who have a strong loyalty to the Sultan of Sokoto, often face the dilemma of balancing their loyalty between the Caliphate and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The duplication of political loyalty, which occasionally turns conflictual, dichotomises loyalty (Mudimbe, 1988), and weakens national cohesion and development. Consequently, political development in most African nations remain in a state of liminality, suspended between the autochthonous traditional and imperialist political systems. This situation stunts the development of a harmonious and dynamic political system, with political elites exploiting it for their selfish interests to the detriment of national stability.

Society does not grow by the mechanical configuration of social traits, but by the historical, organic blending of social traits towards societal aspirations. There is no universal social system that all societies need to copy; rather, a society develops and adopts new social traits through a historical dialectical process of evaluation and adaptation in pursuit of its well-being. Social development evolves from the historical dialectical

process of sublimation. Society continually engages in self-sublation to transcend its limitations through adjustment and revision in the preservation of self. It negates aspects of self (remodels aspects of its being) for higher self-actualisation and preservation (Hegel, [1807] 2018). In the negation, the self is not relegated but preserved as the centre of the determination of the course of action. Human beings are intentional beings who rationally act for self-preservation and actualisation of aspirations. Intentions determine the meaning and direction of human actions and not the mechanical sequence of events (Davidson, 2001). Humans' perceptions model their actions. Therefore, African sociopolitical systems should dialectically evolve from their historical past and perception.

It is necessary to highlight that cultural contact exposes society to diverse perspectives, novel approaches to issues and an enriched understanding of the world. It brings an intercultural exchange of ideas and practices that may trigger revaluation of the cultural status quo to enhance human well-being. The impact of cultural contact depends on the respectful engagement of the cultures. When cultural contact takes the form of

domination and suppression of the other, it triggers self-preservation resistance and tension, leading to possible inappropriate evaluation, adaptation and integration. The colonisers' mindset of the superiority of European culture and the forceful imposition of their political system on Africa led to the failure of adapting the system to African sociopolitical orientation, which continued to destabilise African nation-building.

Every human society is dynamic and dialectically improves itself through cultural interactions and self-reevaluation. No culture is perfect or bereft of goodness. This also is applicable to Africa. African interactions with the outside world have exposed the continent to a broader conception of reality and orientation. There is a need for a meaningful political restructuring of African states in cognisance of the contemporary orientation and realities. This translates to a pragmatic evaluation and synthesis of indigenous sociopolitical realities with global ideas through eclectic selection and integration of relevant foreign political traits to enhance the efficiency of the indigenous political system. This would involve combining indigenous and foreign

political systems, while developing new institutional structures to respond to modern sociopolitical changes and the transition to nationhood (Stockhammer, 2012).

The indigenisation of African sociopolitical systems is very crucial for stability and development. The European sociopolitical system evolved from the European historical experience and values. Asian Tigers' exponential development in the past 50 years points to the effective transformative indigenisation of elements of their colonial experience. Like in Africa, many Asian communities maintained relatively stable political systems before their colonisation. After the colonisation, Asian countries' social order deteriorated and became the poorest in the world. Nayyar (2019) explains that Asia was once a major part of the world economy, with a large share of both the global population and income. He argues that Asia later declined economically because of colonialism and imperialism.

Asia has had the highest development rate index in the world over the past half-century. It has diverse cultures, histories, orientations, and demographics. There was no one magical, universal

sociopolitical or economic system that accounts for the exponential transformation of the region within the past 50 years. Colonialism left the region more impoverished. It took a conscious reorganisation of their sociopolitical system to address the people's existential reality and consciousness to pull the region out of poverty and into exponential transformation and development. They indigenised their sociopolitical system by restructuring the imposed colonial exploitative system to align with the people's cultural values and challenges, and created a responsive sociopolitical system. The diversity of the people's sociopolitical histories and orientations gave rise to different political configurations ranging from authoritarianism and oligarchy to liberal democracies (Nayyar, 2019). Their attitude to foreign ideologies and practices is pragmatic, focusing on national integration and development. African countries need to emulate Asian enterprise in nation-building.

African sociopolitical interaction is community-based. The community provides communal values, a sense of relatedness, belongingness, autonomy and integrity among the people. The individual is recognised as an integral

part of the community, and it should be the base of his political activities. Community values humanise political activities and statecraft. Community-based political activity provides a "polycentric political order" that would recognise and accommodate all strata and facets of society in governance (Olowu, 2011, p. 16). An aggregate of related communities will constitute political units in the build-up to a nation, with the nation being a progressive negotiated union of the communities.

A community-based political system would foster community values and people's commitment to governance. It will encourage the emergence of community-oriented persons who are well-known in the community as leaders and representatives, rather than anonymous figures who appear only during the electoral process. Personal integrity, as attested by communities, would determine those selected or elected into governance, and communities can effectively sanction any leaders who fail in office.

