

**ACHIEVING AUTHENTIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN
CONTEMPORARY AFRICA:
A KWAME NKRUMAH'S PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH.**

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Abstract

Kwame Nkrumah's political philosophy could least be described as a quest for African Political liberation from colonialism, imperialism and even neo-colonialism. Prior to African political freedom from colonialism and imperialism, the voice of Nkrumah resounded the shores of Africa; from the West to the East and from South to the North. Till date the works of Nkrumah still beckons on African leaders who are said to be free for colonialism to avoid a second colonialism best described as neo- colonialism. Nkrumah as a radical rationalist and the proponent of pan-Africanism believes that the true and complete independence of African can only be achieved as a united people with a common goal. But the reality before us seems to suggest that Africa has already fallen victim of what Nkrumah warned against as most serious decisions about many countries in Africa are made by either the United States of America or the United Kingdom of Britain or France. Hence, there is a need to review Nkrumah's political philosophy in the contemporary African society. This work therefore, is an endeavor to research into how we can use Nkrumah's political ideas to better the lot of Africa in the area of political development. It shall adopt a critical descriptive method of inquiry and shall make its conclusions based on global practices and standards.

Keywords: Achievement, Authentic, Contemporary, Politics, Development, Philosophy.

Introduction

For every policy in life, there is philosophy and for every philosophy, there is an idea, and for every idea, there is a human agent. Africans and their freedom from colonialism and imperialism are clear cases of this assertion. The political liberation of Africa from colonialism and imperialism finds strong roots in the philosophy of Kwame Nkrumah. However, Nkrumah did not end in postulating philosophical solutions to Africa's problem of colonialism and imperialism, he also averred possible ways of maintaining the freedom gained. He saw the unity of Africa as a strong factor of maintaining political freedom and avoiding neocolonialism. However, the imperialists strive very hard to maintain disunity in Africa, for the perpetration of their selfish interests. According to Nkrumah,

The imperialists of today endeavor to achieve their ends not merely by military means, but by economic penetration, cultural assimilation, ideological domination, psychological infiltration and subversive activities even to the point of inspiring and promoting assassination and civil strife. (1961: p.125 – 134).

Nkrumah thus, drew the attention of the African leaders to his perceived ways the imperialists were using to separate the African continent, but insist that for Africa to be truly free, it must unite against the forces of the colonial lords and push away the devices of the imperialists. This unity, Nkrumah said must be three dimensional; the political dimension, the social dimension and the economic dimension. He acknowledged the

emergence of a colonial intelligentsia, the awakening of a national consciousness, the emergence of a working-class movement and the growth of a national liberation movement, as strong factors in the freedom of Africa from colonialism and imperialism. These factors led to what he called the African revolution and states his case for socialism as the most valid expression of the African conscience at the present time.

Political Development as a Necessity in Africa Today

The entire social life of a people is greatly tied to policies of their government and their method of leadership. Writing about Aristotle's postulation in Politics, Nnamdi says "Man has been described as a political animal and this postulation of Aristotle is believed to have been occasioned by man's social nature". (2011: p. 3). This assertion means that our existence is closely associated with politics as long as we are social beings. Politics in these circumstances means 'the activities associated with the governance of a country or area, especially the debate between parties having power' (Oxford languages, 2021: p.1). Politics is the set of activities that are associated with making decisions for people, groups, nations et cetera. Through the making of decisions, politics strongly affects the life of the people. The adjective 'political' qualifies everything that deals with politics, the powers, the decisions, the impact, et cetera. Indeed, Africa may have been out of colonialism but not out of neocolonialism and imperialism.

On the other hand, "The word Development is the growth or formation of something over a period of time". (BBC, 1992: p. 310). It enjoys synonyms such as "evolution", "growth", "maturing", "expansion", "enlargement", and "spread". (Oxford Languages, 2022: p. 1). Development is a product of the human mind. Therefore, the development of any place depends on the development of its inhabitants. According to one of the great philosophers of this era;

It stands to reason, therefore, that by developing the nationals of any nation, that nation implicitly gets developed, because 'it is the people who will eventually direct national affairs, manufacture modern facilities and improve social conditions.' Advancement is masterminded by human beings. (Eboh, 2011: p. 141).

