

The Political Legitimacy of Traditional African System of Governance: Ethical Considerations for Majoritarian Democracy

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Abstract

This paper examines the system of politics and governance in pre-colonial African societies. It examines how they enabled that era to produce societies that were democratic and that took the interests of their community members into consideration, without neglecting any group. This becomes pertinent in view of the extent of non-democratic practices that currently characterise post-colonial African states. The paper considers what contemporary African societies can learn from the pre-colonial approach to good governance.

Keywords: Culture, tradition, consensus, communalism, individualism, humanism.

Introduction

This paper examines the system of politics and governance in traditional African societies, and their roles in promoting an ethical and democratic society. The paper further explores the benefits of this primordial system for contemporary African states. Pre-colonial African societies were inherently democratic. This can be noted, for instance, in cases where community members or their representatives participated actively in debates and discussions on community issues at public fora. This system of governance was non-adversarial, unlike what obtains in the western majoritarian democracy which is more concerned about consolidation of power and the protection of the interest of the majority. The indigenous communities were largely administered by chiefs, while final decisions were made in consultation with council members and the elders.

Wiredu notes that political interactions and democratic engagements in traditional African communities were channelled towards achieving consensus. The kind of political system in this era which promoted consensus building did not dispense power to individuals on the basis of majority votes. Moreover, it was not characterised by competition for dominance and power among political parties. Community members were able to engage in this kind of conducive democratic process because they were guided, less by individualism, but more by the spirit of communalism and humanism. A number of theorists criticise colonialism for its negative

influence on the behaviour of contemporary Africans, and for its contributions to the erosion of the humanism that characterised pre-colonial African societies. This paper appeals for a re-examination of the good elements of traditional African democratic systems, with the view to integrating them into the socio-political and economic practices of post-colonial African states.

Democratic Governance in Indigenous African Context

Traditional African societies, according to Bates (2010: 1134) were infused with democratic culture. For instance, in centralised kingdoms were found prominent fora that citizens utilised to challenge the bureaucrats and the royals. In other societies, commoners were appointed to the office of the prime minister. In other communities, the council of commoners provided a check on the public administration. The masses held strong bargaining powers. Although there was inequality in pre-colonial African states, the people that occupied privileged positions were required to allocate state benefits to all community members.

Traditional African system of governance differs from the post-colonial and western systems. While modern rulers are elected and vacate office at the end of their terms, traditional African ruler-ship is a life-long appointment to remain accountable to both their subjects and their ancestors,

to serve all the needs and concerns of their communities and of future generations. Political power and leadership of this kind is not obtained through the votes. It cannot be assessed accurately by the standards that apply to the exercise of multi-party electoral politics in late capitalist societies, as exist in the US and UK (Lauer, 2012: 44).

The system of governance in traditional African context, and in particular, in the pre-colonial Akan society, hinged on a non-party politics, and the choice of the head of a royal family who is supported by an advisory council of elders in life-long service. In some traditional African societies, the position of the chief in itself, confers absolute authority and dictatorship over his community. This kind of African democracy has evolved since the origin of civilization. Decision making was consensual and entailed the consideration of the views of all members (Lauer, 2012: 41-44). In pre-colonial Akan society, the chief as the leader and head of the political structure obtained his position through heredity. However, he did not command absolute authority. The final decision on matters before the council did not proceed from the chief. Rather, his pronouncements were a reflection of the collective decision of all members of council. The position of the chief was also considered both political and religious as he was seen as the link between the ancestors and members of the community (Matolino, 2009: 35). Representatives from various clans within the community constituted the council, and through them, the concerns of their specific constituencies were relayed to the council. The decisions of the council on matters under consideration were arrived at through dialogue. Although voting was not a criterion for arriving at a decision (this became a determining factor only after its imposition by the colonialists), the decisions reached through logical persuasiveness were owned by all, even if they were not all in agreement with it (Matolino, 2013: 140).

It may be erroneous to conclude that traditional African system of governance is undemocratic just because the chief was not elected into office. However, in many pre-colonial African societies, such as the Akan, the chief neither rules in line with his independent discretion nor at will, but always according to the advice of the elders of his community. He may be removed from office should he allow his personal choices or his personality to influence the style of administration, or if he attempts to dominate council proceedings. In the West African system of democracy by consensus therefore, the council of elders command authoritative position in policy formation and decision making. This system of governance remains a common feature in many contemporary African tribes such as the Igbos, Yorubas, Hausas, Akan, Ewe and Dagbon. In most cases, these systems are run in parallel with the adopted western system of governance, and they are recognised by the national governments (Lauer, 2012: 45).

