

Ethnicity, Governance and Prevention of Conflict: State of the Issue and Research Perspectives

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Résumé: Cet article présente les questions de l'ethnicité, de la gouvernance et de la prévention des conflits concernant leur gestion à travers l'exercice effectif du pouvoir. Il n'est pas possible de prévenir les conflits. On ne peut que les gérer. Le facteur crucial et déterminant dans les relations ethniques, de genre et de classe, c'est le pouvoir. L'article retrace les notions de pouvoir chez quelques philosophes et met en évidence l'importance de percevoir l'impact des changements paradigmatiques sur le discours politique. Ces changements sont perçus comme des itinéraires intellectuels qui vont du fonctionnalisme structurel à la théorie critique contemporaine de l'Amérique du Nord et la théorie postmoderniste. La problématique de l'ethnicité est posée dans des débats découlant des rivalités de perspectives et des luttes paradigmatiques. Sont également remis en question et critiqués, l'économie morale, le choix rationnel, ainsi que les approches subalternes. L'article soutient que lorsque le fondement des structures et procédures de gouvernance démocratique est miné, alors la légitimité politique est compromise et préconise une nouvelle coupe de l'analyse historique du discours contemporain sur la gouvernance de ses prétentions.

Introduction: Weberian and Parsonian Notions of Power and Modern Critical Theory

Power must be seen as the crucial determining factor in ethnic, gender, and class relations. The twin themes within the paradigm of modernism, which link the stratification and social relations of a society, are inequality and conflict. Both of these themes are direct outcomes of power exertion. The issue of ethnicity, governance and prevention of conflicts ought to be approached from the perspective of management of conflict through the proper exercise of power. The instruments by

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which power is exercised and the sources of the right to exercise it are interrelated. In my view, conflict cannot be prevented, it can only be managed.

The dominant figure in the development of a conflict and power perspective was Karl Marx. His conception of social classes was based on varying relations of the means of production. This view was to influence social scientists for so long (Olsen 1970:296). The idea of the conflict of opposites was to be conceived to belong to all mankind (Altukhov 1990:101). According to Marx, power originates in economic production whose social relations are conflictual. Its wielders are the social classes. He expanded the concept of power from a mere political phenomenon to a social process and offered a theory of the development of society based on the exercise of power (Olsen 1970:70).

Max Weber broadened Marx's power perspective on stratification and related it more directly to individuals. He argued that the distribution and use of social power typically produces three different kinds of inequality. These three distinct yet interrelated dimensions of stratification are (a) economic class differences as determined by individuals' varying life chances in the economic market place, (b) prestige status distinctions growing out of common life styles and consequent shared values, and (c) party organization resulting from efforts of people to exert collective influence on community and societal decision-makers (Olsen 1970:297). Weber defined power as the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action. To him, economically conditioned power was distinct from other forms of power. The structure of every legal order directly influences the distribution of power and the state is a legal order (Weber 1946). In line with his perception of power, Weber

assumed that an actor in a social relationship is in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance (Lukes 1992:2).

Talcot Parsons incorporated power as a crucial variable in his Parsonian value theory and the integration theory of society. Parson's integration theory of society conceived social structure in terms of a functionally integrated system held in equilibrium by certain patterned and recurrent processes. This theory was founded on the assumptions that every society is a relatively persistent stable structure of elements. That every society is a well-integrated structure of elements, and that every element in society has a function by which it renders a contribution to its maintenance as a system. Finally, every functioning social structure is assumed to be based on a consensus of values among its members (Dahrendorf 1970:59-60). Parsons, like Hannah Arendt, rejects the Weberian view of power as highly selective. Power to Parsons is a system's resource, a generalized facility in society, and a phenomenon of both coercion and consensus because it interpretes a plurality of factors and outputs of political effectiveness (Lukes 1992:3).

Weber and Parsons influenced a large number of political scientists and anthropologists. They inspired behavioural political scientists like Christian Bay, David Easton, and Leo Strauss. Structural functionalism tracing its roots to Parsons believed in the existence in political systems of four basic functions: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance. Each of these functions was carried out by four analytic sub-systems: the social, cultural, personality and behavioural organism. To Weber, domination is one of the most important elements of social action. Domination constitutes a special case of power (Weber 1992:28). Power in my view, is a means to an end and that end is social justice and human development. Power therefore calls for its proper management and deployment.