But often African leaders mistakenly think that development entails the mere physical upgrade of infrastructures. This demonstrates the extent African leaders understand the logic of existence. They build roads, beautiful edifices and buy the latest gadgets in the world, without realizing that in as much as these infrastructures are important, it is more important to first develop the people who will manage those infrastructures. This could be the reason behind the consistent lack of maintenance of infrastructures in Africa. Many of the inhabitants neither understand the value of such infrastructures (therefore, prefer to loot them away) nor can they help to maintain them. In support of human development, Pope Paul VI argues that, "Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete, integral; that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man." (1967: p. 10). Thus, the state of the people reflects on the state of the society and vice versa.

Indeed, looking at the present state of life in Africa, it is no doubt that the critical minds

will be restless, as they search for the best possible way to help a continent such as Africa come out of the plaguing difficulties that emanate out of wrong policies or bad measures in the quest for the good life. Nkrumah noticed three major areas that Africa must be liberated from; economic, political and social dimensions. Indeed, these three areas have been the reasons behind the woes of African countries. On economy, it is an obvious truth that the African economy is on a continuous downward turn. All African currencies measure their relevance and strength using other foreign currencies such as the Dollar, Pounds and Euro. But that has evidently thrown the whole of the African economy into greater tension and steady declivity. The social and political strength of Africa, definitely affects the output from Africa. In turn, the output from Africa will have its consequence on the economy. On the social level, it is high time Africans realized how strong and special they are. The very fact that Africans, even those often neglected in their various countries, do exceedingly well, once they find themselves in other continents with better systems of operations, show that Africans are special breeds. Unfortunately, on many occasions, hardships and the quest for survival have often turn them to use their intelligence negatively, but the other truth is that a person who can utilize intelligence negatively, will be awesomely electrifying when such intelligence is channeled towards positivity and supported by a working system of operations. But unfortunately, Nkrumah noticed that the imperialists are continuously making efforts to dominate in Africa through economic penetration, cultural assimilation, ideological domination, psychological infiltration, and subversive activities. It is seeming that Africans have accepted the Western conditions as the right standard of doing things and consequently, play down on the avalanche of raw talents that are denied supports to come to universal limelight. On the remaining factor mentioned by Nkrumah being political factor, it is evidently visible that African leaders do no seem to know how they can positively influence existence in their various countries through political decisions. Most of the policies used to run the African governments are borrowed from other countries. The truth is that no two places are exactly the same and using what works in other places to govern another place may likely fail the test if the circumstances are varied. The method of coming into power without a clear idea of how to navigate it must change. It is true that leaders in Africa hardly come with the mindset of helping their various countries, but with the intention of getting wealth and power. As such, the African leaders are often bereft of ideas in leadership. Based on this reality, the political sector in Africa has suffered underdevelopment and continues to yearn for development and improvement. This development must be built on what is original to the people and their environment. The continuous borrowing of policies from the West must improve through the adoption of native talents. African leaders must realize the necessity of developing the African political life on what will assist the continent to achieve self-realization.

Political Liberation of Africa in Nkrumah's Philosophy

The concept of liberation in Kwame Nkrumah's philosophy entails total and complete freedom from external influences on economic, social and political matters. The existence of such influences, Nkrumah describes as imperialism. This term which is an old term in political history can be traced back to time of the disintegrated Roman Empire. According to Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy, "Imperialism can be described as an orientation which holds that a country can gain political or economic power over another

through imposed sovereignty or more indirect mechanisms of control.” (Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy, 2021: p.7). It is particularly focused on the acquisition of power by a state over another group of people. It is also described as a state policy, practice or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas. Having studied outside his immediate country and continent of origin and with exposed knowledge and experiences in the United States, Nkrumah realized that the African experience in the hands of the imperialists and the colonial masters left Africa exploited and underdeveloped. He noted three ways the imperialists can use to hold on to power in Ghana and Africa at large; through political control, economic control and social control.