In traditional African societies, consensus, for Wiredu (in Matolino, 2009: 35), was noticeably evident in most adult social relations. Most political and social engagements, decision making processes, discussions and interactions among members of society were channelled towards achieving consensus. Consensus, for Wiredu (2007: 164), is “an agreement arrived at by all members of a given group through rational dialogue and mutual accommodation”. Democracy by consensus, according to Wiredu, entails reaching a decision having considered not only the views of the majority, but the will of the minority as well (Matolino, 2009: 35). In political terms consensus becomes democratic since all stakeholders are expected to physically or by representation participate in the decisions that may possibly impact on them. The dual representative nature of consensual democracy made it participatory and inclusive of minority groups (Ani, 2014b: 344). Democracy by consensus, for Wiredu (in Matolino, 2013: 138) provides a political system that is not defined by competition for dominance and power among political parties. It avoids conferment of power on winners based on majority votes.

This differs from the western majoritarian democracy which is primarily concerned with protecting the interests of the majority as well as consolidating their power, which is easier to achieve than seeking consensual outcomes (Matolino, 2009: 35). It is also in contrast with the western approach where democracy is conceived as adversarial competition among various political parties in a majoritarian system, and which confers political power on the party that got majority votes in an election and relegates the losers to opposition. He further defends democracy by consensus for providing the electorate with maximal representation, and preventing the marginalisation of the minority (Matolino, 2013: 138). In most sub-Saharan pre-colonial African states, conflicts were resolved by seeking the opinions of all adult members of the community until they come to an agreement. This, in line with the sharing notion of Ubuntu (humanism), also relates to sharing political power in a manner that ensures that decisions are taken in the interest of all community members (Murove, 2010: 384).

Wiredu (in Ani, 2014a: 311) anchors the process of consensual decision making on the spirit of cooperation that was common in the communal structure of these societies. Although he concedes that consensus was not necessarily a common feature in all pre-colonial African societies, the practice was widespread. According to Wiredu (in Ani, 2014b: 342-343) deliberations in this era were not subjected to voting. Consensus was considered self-evident for joint action and was an inherent or immanent approach to relationships among people. The

import of this immanence for him could be seen in people reconciling not for the sake of avoiding punishments and revenge, but the genuine nature of dispute resolutions, as opposed to what largely obtains in the current era, where disputes are resolved without consequent genuine reconciliation. Ani (2014b: 345-346) objects to the manner in which Wiredu attached the doctrine of immanence to consensus. Although Ani accepts the merits of consensus as a social and political theory, he believes that the idea of immanence can only be attached to human beings in general and not only to Africans, because such classification plays no helpful role in dispelling or in discouraging other negative biases such as that Whites are inherently superior in intelligence to other races.

A number of conceptual factors play a significant role in Wiredu's conception of democracy by consensus. Firstly, in his assessment of human nature, he claims that the differences among human beings proceed from a mistaken belief or the failure to understand and correctly judge their actual interests. When disagreements arise, the parties to the dispute should rather take cognisance of the fact that ultimately they share an identity of interests (Matolino, 2013: 140). In other words, consensus hinges on the belief that the interests of all community members are ultimately the same, even though their initial understanding of those interests may differ. He uses the example of an art motif. In the Akan culture, the Art motif portrays a crocodile with two heads but one stomach fighting over food and forgetting that the food is destined for the same stomach. Wiredu considers this symbol as capturing the basic problem of ethics as well as its solution. The problem that it captures is that while human beings possess legitimate interests as depicted by the different heads, they can however, forget that their interests are the same, especially their common well-being, which the same stomach symbolises. The root cause of disagreements and conflicts result from losing that notion of common interest, "and its restoration should facilitate that agreement on the sharing of assets which recognises the interest of all parties concerned" (Wiredu, 2009: 10).