Weberian and Parsonian perspectives have not been completely abandoned in North American Critical Theory. A great deal of influence of Talcott Parsons is evident in Jurgen Habermas of the Frankfurt School established by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. It is also evident in the Neo-Weberian Anthony Giddens. However, in Parson's work, we see the influence of Max Weber who seemed to exert great influence on Arendt. Habermas is both neo-Weberian along the lines of Hannah Arendt, who helped in the retooling of political philosophy within the Benjaminisque mode of analysis. Habermas is also neo-Parsonian. Habermas is a Parsonian style Neo-Weberian concerned with rationalization of values and with social differentiation. This is laced with the Arendt's communicative power of narrative, which resonates with the post-modernist hermeneutic narrative. Thus, the functionalist cast of Parsons' thought recurs in Habermasian fascination with value-consensus or symbolic orders (Giddens 1984). Yet the above notions of communicative power of narrative, purposive dialogue and creation of consensus are not formulated in terms of management of power as compared to its expression.

Arendt's communicative power is re-enacted by Habermas's modern critical theory. Arendt who perceives violence as nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power agrees with C. Wright Mills that all politics is a struggle for power and the ultimate of power is violence. But is violence not a manifestation of resistance to the abuse of power? Mills was merely echoing Weber's definition of the state as the rule of men over men based on the means of legitimate violence (Arendt 1992:59).

To Hannah Arendt, power needs no justification being inherent in the very existence of communities. What it does need is legitimacy (Arendt 1992:69). This notion of power resonates with the legitimation narratives of the power in hermeneutic movement. Foucault's notion of

disciplinary power and subjection is generically allied to it. To Foucault there is a triangle of power, right and truth.

Weber had been influenced by the hermeneutic tradition much earlier and he incorporated some of its concepts in his work. Its influence is evident in the modernity of Habermas with its critical hermeneutics. Habermas examined power in Max Weber, Talcott Parsons and Hannah Arendt, tracing in the latter the communicative concept of power. He wrote during an era when there was a decline in the empiricist philosophies of natural science as language assumed a fundamental role in Saussurean and Levi-Straussian structuralism in the post-Weberian era. Language and cognitive faculties were to be accorded a big role in the explication of social life. In a post-structural approach, Michel Foucault was concerned with the concept of power, arguing that power flows in a capillary fashion. But he failed to demystify power as an important resource that needs to be managed.

As Ludwig Wittgenstein of the behavioural approach in political analysis, said, we cannot look to metaphysical theories and certainty to provide us with a basis for a secure way of life (Plant 1991:334). Without proper management of power, there can be no sustainable security. Wittgenstein and Karl Popper belonged to the logical positivist school also called the Vienna Circle of the 1920s. Its activities led to the decline of the paradigm of consciousness with the shift to the paradigm of language. This is language not seen as a syntactic or semantic system but language in use or speech (Habermas 1991:xi). Under this influence, Foucault, too, talks of producing discourses of truth and relations of power. He relates power to discourse, the exercise of power through the production of truth.

It may be said that the structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure who had great influence on Claude Levi-Strauss laid the foundation of a theory of meaning in difference in the existentialist mould of Martin Heidegger, Arendt's teacher and lover. Heidegger's other adherent was

Jean Jacques Lacan. The primacy of the semiotic was accentuated by de Saussure and Levi-Strauss in terms not radically different from Charles Sanders Peirce. They emphasized differences which comprise codes which create the field of signs and the grids of meaning (Giddens 1984:32).

Apart from Weber exercising great influence on Parsons, other sources of influence on the latter were Emile Durkheim and Vilfredo Pareto. Durkheim was one of the founders of structural functionalism, while Sigmund Freud laid the foundation of psycho-analysis. Weber, Durkheim and Freud can be described as precursors of behaviouralism. Moral relativism which emerged in the writings of David Hume was however to be crystallized in the twentieth century social sciences by Weber. The other American sociologist to emerge apart from Parsons was the Neo-positivist Herbert Mead. Weber linked neo-positivist ideas with the Neo-Kantians like Heinrich Rickert and George Simmel. Mead maintained that the constitution of the I comes about via the discourse of the other, that is, through the acquisition of language (Giddens 1984:43).

Emphasizing Weber's notion of power as asserting one's will against opposition, Arendt provides a model of action called the communicative, in which power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but act in concert. Thus the fundamental phenomenon of power is the formation of a common will in a communication directed at reaching agreement (Habermas 1992:76). She wrongly regards the development of power as an end in itself and power serves to maintain the praxis from which it springs. Arendt renews the Aristotelian concept of praxis, she analyses the inter-subjectivity speech as the basic feature of cultural life.