(a) Political Factors:

One of the factors that Nkrumah believes the colonial masters and the imperialists used to get through to control of the African continent is political leadership. In exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, every other African country is said to be colonized at a point in time by one country or another, with most of them being either France, Britain, Belgium or Portugal. According to Alistair Boddy-Evans; “There are two countries considered by some scholars to never have been colonized: Ethiopia and Liberia.” (Boddy-Evans, 2021: p.1). As debatable as this might be, every other country in Africa was colonized and politically ruled by other countries. Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia; were all colonized by France. Botswana, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra-Leone, 'Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe; were all colonized by Britain, Burundi, Congo DR Congo and Rwanda were colonized by Belgium. Angola, Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau were colonized by Portugal. A few African countries; Ethiopia and Egypt particularly also colonized Eritrea and Sudan respectively in parts. Thus, Nkrumah was right to sense a deliberate interest from foreigners to control the political affairs of Africa that aided imperialist's exploitation. Nkrumah noted that:

The inevitable results of imperialism thus are: (a) the emergence of a colonial intelligentsia; (b) the awakening of national consciousness among colonial peoples; (c) the emergence of a working – class movement; and (d) the growth of a national liberation movement (1962: p. 38-45).

As such, with better knowledge and awareness and united fronts, the Africans sought for freedom which eventually came at different times for different countries. However, this freedom is yet to achieve its fullest realization from neocolonialism and imperialism. Nkrumah, therefore, advocates for true African independence in political matters. Africans must rise to the point of making political decisions based on the circumstances that are before them and not based on the expectations of a master/mistress who must detect what must done and how it must be done. Africans must rise up to the point where the leaders will only seek political advice from the other parts of the world as mere suggestions that may or may not be enshrined into their existence and not as commands that must be obeyed and meticulously preserved.

(b) Economic Factors:

Another factor that aided the colonialism of Africa is the economy. Through economic necessity, the colonial lords and the imperialists gained dominance of Africa by using African resources to improve themselves while releasing very minute fractions to Africans. The *emergence of a colonial intelligentsia and the awakening of national consciousness among people and the emergence of the working class, led to revolution against colonialism and its monopoly and control of capitals by imperialists against their dependent colonies.* According to Kwame Nkrumah,

The dominance of finance capital in the advanced capitalist countries; the export of capital to the sources of raw materials (imperialism) and the omnipotence of a financial oligarchy (finance capital), reveal the character of monopolist's capital which quickens the revolt of the intelligentsia and the working-class elements of the colonies against imperialism, and brings them to the national liberation movement as their only salvation (1962: p.38-45).

This shows that the imperialist controlled the capitals and continued to extend their colonies until "... the transformation of capitalism into a world system of financial enslavement and colonial oppression and exploitation of vast majority" (Nkrumah, 1962:38-45) led to the realization of the inalienable human rights of the African people to rule and govern themselves. The realization of these rights to self-government, eventually took away that direct control of the economy from their dominant masters and placed it on Africans. Nkrumah encourages Africans to work hard to maintain this freedom. However, the reality we see show that this freedom is far from Africa in a neo-colonized world of today, where Africans will even export their own natural materials to be refined by their former colonial lords and then sell back to them. What of the African currencies that are printed outside its continent? For a complete control of its economy, Africa must be willing to control of her goods and services.

(c) Social Factors:

The human person is both individualistic and social in nature. At the individual level, the human person relates only with himself and does not interfere in the existence of any other person. The internal biological processes of the human person should have no interference on the life of others except the human person external expresses them to affect others. The fact that such expressions could be otherwise done, shows that expressing them to interfere in the existence of others is not a necessary part of such process, rather the choice of the individual to interfere in the existence of others. But at the social level, the human person relates with other people and the entire society. Expressions of emotions, respect or disrespect for others, community worship, external interactions; all find their existence within the social aspect of human existence. According to Daniel J. Sullivan, "Philosophers and scientists are right when they insist on the strength and importance of man's instincts and sense appetites, and when they assert that he is deeply immersed within the impersonal forces of the physical universe." (2012:

p. 63). At the level of the social dimension of the human person, he is impersonal and through it, he also relates with the forces of nature. Colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism; all find themselves at this level of the human existence. Since the individual dimension combines with the social dimensions to eventually influence human decisions, it is sometimes noticed the influence of one aspect of the human existence on another. The colonial lords manifested their individualistic interests through the monopoly of the economic, political and social factors in their colonies; thereby dividing the people and causing class consciousness, both within nations and internationally among nations. According to Nkrumah;