Wiredu believes that human beings are able to work through their differences until they arrive at a similar comprehension of their interests through rational dialogue and debate. He also believes that consensus can be achieved by people or parties with different interests if they are prepared to overlook their views in favour of a persuasive alternative view, and if they are committed to attaining consensus (Matolino, 2013: 141-142). Consensus for Wiredu does not mean that all aggrieved parties are in full agreement. Rather, consensus presupposes and appreciates diversity and different points of view, and utilises dialogue to bring about results that are acceptable to all concerned individuals and groups, giving rise to the willingness to suspend disagreement. This will enable them to agree on what should be done, while retaining their personal views about what is true or false, despite their differences in ethical and intellectual belief (Ani, 2014b: 343). The fundamental basis of the traditional Akan politics, for Wiredu, lies in the ability of the council members to reach agreement (the will to consensus). Those among these elders holding different opinions can maintain the integrity of their opinions while at the same time be willing to make compromises that will promote the realisation of a plan of action (Lauer, 2012: 46). The residual minority are usually those who suspend their disagreements in favour of

the view of the majority which prevails not over, but upon, this minority to accept the proposal in question - not just to live with it, which is the basic plight of minorities under majoritarian democracy. Wiredu emphasises that all this is made possible by the will to consensus. The feasibility of this depends not only on the patience and persuasiveness of the right people but also on the fact that African traditional systems of the consensual type were not such as to place any one group of persons consistently in the position of minority (Ani, 2014b: 343-344).

Wiredu's preference for democracy by consensus over majoritarian democracy attempts to develop an understanding of a state where the majority party does not exercise political power while overlooking the opposition and minority parties. He notes that such slanted appropriation of power has been a source of problems in Africa since the end of the colonial era and the emergence of majoritarian democracy. Wiredu's arguments in favour of consensual democracy also attempts to find solutions to the myriad of challenges confronting post-colonial Africa (Matolino, 2013: 138). He adamantly criticizes the multi-party electoral processes characteristic of modern oligarchies (e.g., the UK and US models) as too expensive and distracting from development agendas so critical to modern African citizens' welfare all over the continent. While he notes the potential of democracy by consensus to enhance the realisation of contemporary Africa's search for ideal democratic order, he also advocates the adoption of a modified version of its ideals of good governance for contemporary systems of governance and administration in Africa (Lauer, 2012: 42- 43).

Matolino objects to Wiredu's idea of democracy by consensus as not different from what obtains in a one-party state. Although it is not Wiredu's intention to advocate for one-party state, Matolino considers Wiredu's position as tending towards a dangerous form of benevolent one-party state (Matolino, 2013: 149). Eze criticises Wiredu's treatise of the Akans' system of governance and the manner in which he ascribes political legitimacy to it as an excessive rationalisation, a misleading romanticisation, and a non-party system of politics which can serve the purpose of defending the early nationalists' single party system of politics in which their total control of political power did not encourage democratic freedom. In pre-colonial African politics, the indigenous council of elders also showed signs that deter democratic inclusion (Lauer, 2012: 41-43).

Wiredu (in Matolino, 2009: 36) conceives the legitimacy of the chief as residing in the eldest member who possessed the power of persuasion and critical thinking that guaranteed the attainment of consensus through dialogue. Contrary to this position, Eze believes that political power derives its legitimacy from other factors that enable consensus building, such as religion and other beliefs since they are able to influence the kinds of choices that people make. He does not see logical persuasion as a sufficient guarantee for political power since the exercise of public power also depends on cultural, social and religious fantasies, myths, the party, progress, liberation and freedom, which demand less of logic in getting people to cooperate and understand each other.

For Eze (Lauer, 2012: 49-50), it is inconceivable to subscribe to the effectiveness of consensual politics in the traditional Akan society on the basis that all society members shared a rational understanding of the power of reason, believed in the persuasive strength of ideas and

recognised the commonality of their interests. He reasons that the deliberations of the elders were tolerated as a result of the mystical powers associated with the rituals of governance which ensured that the people naively believed that they were bound together by a mystical force. He further posits that such institutions cannot function in the current era since Africans are no longer naive. The concerns raised by Eze gain support from a number of contemporary African political analysts such as Kojo Amanor and Kwame Ninsin; and contributors to American anarchists' studies such as Mark Lance and Daniel Levine, who suspect that Wiredu's consensus politics can undermine the egalitarian ideals and inclusiveness of contemporary representative democracy and become a means of hiding authoritarianism, and a very useful hegemonic instrument for side-lining opposition (Lauer, 2012: 42-50).

Eze cannot be totally right in his views on the ineffectiveness of traditional institutions in the post-colonial era because there are many contemporary African societies that still believe in the potency of mystical powers in governance processes. In the current day Nigeria for instance, most tribes including the Igbos, Yorubas and Hausas believe strongly in the powers of the deities and in their ability to inflict both blessings and curses on people as a result of their conducts. While contemporary African societies have been enmeshed in developments and globalisation, the fact remains that traditional beliefs are still upheld by many individuals and societies.

