

# AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF KWASI WIREDU'S NON-PARTY CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY

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## Abstract

*The multi-party majoritarianism that is widely practiced in modern Africa seems unsustainable precisely because it excludes minorities from state power. To correct this socio-political injustice, Wiredu proposes a non-party consensual democracy as an alternative bonus for modern African states to adopt. The aim of this work is to appraise Wiredu's notion of non-party consensual democracy. Its objectives are to expose the idea of non-party consensual democracy in Wiredu's thought and critique this idea. In line with the above, the study interrogates Wiredu's thought on non-party consensual democracy. Wiredu identifies the notion of non-party consensual democracy with a form of democracy where by the party is not the basis for acquisition and or exercise of state power. Here, Wiredu argues, the party with the highest seats does not form the government since all the representatives are part of the government in their individual rather than associational capacity. Therefore, consensus is always the watchword in making decisions in governing council in lieu of voting. Although Wiredu acknowledges that certain issues may arise in the governing council that no amount of dialogue can mediate or reconcile dissenting opinions. To this, he proposes a willing suspension of disbelief in the prevailing option on the part of the residual minority. This position has informed some scholars' opinion that Wiredu's consensual democracy is no different from majoritarian democracy. Still, others have argued that a non-party consensual democracy is a theoretical farce. Contrary to these schools of thought, this work argues that Wiredu's non-party consensual democracy is a different form of government to majoritarian democracy; and in fact, can work in practice. The work concludes that a non-party consensual democracy, if adopted, can go a long way in restoring political stability in modern Africa. The study employs analytic method of philosophy.*

**Keywords:** Kwasi Wiredu, Democracy, Non-party Consensual, Africa

## Introduction

The current democratic model known as multi-party majoritarianism which is routinely recommended and widely practiced in most modern African states appears to rear out its ugly head. This is due to its tendency to consistently position certain groups that have numerically found themselves in the minority outside the corridors of state power. As

Wiredu rightly observes, where the system in use is such as to cause some groups to periodically be in substantively unrepresented minorities, then seasonal disaffection is bound to become institutionalized (186). As an alternative paradigm to the multi-party majoritarian democracy, therefore, Wiredu proposes non-party consensual democracy for modern Africa. This work attempts a re-appraisal of Wiredu's thought on non-party consensual democracy.

In the 14th chapter of his *Cultural Universals and Particulars...* titled "Democracy and Consensus: A Plea for a Non-Party Polity", Wiredu argues for the adoption of consensual democracy in modern African states. For him, consensual democracy is a form of government where by the party is not the basis for acquiring and exercising state power. He observes that under such dispensation, parties are only outposts or centers for independent thoughts or for the expression of plurality of views. He argues that albeit people may use the party to propagate their views or ideas through which they may be elected into the parliament or government. Nevertheless, the party with most seats in parliament does not form the government as in the case of majoritarianism, rather, all the representatives in council are part of the government in their individual rather than associational capacity. Therefore, decision-making in council should be by consensus. Wiredu observes further that under consensual democracy too, certain issues may come up in the parliament that unanimous position becomes difficult to arrive at even by dialogue, for example, there may be a debate on either we are to go to war or we are not. The point here is how a group without unanimity may settle on one option without alienating anyone? This is where consensual democracy proves more challenging! To this, Wiredu recommends that the opinion that enjoys the most backing in parliament should prevail over and above the one which is backed by only few members of the parliament. He writes: "This is the severest challenge of consensus, and it can only be met by the willing suspension of disbelief in the prevailing option on the part of the residual minority" (183).

This thought system has provoked reactions among Wiredu's commentators, distinguishing them into different schools of thought. One school of thought argues that Wiredu's consensual democracy is no any different from majoritarian democracy which he pretends to be arguing against. Another school of thought argues that a non-party consensual democracy is a theoretical farce. Contrary to these schools of thought identified above, this work argues that Wiredu's non-party consensual democracy is a different form of government to majoritarian democracy; and in fact, can work in practiced. The remaining part of this paper is dedicated to this argument.