The monopolistic possession of 'spheres of influence' and colonies; the uneven development of the different capitalist countries leading to a frenzied struggle between the countries which 'have' and the countries which 'have not'. Thus, war becomes the only method of restoring the disturbed equilibrium. (1962: pp. 38-45).

Nkrumah believes that the struggle for even development of the different capitalist countries strongly affected the social life in the society against the capitalists. He explained that the feeling of injustice and inequality led inter-capitalist alliance which helped the amalgamation of the front of the working class of the capitalist countries and the front of the toiling masses of the colonies for colonial emancipation. This alliance weakened imperialism and aided the freedom of the various colonies. Having realized the powerful destructive power of disintegration, Nkrumah called for a united Africa as the key to a true and complete freedom.

Nkrumaism as a Possible Solution

Nkrumaism also known as Consciencism could be called a trademark for Nkrumah's political philosophy. "Nkrumaism (sometimes consciencism) is an African socialist political ideology based on the thinking and writing of Kwame Nkrumah." (Wikipedia, 2020: p.1). Influenced by Marx-Leninist theory, Nkrumah postulated his philosophy of a United Africa as the only way of achieving true and complete freedom from colonialism and imperialism. According to him, "To draw the most from our existing and potential means for the achievement of abundance and a fine social order, we need to unify our efforts, our resources, our skills and intentions." (1963: p. 216). Unity therefore could be described as strength in the philosophy of consciences. This unity advocated by Nkrumah must be a strong bond to control the political, economic and social life of the Africans. Nkrumah maintains that;

In my view, therefore, a united Africa-that is, the political and economic unification of the African continent – should seek three objectives: firstly, we should have an overall economic planning on a continental basis Secondly, we should aim at the establishment of a unified military and defense strategy The third objective which we should have in Africa stems from the first two which I have just described. If we in Africa set up a unified economic planning organization and a unified military defense

strategy, it will be necessary for us to adopt a unified foreign policy and diplomacy to give political direction to our joint efforts for the protection and economic development of our continent. (1963: pp. 216-222).

Thus, Nkrumah believes that unity in our economy, security and foreign policies will lead to a developed Africa. According to him, “So long as we remain balkanized, regionally or territorially, we shall be at the mercy of colonialism and imperialism.” (1963: pp. 216-222). The theory of uniting Africa into one on economic, military and political foreign policies, was tagged African socialism. Nkrumah wrote that;

From the ancestral lines of communalism, the passage of socialism, lies in reform, because the underlying principles are the same. But when this passage carries one through colonialism the reform is revolutionary since the passage from colonialism to genuine independence is an act of revolution (2021: p.1).

It is a common knowledge that ancient Africa was communalistic in existence. Nkrumah advocates a passage into socialism can only come through a reform. For this reason, he supports the process of revolution, even when it demands some force. The truth is that many countries in Africa got independence through revolutions and demonstration. Nkrumah believes that for there to be a reform, there must be a revolution. By extension, this revolution remains a valid form of bringing reform, not only before the colonial lords, but even before bad leaderships. The philosophy of Nkrumah, therefore, is an ideology that supports forceful reforms, even when the leadership fails at the national level. Africans must therefore, rise up to the challenge, so that their leaders will understand that it is not enough to win elections and assume the places of power. There is a possibility of a revolution when the leaders fail in their duties and also refuse to act responsibly. African leaders must realize that the days in which they lead now demand accountability and responsibility. When there is failure, there will be consequences.