The Akan system of politics in Ghana is similar to the Igbo system of traditional governance in Nigeria, and this system has not substantially deviated from its pre-colonial practice. Looking at most traditional African mode of governance will reveal similar traits. In the Igbo traditional system of politics, including the contemporary case, members of the council are usually older men who have passed the stage of youthful exuberance. One of the shortfalls of this system is that almost all members of the council, especially in the Igbo case are men. The age of westernisation has not been able to influence the practice. One of the main reasons for this trend is probably the fact that men in the traditional Igbo culture do not consider it appropriate to include women in the council. Women may send representatives to the council if the so desired.

Wiredu and other philosophers who support democracy by consensus posit that traditional African societies were inherently democratic. They outline the process of consensus in the traditional African societies and deduce its desirability as a preferable type of democracy in contemporary African political systems. Wiredu's main treatise on African politics proceeds from his evaluation of the traditional Akan philosophy and culture, from which he has been able to produce a modern philosophy in the form of democracy by consensus that is applicable to contemporary African society. Wiredu posits that based on merits and in continuation of the good traditional African democratic practices of the Akan and other commendable African societies, such as the Igbos, democracy by consensus is a better option than majoritarian democracy. He appeals to a return to democracy by consensus because democracy in Africa was not imported, but has always been an inherent feature of rule in pre-colonial African society, with distinctive advantages over majoritarian rule (Matolino, 2013: 139).

There have been various disagreements among theorists on the political legitimacy of traditional African system of rule and their relevance to contemporary democracy. The

traditional African system of consensus politics which Wiredu alludes to has survived for centuries despite colonial interference and the corruption of the local traditional authority. While Wiredu promotes non-party politics, Eze promotes multi-party politics in Africa. Wiredu's non-party consensual politics is essentially utilitarian. However, he has not been able to provide practical processes for its implementation, which are capable of replacing multi-party rule in a large society. Nonetheless, Wiredu and Eze are in agreement on a number of areas, such as promoting freedom of speech and opinion, discouraging autocracy, and encouraging political contestation. They both discourage the lust for power, wasteful, extravagant and reckless lifestyle which seem to be prevalent in the political life of many oligarchic democracies. They both believe that African societies can derive immense benefits from systems of rule that have not been perverted by the worse forms of capitalism. However, they both disagree on the feasibility of a reformed kind of democracy by consensus as an alternative to the excesses of western democratic practices. A substantial aspect of indigenous African system of rule has remained undiluted and effective even throughout the colonial era and up to the contemporary period as its intrinsic values portray (Lauer, 2012: 54).

The foregoing reveals that the indigenous African system of governance was characterised by democratic culture (Bates, 2010: 1134). This is contrary to what obtains in western majoritarian democracy, which contemporary African states largely practice, where the political landscape is characterised by tension, disagreements, where the winner is accorded maximum political power and the opposition is relegated to the background (Matolino, 2013: 138). The system of politics and governance in traditional African societies can be linked, as Wiredu (in Ani, 2014a: 311) opines, to the cooperative and communal nature with which community members interacted with each other.

Communal Nature of Traditional African Societies

African communalism proceeds from the humanity with which indigenous Africans interact with each other. This humanism is known as Ubuntu in the traditional and contemporary Southern African societies. Humanism, according to Letseka (2012: 54) emphasises the interdependence and common humanity of human beings, and the responsibility that proceeds from human interconnection. For Dolamo (2013: 1-3), Ubuntu represents what makes an individual human and the elements that promote the attainment of individual and communal fulfilment. This African humanism, according to Letseka (2014: 547) requires community members to treat each other with respect, care, compassion, cooperation, loyalty, solidarity, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and collective responsibility.

However, various theorists argue that colonial influences have impacted negatively on the conduct of contemporary Africans to the extent that it has eroded many of the values that made Africans authentic human beings. For Ezenweke and Nwadiolor (2013: 61-62), African communalism has been eroded and largely replaced by individualism in the contemporary era. Chimakonam (et al, 2014: 145-146) observe that the individualistic orientation of western liberal democracy, which post-colonial Africa subscribes to, is detrimental to the largely communal nature of African societies. He further asserts that the western individualistic

ontology, which places the individual ahead of the community negates the African ontology, which while recognising the individualistic nature of the person, considers the community as prior to the individual.