### **Philosophical Foundation to Wiredu's thoughts on Non-Party Consensual Democracy**

The main scholarly aim of Wiredu treatise was to help get African philosophy, once disregarded as 'inferior' or 'non-existent', recognised worldwide as the equivalent of all other philosophies. Sharing this view, Martin Ajei summed up Wiredu's work as follows:

Between the 1970s and 1990s, technical debates on the nature of African philosophy, as a sub-discipline of philosophy, were rife. Two questions that decisively shaped these discussions were: what is the distinguishing feature of an African philosophical work, and who counts as an African philosopher? Two central points of view on these questions emerged – the 'universalist' and 'particularist'.... Particularists were deemed to consider collective systems of thought, particularly in traditional African cultural settings, as essential to African philosophy; whereas universalists considered philosophy as a practice that has the same methodology and questions everywhere, and insisted African philosophy is an activity that conforms to such universal philosophical practice (qtd in Duodu Web).

As a pivotal opinion in the discussion of these questions, Wiredu, usually considered to be a universalist, prescribed for African philosophy an orientation that involves constructive self-criticism, i.e., examination of the intellectual foundations of traditional life, to identify the inelegant features of traditional thought and practice, inelegant in the sense of standing in the way of human wellbeing: of their being anachronistic, superstitious or authoritarian. He advocated the charting of new conceptual directions as guides for addressing these features in the contemporary world (Web).

On a more global perspective, however, Wiredu, in his *Cultural Universals and Particulars...*, confronts the paradox that while Western cultures recoil from claims of universality, previously colonized peoples, seeking to redefine their identities, insist on cultural particularities. For Wiredu, universals, rightly conceived on the basis of our common biological identity, are not incompatible with cultural particularities and, in fact, are what make intercultural communication possible. Drawing on aspects of Akan thought that appear to diverge from Western conceptions in areas of ethics and metaphysics therefore, Wiredu calls for a just reappraisal of these disparities, free of thought patterns corrupted by a colonial mentality. Sharing the insight, they got from reading Wiredu's *Cultural Universals...*, Bird and Karp aptly observed that Wiredu's exposition of the principles of African traditional philosophy is not purely theoretical; he shows how certain aspects of African political thought may be applied to the practical resolution of some of Africa's most pressing problems (qtd in the preliminary pages of Wiredu's *Cultural Universals...* no. pg. no.). His return call to African traditional system of government, namely: non-party consensual democracy attests to this fact.

Without under-estimating the importance of challenging the pejorative assessments of indigenous African thought in philosophical history, Wiredu was more interested in evaluating the value that such thought can potentially have for constructing an African future. Against this backdrop, Ajei reports that Wiredu "... elaborated an approach, conceptual decolonisation, ..., to guide African philosophers as they strive to affirm themselves as generators of knowledge in the social, scientific and humanistic disciplines, and as educators of a new generation of citizens" (qtd in Duodu Web). It is worthy of note that Wiredu's work spans several key areas of philosophy: logic,

metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy and meta-philosophical considerations. In this work, however, we are concerned with one area: his socio-political philosophy, particularly his thought on a non-party consensual democracy.

### **Consensus Democracy in Wiredu's Thought**

In the 14th chapter of his *Cultural Universals and Particulars...* titled "Democracy and Consensus: A Plea for a Non-Party Polity", Wiredu alludes to the representative character of governance in his traditional Akan society which was based on kinship. Here, Wiredu established that each lineage had representative in the local governing council presided over by the natural ruler of the town called *ohene* (chief); and similarly, each local governing council had representative in the divisional governing council presided over by the paramount ruler; and each divisional council had representative in the regional council presided over by the Ashanti *ohene* (King of Ashanti) in that ascending order. This entails that every lineage, nay, everyone was duly represented on all levels of government.