Critical Assessment of Nkrumah's Political Philosophy

Unity is strength and Nkrumah was not wrong to have advocated for a united Africa. The fact is that uniting and maintaining a united front within and beyond Africa, will always form a stronger bond and yield a better result. This was what Kwame Nkrumah understood very well and advocated for as a tool for African political development. However, the extent of this unity he sought for needs more time to be achieved if it could ever be achieved in this present life. He advocated for unity in three fronts of the African existence, being economic, military and socio-political dimensions. His philosophy of economic unity no doubt will be to form a united Africa and help Africa's industrial and economic powers. In fact, presently, the dream of having a common currency “Eco” in West Africa finds its root in Nkrumah's political philosophy. According to Mandisa Xuba, “The Eco is supposed to boost economic development in West African region and improve cross border trade”. (2021: p.1). This dream being pursued is one of the key postulations of Nkrumah in his zeal for African development. Secondly, his interest in a united military force is also necessary but not to the extent he postulates. The various African countries as long as they are independent cannot have a common military control.

If this is to happen, which country will be in charge of it? But unity of our military in fighting common foes is not out of place. The present-day experience in the hands of terrorists' groups in Africa exemplifies the need for unity in attacking a common enemy. The third perspective is the socio-political dimension, where he involved foreign policies. On this point, Nkrumah sought for a united front towards the rest of the world by Africans on policy-making. However, it seems clearly that Nkrumah tends to ignore the powers bequeathed on people and their sovereignty through political independence. Each country's policies are influenced by their needs and circumstances. Since the needs and circumstances of various countries are different, then their policies will differ as well. For the actualization of this socio-political unity, a bigger union with a competent authority must be established first. But Nkrumah did not highlight the necessity of this higher union in his philosophy. Thus, Nkrumah's political theory lacks coherence. Henry Bretton also supports this position in his criticism on Nkrumaism. According to him;

Nkrumaism was a verbalization of the requirements of the personal political machine. Professional scribes and amateurs, along with the Ghanaian left, were set to the task of providing the coherence and internal consistency required to give a semblance of philosophy to the chaotic assemblage of ideas and fantasies borrowed from all parts of the world and from all periods of history, frequently out of context (1964: p.87).

The aspect of Nkrumah's personal interests in pursuing a united Africa presumably gets a backing of Ama Biney. According to Biney, "From the beginning his personality dominated Ghana's external relations, because he felt that he had a specific mission for Africa which could be fully realized only under his control at the helm." (2021: p. 3). Nkrumah therefore wanted to extend his sovereignty to the entirety of Africa and to achieve this, he pushed first for the unity of Africa. As at the time of this push for this unity tagged pan-Africanism, Ghana's voice could be likened to Nkrumah's voice and Nkrumah's interest was almost one and the same as Ghana's interest especially before foreigners. Since Nkrumah was the central instrument in the pursuit of a united Africa, the achievement of this interest would have made Ghana the capital of Africa and Nkrumah the general president of Africa. As true as this might be, we must not deny the relevance of the philosophical ideas in Nkrumah's thoughts. Even philosophy itself is used for personal interest at times and till date has remained a discipline of individual arguments and theories.

Conclusion

Permit me to paraphrase a statement in the fourth chapter of Nkrumah's *Consciencism* which says that thought without practice is empty and action without thought is blind. (2021: p.10). Nkrumah reflected his political philosophy in line with the political challenges of Africa at the time of his reign in various positions in Ghana. From his exposure in United States of America and England, he realized that colonialism and imperialism would not have Africa in his desired state of existence. He pushed for the liberation of Ghana and Africa at large from political and economic manipulations in the hands of the colonial lords and the imperialists. He held conferences, traveled the length and breadth of Africa, postulated the unity of Africa as a way forward. However, no

human work is perfect. As such, he also received criticisms which should help in sharpening his philosophy for a United Africa. As such, contemporary Africa must adopt his philosophy to the extent that it can help Africa and jettison what is not necessary for the growth, progress and development of Africa. Africa must unite, but not exactly in the same sense of Nkrumaism. Africa can unite through a committed process of supporting one another through trade, sports, education, justifiable exchange of facilities, common pursuit of a peaceful and secured region. As such, this research condemns any form of violence among Africans irrespective of the cause of provocation and supports any form of supports that will bring about a greater Africa through a united front. Unity will be the strength of Africa's political development.

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