Wiredu (2009: 15-16) opines that it can be anthropologically established that communalism is the operative ethic in the traditional African society. The communalism that permeates Africa is the type of social formation in which kinship plays a fundamental role. Individuals are developed from childhood to cultivate the feeling of affinity with all members of their family and extended family. This kind of unity begins from the immediate family and transcends to the other relations, and eventually to the community at large. The sense of connectedness that individuals developed resulted from the reciprocal nature of interrelationships. This seems to be largely absent in the manner in which the current era relates with each other, the consequences of which are often unfavourable for the well-being of individuals and communities. Wiredu, however, adds that this idea of human connectedness goes beyond a mere idea of connection based on kinship and rather, fundamentally involves a sense of connection rooted in humanity.

In traditional African community, the members, according to Ezenweke and Nwadiolor (2013: 64-65), assume collective responsibility for the needs of the less privileged, the old and the weak. In the Igbo community for instance, the entire community contributes towards the needs of the less privileged. The community members often assist their kinsmen to build their houses or to cultivate their farmlands. Interdependence is a paramount ideology among the Igbo race. The Igbo principle of interdependence recognises the enormous strength that proceeds from a united front. This promotes discipline, humanises relations and reduces crime (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor, 2013: 65).

In traditional African societies are found a number of ethical principles such as the principles of individual and communal responsibilities, which guide the behaviour of their community members. The principle of individual responsibility states that individuals and their immediate family members, not the whole community, are responsible for the person's actions (Lajul, 2013: 117-121). This principle is in line with the Kantian theory which holds that human beings must assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions, and not transfer the consequences to someone or something else (Urbanovic & Tauginiene, 2013: 72). Individuals in this case are held accountable for their actions because they possess personal values which are guided by different factors through the course of their lives. While each community or entity possess values which shape the culture or way of life of its members, the conduct of each person determines if the values which the community seeks to emulate will be actualised (ICAS, 2015: 6).

The principle of communal responsibility posits that the actions of an individual impact on the community as a whole. In other words, an action is right or wrong based on its effect on the community (Lajul, 2013: 119). The individual is defined in relation to a larger ethnic or social group which covers the living, the dead, the unborn and the spirits. The individual is attached to the social or ethnic group in a manner that confers his primary responsibility to the clan or his community. A number of critics consider this detrimental to self-individuation. This lack

of subjectivity is viewed as the primary cause of the numerous challenges that African countries continue to experience (Kochalumchuvattil, 2010: 112), such as intertribal conflicts and wars.

There are many cynics who reject the idea of communal responsibility. Examples include a number of people and movements in the Western thought, such as the social deviants and the anarchists who perceive society as a clog or an impediment to the realisation of individual happiness. They assume a rebellious lifestyle against society and its values. One may attribute such negative attitude towards society as emanating from the individualism that characterises a substantial aspect of Western life. The loss of faith in community life becomes entrenched in environments where the individuals are no longer able to enjoy the social equilibrium that they had become used to, which offered them the space to construe themselves as autonomous, supreme and self-governing. In cases where such individuals are not able to adequately deal with the problems that confront them, they become worried. They develop a sense of abandonment by society and conclude that their world is obstructive and an impediment to their happiness. Contrary to these negative sentiments, it is unlikely that Africans would succumb entirely to these kind of absolutist individualism since they believe that the life of an individual only acquires meaning in the community. In other words, the individual can only realise his wellbeing and social aspirations by mutually interacting with other community members (Agulana, 2010: 287- 288).

The principle of communal responsibility is responsible for the myriad of challenges that confront the African continent, such as corruption, revenge, rampant violence, collective condemnation of specific ethnic groups, and ethnic cleansing. These negative tendencies must be discouraged if there is any hope of developing the African countries into strong and desirable nation states. On the other hand, it is imperative to encourage the positive aspects of the principle of communal responsibility, by dissuading tribalism and ethnic affiliations, by promoting justice and fairness, and by embracing all members of a given community without any discriminatory practices (Lajul, 2013: 120-121).

Lessons for Contemporary Systems of Governance in Africa

The majoritarian system of governance, which most contemporary African countries adopt, largely differs from what obtained in pre-colonial African societies. While pre-colonial African societies were more humane and considerate in their outlook, contemporary systems of governance are more contentious, corrupt, selfish, party oriented and struggle to reach consensus among various stakeholders. In most African countries, such as Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe, political parties fail in many cases to reach consensus on matters that affect the well-being of the citizens. This results in bad governance, poor service delivery, fraud, corruption and instability. For instance, South Africa witnesses intermittent violent protests by dissatisfied individuals over issues relating to poor service delivery. This often leads to the destruction of public property and private businesses (Nembambula, 2015: 47).