Now, representation was not only formal but also substantive. These reflect in both the constituent of the parliament and the content of its decisions or resolutions. Specifically, the latter case is where consensus echoes the loudest in ancient Akan state craft as each representative is allowed, by right, the freest airing space to submit his opinion on any matter of public concern as well as grant his consent to any prevailing position before it can be passed on to become a law. Speaking on consensus, Wiredu asserts thus: "... all parties are able to feel that adequate account has been taken of their points of view in any proposed scheme of future action or coexistence" (183).

Lineage was the basic unit of government. The criteria for leadership selection on lineage level were seniority in age, great rhetoric abilities, wisdom and a sense of civic responsibility (184). In a traditional society as ancient Akan, it was believed that wisdom comes with age and since it was the objective merit of a position that qualifies for its adoption in parliament, logical persuasiveness was taken as a very serious criterion to consider before electing a person as leader. All these qualities are often collected in the most senior, but non-senile, member of the lineage. In that case, election is almost routine. But where these qualities do not seem to converge in one person, election may entail prolonged and painstaking consultations and discussions aimed at consensus (184). The leadership choice proposed by the "queen mother" has to be approved by the council and endorsed by the populace through an organization known as "the young peoples' association" in order to become final (184–185). Pronouncement of the king does not automatically become law but the consensus of the parliament. In council, the king's words only pass as mere opinion, just as those of other members of the council; and must pass through rigorous deliberative process of the parliament to become law if, eventually, it is agreed upon by members of the council. This is why the Akans say there are no bad kings, only bad councilors. Nevertheless, a king can be de-stooled and certain shortcomings result in the depose of a king. These include cases of physical, intellectual

and moral degeneration. For example, when a king becomes tyrannical:

Contrary to a deliberately fostered appearance, the personal word of the chief was not law. His official word, on the other hand, is the consensus of his council, and it is only in this capacity that it may be law; which is why the Akans have the saying that there are no bad kings, only bad councilors. Of course, an especially opinionated chief, if he also had the temerity, might try, sometimes with success, to impose his will upon a council. But a chief of such habits was as likely as not to be eventually deposed (185).

The faith in consensus politics was based on the supposition that all human beings have common interest even though individuals' interest appears different in reality: "... this adherence to the principle of consensus was a premeditated option. It was based on the belief that ultimately the interests of all members of society are the same" (185). This notion finds expression in a remarkable construct of fine art: "... a crocodile with one stomach and two heads locked in struggle over food. If they could but see that the food was, in any case, destined for the same stomach, the irrationality of the conflict would be manifest to them" (185).

Further, Wiredu submits that through dialogue, "... human beings have the ability eventually to cut through their differences to the rock-bottom identity of interests" (185). Yet he acknowledges the fact that at certain points, issues may arise in parliament that no amount of dialogue will be possible to resolve: "... certain situations do, indeed, precipitate exhaustive disjunctions which no dialogic accommodation can meditate. For example, either we are to go to war or we are not" (183). To this, Wiredu proposes a willing suspension of the numerically minority position by those who hold it in favour of the numerically majority position in council. He writes: "This is the severest challenge of consensus, and it can only be met by the willing suspension of disbelief in the prevailing option on the part of the residual minority" (183). However, Wiredu observes further that when an issue in council consistently ends in a stalemate and threatens to put state affairs on a standstill, voting should be used to break such an impasse:

In a consensus system the voluntary acquiescence of the minority with respect to a given issue would normally be necessary for the adoption of a decision. In the rare case of an intractable division a majority vote might be used to break the impasse. But the success of the system must be judged by the rarity of such predicaments in the workings of the decision-making bodies of the state" (190).

The above discussion is what non-party consensual democracy in Wiredu's socio-political thought looks like.