Local communities should manage their resources and contribute to the national wealth. This will encourage community productivity and responsible resource

management. It will also douse sectional struggles and antagonism over the control of national resources for sectional interest, as the resources are with the communities. It aligns with the arrangements of the Nigerian First Republic regional government, where the regional governments were relatively autonomous in so many ways, especially in matters relating to the economy, basic needs, development, cultural values and sensitivities of the people.

Some people may argue that this arrangement will strengthen sectional consciousness and weaken national cohesion. National cohesion cannot be achieved through force, intimidation and suppression of people's natural social affiliations and identities. Rather, it is fostered through respect for people's social and psychological orientations, which helps build trust, legitimacy, and a stable society. The failure of many African nation-building is the imperialist attitude of suppressing people's social orientation and bonding, instead of building on them. European nations respect the uniqueness of various political blocs and freedom of self-determination in their governance to achieve national stability. Countries like Belgium maintain multiple recognised national languages. Despite its unitary

system, the United Kingdom has strong independent administrative units, and the federating states of the United States of America have strong local autonomy in managing their resources.

Recommendations

For the effective realisation of the objectives of this inquiry, we recommend a re-evaluation and restructuring of the sociopolitical systems of African countries through an eclectic synthesis of the traditional and foreign political features based on the people's contemporary socio-political consciousness and societal realities, which will crystallise into an indigenous community-based system. This may warrant the re-aggregation of some African nations to align with the mutually agreeable communities and cultural groups.

The community should be the basic unit of political activity, the starting point of all political structuring and galvanisation. From some related communities, a council is formed; from related councils, a region is created; and from the regionals comes the nation. The communities, either independently or in collaboration with other communities, should control their resources and

contribute to the sustenance of the nation. Individuals seeking public office should first establish themselves as credible and worthy representatives within their communities before ascending to higher levels of political responsibility. In this way, the communities would endeavour to present their best for their chances to attain high positions. Hence, people of integrity and impeccable pedigree are likely to emerge as political officeholders.

While advancing these major recommendations, some of the solutions proposed to enhance democracy, as outlined above, should also be considered. From this point of view, the candidates for public office should be thoroughly scrutinised to ensure their integrity and resourcefulness. People should be encouraged to actively participate in politics. International financial, security, and advisory assistance are welcome, but not to the detriment of the values and interests of the people.

Conclusion

The imperialist adventure in Africa is an undeniable historical fact in the annals of humanity. What might be arguable is the impact of this adventure on the socio-

cultural, economic, political, religious and psychological life of Africans. Despite the multidimensional nature of the impact, this enquiry focuses on the sociopolitical situation and investigates the effectiveness of the post-contact political systems in Africa. Using a qualitative philosophical hermeneutic analysis, the study reveals that post-colonial political systems in Africa have significant indications of failure in nation-building. The indications include poor leadership, political instability, economic hardship, and deficient basic societal infrastructure. The paper observed that part of the reasons for the failures are the negative effects of the imperialist disruption of indigenous political systems and the persistence of the state of political liminality, arising from the tension between inherited colonial institutions and indigenous sociopolitical traditions.

There is a strong desire among the populace for positive changes in African political fortunes. Many of the measures taken to stabilise African sociopolitics and economy failed because they did not address the cultural, ideological, and psychological roots of the problem. The problem lies in the disparity between the prevalent imposed imperialist political

system and the people's sociopolitical consciousness, orientation and values. The imposed top-down imperialist political system is not in agreement with the African community life, not responsive to the people's plight and consequently does not elicit people's allegiance and commitment, even of those elites who use it as an instrument of exploitation. Hence, this work recommends a radical restructuring of the political system to indigenise it to reflect the people's political consciousness and values.

The prevalent strong African sense of community in human aggregation calls for an authentic community-based African political system that will enhance effective people's engagement in governance and curb the excesses of

political leaders. To address the contemporary challenges, we recommend a pragmatic hybrid political system that incorporates relevant modern political structures in the indigenous political system to enhance efficiency. This will help African nations transition from their present political liminality to the development of an efficient indigenous community-based political system. This will bring governance to the people's control, produce responsive and accountable leadership, improve resource management and enhance authentic socio-political development of Africa. We do not recommend any specific political model, as the sociopolitical history and orientation of the people should determine the model. There is no one universal political system that suits all people.

ORCID IDs

Michael Chugozie Anyaehie: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8720-5292>

Sebastian Okechukwu Onah: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1670-5924>

Anthony Chimamkpam Ojimba: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8188-8392>

Nneka Ifeoma Okafor: <https://orcid.org/0000000243141255>

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