Case studies across the globe reveal, as Hobbes (1968: 186) also notes that the inability of community members to adhere to the principles of good governance and peaceful coexistence leads to violence and death. Therefore, African countries cannot continue to wallow in bad

governance. The attitude of public representatives and leaders must change so that the lawlessness, violence and random killings that characterise many African states can be avoided. A true ruler, for Aristotle (1962: 130), “is the guardian of what is just, and as such he is also the guardian of equality and fairness [...]. His labour is, therefore, for the benefit of others [...]”. For Plato (1988: 1), justice is “the central value in both the unity of human societies and the harmony of individual souls”. These philosophers show that justice promotes democratic and orderly society where the views, wellbeing and interests of all community members are taken into consideration, irrespective of their beliefs or political affiliation. The views expressed by these philosophers can promote a society that is more inclusive, humane, community oriented and consensus building.

African leaders must be trained on the good elements of pre-colonial African system of governance, on ethics, integrity and accountability. They must realise that the positions they occupy are for the delivery of public good, and not for selfish gains. Public officials must cooperate with each other in the formulation and implementation of public policies. African governments must institute strong mechanisms to ensure that leaders and public representatives adhere to the principles of good governance and oversight. Public officials and leaders must be penalised when they fail in their duties or when they engage in acts of corruption, fraud and other unethical practices. While political parties are more concerned with the interests of their members in a majoritarian democracy, leaders must bear in mind that they are chosen to protect the interests of both the majority and the minority. Although the good elements of majoritarian democracy are encouraged in African politics and governance, pre-colonial elements of consensual democracy must be taken into consideration as well.

Conclusion

This paper explored the system of politics and governance in pre-colonial African societies, and their implications for the contemporary era. Traditional African societies are considered inherently democratic, always seeking all sorts of agreements on most major decisions that impact on citizens. In most pre-colonial African societies, conflicts were resolved by seeking the opinions of all adult community members until they came to an agreement. Political powers were dispersed in a manner that ensured that decisions made were to the benefit of both the majority and the minority. Specific attention is paid to consensus as essential in reaching just decisions.

Critics of democracy by consensus contend that it can lead to the entrenchment of one-party politics. They consider it a misleading romanticisation, excessive rationalisation and a non-party system of politics, which can be used to justify the single system of party politics of the early nationalists which discouraged democratic freedom as a result of their complete control of political power. It is further criticised as an instrument for camouflaging authoritarianism, and for its potential to become a useful hegemonic means of side-lining opposition.

Wiredu prefers democracy by consensus to western majoritarian democracy which contemporary African states largely practice, but which is characterised by tension and conflict. He subscribes to the kind of political system which does not promote a winner takes it all

philosophy, but which equally provides for the needs of all society members, irrespective of their political affiliations. The communal nature of traditional African societies as espoused in this paper shows how the principles of humanism enabled the cultivation of ethical, more tolerant and considerate individuals. While there are divergent views on the ability of democracy by consensus to ensure the realisation of a good system of governance, there are many benefits associated with it that need to be harnessed. These include caring for all members of society and being ethical in all dealings. The good aspects of this kind of political system and African communalism should be encouraged in Africa in order to guarantee the realisation of the kind of state that all its members desire, a state free of favouritism and bias, and which is structured on the disposition towards a just and reasonable treatment of all community members.

Wiredu and Eze outline a number of factors that guarantee the legitimacy of political power. For Wiredu, the political legitimacy of traditional African leadership resides in the persuasive ability of leaders and critical thinking. For Eze, this legitimacy results from processes that promote consensus building; and from those factors that enable community members to cooperate and understand each other; such as religion, values, cultures and freedom. It is worth adding that the political legitimacy of both traditional and contemporary leadership requires all the elements that Wiredu and Eze allude to. Many leaders do not apply these principles in the execution of their mandates. This oversight results in the erosion of values and governance failures, with dire consequences for social, political and economic wellbeing of community members. A good leader must be ethical, humane, intelligent, well-educated and wise. Moreover, a society that neglects religion, ethics, morals, values and cultures will always be confronted with ethical challenges.

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