### **A Critique of Consensus Democracy in Wiredu's Thought**

Wiredu's thought on non-party consensual democracy has been taken up in various forms by his commentators. For example, one school of thought interprets his non-party consensual democracy as simply majoritarianism due to the chance it gives to majority

opinions in council to prevail over and above its minority counterpart. Prominent scholars in this school include Villoro, Olanipekun, Olowoniyi, among others. In her 2021 "An Assessment of Kwasi Wiredu's Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-Party Polity" for example, Olowoniyi argues that:

...substantive does not equate to total representation and so what becomes of the few left out, if only a substantive aspect is taken care of. What becomes of the minority left? Are they not the ones the so-called substantive in Wiredu's argument supposed to take care of? Subsequently, will substantive representation not indirectly equate to majoritarianism which Wiredu rejected in the end and thereby leads Wiredu's argument into a *reductio ad absurdum*... The argument here therefore is that if consensual democracy and majoritarian democracy are both be-deviled, then, why should Wiredu argue that one should be preferred to the other?(7).

It is important to note here that while in majoritarianism, the majority opinion enjoys superiority in council simply by dint of their number; and regardless of how the minorities feel about the conclusions in parliament, in consensual democracy, the majority is only privilege by the willingness of the minority to suspend their opinion in favour of the majority. Not only because the minority also have a fair hearing in the decision-making process; and that the adoption of a certain conclusion is dependent on the minority, but also because in consensual democracy, no one group is consistently positioned in minority. Positioning in the minority in council is often adhoc. As Wiredu himself puts it: "In the case under discussion the majority prevail not over, but upon, the minority – they prevail upon them to accept the proposal in question, not just to live with it, which is the basic plight of minorities under majoritarian democracy" (190). It suffices to say, therefore, that the voluntary acquiescence of the minority with respect to a given issue being necessary for the adoption of a decision; and the impromptu positioning of members of council in minority– the two of which are the hall mark of consensual democracy– makes it different from majoritarian.

Again, other scholars have read totalitarianism in Wiredu's plea for a non-party consensual democracy. For them, consensus seems much as an attack on people's liberty to hold opinion and may be likened to a totalitarian unanimity. In their interview with Wiredu titled "Emergent Issues in African Philosophy: A Dialogue with Kwasi Wiredu", Eze and Metz expressed this sentiment when they inquired from Wiredu thus:

I take you back to the issue of consensus in the African system of thought. You gave us a motif of a crocodile that has two heads struggling for food. If only they know that the food goes into the same stomach, they will not struggle for it. This is how you explained the process of ethical decision among the Akan and how they arrive at consensus. But don't you think that consensus does not accommodate every particular view point? In this sense, consensus is somewhat likened to a totalitarian unanimity, and I am wondering whether you would rather substitute the crocodile example

with a kind of a realist perspectivism when you consider, for example, Lyotard's critique of Habermasian consensus. Or would your use of consensus be any different from that of Habermas? If not, don't you think that this Kantian foundation and orientation stifles individual liberty to some extent? (75).

To liken Wiredu's consensual democracy to totalitarian unanimity is a misinterpretation of Wiredu's thought system. In fact, the very notion of consensus presupposes an original position of diversity. Wiredu established that on first appearance of an issue in parliament, members of council are at liberty to hold various opinions because the better option to adopt is not always readily known. Which is why dialogue is taken as the means of reaching this consensus. This is done through "... the smoothing of edges, to produce compromise that are agreeable to all or, at least, not obnoxious to any" (183). Therefore, what should naturally impress on the mind of Wiredu's scholars is that, prior to unanimity in council, dissenting opinions are held in council. This suggests plurality of views or liberty to hold opinion. Wiredu also identifies consensus with 'agreed joint action', that is, when there is a willing suspension of disagreement in council, making possible agreed actions without necessarily agreed notions. He writes:

A consensus society is one in which people can agree about what to do even though they disagree on some issues about what ought to be done or what can be done. So, the question of consensus should not be identified with unanimity. There is going to be unanimity only regarding what is to be done, not unanimity regarding what ought to be done. Now, unanimity regarding what is to be done is obviously not an easy thing to achieve (75–76).

The underlying philosophy here is that, under consensual dispensation, people are not forced to change their cognitive opinions regarding certain issues. People may change their opinions only when they are persuaded and convinced by the objective merit of other's contrary views or opinions.

Further, some of Wiredu's commentators have likened his plea to a theoretical farce on the basis that it was only practiced in ancient, simple African societies that were based on kinship. For example, Fayemi— a leading scholar of this school— notes that the socio-political and economic reality of today is different from those of traditional societies hence, consensual democracy is not possible in modern African states. He writes:

We should note that what actually facilitated the adoption of consensus principle in... traditional African societies was because of the need for collective labour in the then agrarian economy, which demanded cooperation, mutual assistance and shared decisions. Because of this economic motive, consensual procedures were not usually questioned as they became part of a commonly accepted tradition of those communities. But this economic condition that facilitated the spirit of consensus among traditional Africans is no longer there in our today's world. While political

democracy in our world today has its own economical ideological correlate, which is capitalistic and individualistic in character, it is quite difficult, if not impossible to return to the agrarian mode of economic and societal organization in contemporary Africa (221).

While it may be difficult to establish consensual democracy in modern African states, it is not entirely impossible. On a general note, a consensual democracy is a more tedious system to adopt. However, its justice to human rights, especially the right to decisional representation, makes it to stand out among all the alternative systems of governance. Even in simple societies, people had disagreement. But the willingness for a polity based on consensus made it possible in reality. Therefore, a similar willingness to adopt a consensual polity in modern Africa will make it a reality just as it was in the past. Wiredu himself insists with lots of sense that unanimity, hence, consensus is a difficult thing to arrive at even in simple societies. The difference is that it once happened in human societies. And this same practice can still happen. He writes:

Now, in some of the things I have written about consensus, I have suggested that at least in some African countries, there is a history of consensus, the operation of consensus in decision making. I know that these societies are supposed to have been simple societies, and so consensus may have been easy for society of that kind but not in contemporary societies. I have heard that criticism. That criticism does not impress me much, but at least it grasps the point one is making that in traditional societies it is possible for people to take decisions about what is to be done, take that decision unanimously. Now, people were ready to accede to certain decisions even if they seem to be based on cognitive assumptions which they did not agree with. The hope was that perhaps the time will come when they will also be in situations whence they are not the ones making the concessions but others are. As for the complexity of modern society, that is true, but you know people even in the simplest societies, people can get into disagreement upon matters about which they feel strongly. The difference is going to be whether we have had a practice in consensus decision-making

The prospect for a consensual democracy in modern African states lies in the fact that, if it worked in the past, however primitive societies would have been, it can and will work in the present by the simple acts that show commitment to consensus in our modern African states.

### **Consensus Democracy and Human Rights**

For Wiredu, a non-party consensual democracy secured all of the fundamental human rights we had in traditional African societies. These rights include the right to land, the right to fair hearing, the right to self-government, religious freedom; and the right to participation in politics (or decisional representation), among others. However, he finds

these ideals consistently violated under our modern multi-party majoritarian dispensation. He wrode: "... while considerable blame may be ascribed to the moral degeneracy of some politicians, it may well be that the root of the problem lies in the form of democracy that is routinely recommended for all. That form might be called majoritarian democracy" (172). To this end, Wiredu proposes a returning-back movement to non-party consensual democracy for modern African states. Wiredu was convinced that the moral bonus of this return movement is that, it will equally bring back the culture of respect for human rights just as it were in ancient African societies. He writes: "... I propose to explore the hypothesis that a consensual form of democracy might be better able to forestall, if not all, then certainly many of the causes of the violation of human rights" (172).

Wiredu so rightly observes that the social evil of political oppression is what severely exercised scholars' contemporary concern as regarding rights: "Violations may come from individuals or from governments. In the former case they are private transgressions; in the latter they constitute political oppression. The latter is what principally engages contemporary concerns with human rights" (172). For specificity and ease of analysis, thus, he focused much of his attention on the right to political participation and or more stringently the right to decisional representation. This also owes much to the existential basis of his plea.

The opinion Wiredu is projecting here is not far-fetched. For him, under consensual democracy, the party with the highest seats does not form the government. The happy consequence of this is that, every representative becomes a sharer in the powers of government in his or her individual rather than associational capacity. When this happens, issues of majority/minority divide in council are bound to be relegated into the dustbin.

The aim with which Wiredu proposes such a non-party consensual system is to secure substantive representation where by everyone is allowed, by right, to speak objectively and listen to others' opinion more open-mindedly in search of a consensus. With representatives not having a party to protect particular interests, what counts in parliament becomes an opinion with the most objective merit having superior standing as the negotiated consensus of the council. Only through such arrangement can we realize a national identity which is pivotal for national development.

The bearing of Wiredu's consensual democracy with human rights is so profound. Take for example, very many people co-exist in the society. Different people presuppose distinct opinions. So, to secure a very high sense of belonging in all quarters of the state, members of the society owe each other the moral duty of audience to each opinion. Therefore, the right to opinion, is by nature, a fundamental human right; and Wiredu's consensual democracy protects this right by way of its insistence on decisional representation in governing council. Indeed, non-party consensual democracy in light of

Wiredu is a form of government for the protection of human rights, especially the right to representation, to say the least!

### **A Plea for Consensus Democracy in Modern Nigeria**

Through colonialism down to post-independent Nigeria, our reality has been a collection of various ethnic groups as a complete whole. Speaking on the nature of the Nigerian state, Achebe, in his *There Was a Country...* writes:

It was one of the most populous regions on the African continent, with over 250 ethnic groups and distinct languages. The northern part of the country was the seat of several ancient kingdoms, such as the Kanem-Bornu– which Shehu Usman dan Fodio and his jihadists absorbed into the Muslim Fulani Empire. The Middle Belt of Nigeria was the locus of the glorious Nok Kingdom and its world-renowned terra-cotta sculptures. The southern protectorate was home to some of the region's most sophisticated civilizations. In the west, the Oyo and Ife kingdoms once strode majestically, and in the midwest the incomparable Benin Kingdom elevated artistic distinction to a new level. Across the Niger River in the East, the Calabar and the Nri kingdoms flourished (1–2).

To say that this colonial arrangement called Nigeria was done by the white man without the knowledge of the African peoples whom were destined to continue living together as one is not in doubt. Such is the truth of this claim that Achebe once remarked thus:

The rain that beat Africa began four to five hundred years ago, from the “discovery” of Africa by Europe, through the transatlantic slave trade, to the Berlin Conference of 1885. That controversial gathering of the world's leading European powers precipitated what we now call the Scramble for Africa, which created new boundaries that did violence to Africa's ancient societies and resulted in tension-prone modern states. It took place without African consultation or representation,... (1).

These groups that form Nigeria are sub-divided into two: the majorities and the minorities. At the dawn of our independence in 1960, the whites seem to have privileged those in the majority over and above the minorities through the multi-party majoritarianism that they foisted upon us as the ideal way to govern ourselves. As Gundu once observed:

In Northern Nigeria for example, the British had privileged the Hausa Fulani against what they identified as pagans in the region, encouraging and emboldening them to overrun and choke the 'pagans' who have remained a footstool with insufficient political and economic space to contribute on equitable terms in the country (137–138).

It is now common place that before the minorities in Nigeria could have a fair share in

state power, they, most often, have to bow in alliance with any of the majority groups. Achebe established this point when he says:

The minorities of the Niger Delta, Mid-West, and the Middle Belt regions of Nigeria were always uncomfortable with the notion that they had to fit into the tripod of the largest ethnic groups that was Nigeria—Housa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. Many of them— Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Itsekiri, Isang, Urhobo, Anang, and Efik— were from ancient nation-states in their own right. Their leaders, however, often had to subsume their own ethnic ambitions within alliances with one of the big three groups in order to attain greater political results (47).

This privileged position has breed arrogance in the minds of the majorities, allowing them to take ownership of the entire country even though they supposedly share the space with others called minorities. Corroborating this argument, Sir. Ahmadu Bello was reported to have once said:

The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities in the North as willing tools and the South as a conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future" (qtd in Gundu 134).

Disaffection by this disadvantaged position, most Nigerian minority groups have since relegated to the narrow enclaves of regionalism or ethnicity in order to cut themselves loose off Nigeria and fully assert themselves as human beings. This finds expression in the several attempts to cessation by many minority groups we have witnessed in our recent history. For example, the February, 1966 incidence when Isaac Adaka Boro hoisted a red flag bearing a crocodile to declare an independent Niger Delta State, or the fact that after the Nigerian Civil War, The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) had declared the State of Biafra as recent as in May, 2000. More so, the Middle Belt Congress from available information is also working towards a Middle Belt Federation (Gundu 133–134).

Since majoritarianism emphasizes more on the party with the majority number to take the day, the prospect of securing state power by those who have numerically found themselves in minority is quite blur, if not completely impossible. There is no gainsaying that people who do not feel involved in the state will be disaffection by such an arrangement. Their attempt to fight the state or try to create a space for themselves in which they could enjoy an unbridled destiny often degenerates into fracas, hence, political instability.

The Nigerian state we have acknowledged above is a country that plays host to many ethnic nationalities with a few belonging in the majority and many in the minority. In order to continue as one nation, however, it is important for us to first remember that our

country is a delicate project since at birth. Therefore, we ought to be willing to wish away our subconscious identity– which is a natural enemy of the state– in favour of a more refined, national identity. This national identity is capable of bringing us peace and preserving our unity which is necessary for our continued co-existence and progress as a people. But how can we achieve this national identity? This work proposes that a good starting point for this to happen is for us to engage the challenges we face as a result of the system foisted upon us at independence. In line with Wiredu, therefore, this work suggests a return to a non-party consensual democracy as an intellectual capital for our modern usage. Such a system is best for us not only because it is accommodating to all the constituents of our Nigerian state in terms of power appropriation, but also consensus was an integral part of our social life in ancient Africa. Hence, we may safely say that it is indigenous to us as Africans. The envisioned benefits of establishing a consensual democracy is unity, peace and progress as the system will acknowledge all the divides that are in Nigeria in matters of state power. Unless we start thinking in the direction for this change of government towards adopting a form of government that is indigenous and consistent with our mentality as Africans, our country will continue to, as John Campbell will say, dance on the brink– unfortunately!

### **Conclusion**

By and large, Wiredu's return call to non-party consensual democracy in modern Africa is a plausible intellectual effort as it acknowledges the challenges faced by minorities in modern African states in terms of rights, especially the right to representation. His intellectual effort lead to the intellectual unraveling of one fundamental human right, namely: the right to 'decisional representation' in government. This is equally an enviable African contribution to Jurisprudence in terms of human rights discourse. Although the United Nations Universal Declarations of Human Rights acknowledges the right to representation in government, its prescription for this right is not as stringent and instructive as might have been hoped. It is worthy to note that in majoritarianism, there may be formal representation without its substantive correlate– and here is where minorities run into trouble because decisions in council are taken by dint of number. Wiredu's introduction of decisional representation affords minorities the opportunity to influence decisions in council on an even handed basis with others as it takes care of both formal and substantive representation. And decisional representation is the hall mark of consensual democracy. Its elimination of party, for example, gives equal political power to everyone to be able to negotiate between different positions in parliament. Under such system which everyone feels carried along, therefore, political stability will become characteristic of the state.

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