There was a great deal of paradigmatic shifting in the discourses on power in the early 1960s. Karl Popper's view that science is primarily characterized by the principles of testability, falsification, tentativity,

and rigorous application of reliable methods was turned on its head by Thomas Kuhn. Popper's notion was the conceptual cornerstone of behaviouralism. It stated that scientific inquiry tries to learn about its large and complicated subjects by first studying parts of the whole, acquiring reliable knowledge as it were only by chopping the world into manageable units of inquiry. This was shattered. Against this Popperian behavioural linear view of scientific progress, Kuhn argued that progress of science is not strictly commutative at all (Meyers 1983:43).

The Kuhnian impetus for paradigmatic shift in scientific research was to have great effects on the accepted methodological canons of social science. The Kuhnian notion entailed generally accepted conceptual frameworks providing epistemological and methodological, retooling which assigned to a paradigm cognitive, normative and sociological functions. For him, paradigms have constitutive value for research as they provide the scientist with an epistemological map (Meyers 1983:50). Paradigms represent the internationalization of principles upon which explanations are based. The way the world is seen, perceived, understood and interpreted is basically paradigmatic. We interpret everything through these paradigmatic mental maps while our attitudes grow in these assumptions (Covey 1992:23-24). A theory, according to the post-Kuhnian philosophy of science, allows researchers to study a subject only when the subject matter is related to the logic to which the theory directs them. A theory is determined by its own framework and in turn the theory interprets its subjects in accordance with its own logic (Brohman 1995:123). New paradigms have stimulated great paradigmatic shifts in political or historical discourse.

We become realistic in view when we confront and interrogate other paradigms and become critical or open to their perceptions. Our own various paradigms, which have heretofore influenced our perceptions of political processes, need to be re-examined and tested

against real facts. This explains why there is need for paradigm shifting when one begins to see things in a different way. Although Kuhn shows how almost every significant breakthrough in the field of scientific endeavour is first a break with tradition with old ways of thinking and with old paradigms—some profound intellectual reflection is called for. That is why we in Africa need to engage ourselves in the process of critical theoretical diagnosis, self-discovery and renewal.

Individual adjustment to the state in temperance and self-control was deemed a supreme virtue by Plato. A law abiding disposition was critical in the Platonic paradigm. Paradigms are inseparable from character. A stable intellectual disposition is necessary for sustainable productivity. Stability of intellectual character is required in the exercise of leadership. The so-called communicative action of Arendt and Habermas need to be reworked to reflect the importance of political renewal based on certain intellectual principles.

There can be no communicative production of power without strategic competition which reflects on intellectual and moral character. Only people of principle pursue their convictions until they actualize them. As Habermas says legitimate power arrives only among those who form common convictions (Habermas 1992:85). Conflict resolution therefore involves conviction.

In the Kuhnian sense, we cannot go far in changing our seeing without changing our being. Our being is embedded in some ethnic or class identity. Paradigms create the lens through which we see our ethnic world and the other political identities. The power of paradigm shift is the essential power of theoretical change. Paradigms emerging out of experience and identity conditioning are subjective reality which need to be objectively interrogated. That is why Max Weber's notion of power and his neo-Kantian constructions must be interrogated. His description of the rational organization of human life was adopted in different ways by neo-Weberians like Habermas, Giddens, and others.

The recycling of Weberian and Parsonian notions in North America Critical. Theory and postmodernism is already finding expression in Africa in discourses which claim to fold and move power relations. In a postmodern intellectual posture, Jean-Francois Bayart (1993) refutes the concept of ethnicity.

Bayart combines both political science and anthropological perspectives that are enriched by the hermeneutics of Foucault and argues that processes of reciprocal assimilations are inseparable from strategies of political entrepreneurs. The parameters within which they unfold are demarcated by the subterfuge networks of family ties ad faction of patrons and clients of big men and small boys (Lemarchand 1992:131).

Structural functionalism of Talcot Parsons influenced Bronislaw Malinowski, the anthropologist, in the concept of family ties when the concept of kinship relations. It is Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Shils who counter-penetrated sociology and political science with a great deal of anthropological armoury with their notions of custom, ideas and beliefs and their function in accomplishing and representing an indispensable part within a working concept of ethnicity that Bayart repudiates. Even Parsons was deeply influenced by anthropological functionalism and on the basis of the traditions of anthropological functionalism, he differentiates one sub-system from another on the ground that each performs one of the four functions of adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance (Verma 1975:200). Kinship relations operate within ethnic panoplies investigating and interrogating.

Kinship is an anthropological concept which relates closely to ethnicity. Radcliffe-Brown concedes that the literature dealing with kinship is loaded with theories that are pseudo-historical (Radcliffe-Brown 1950). Kinship systems are tied to ethnic localities and are typified by social relationships whereby the cognitive

relationships between children and their parents define descent. Thus the elementary family is the basic unit of kinship structure in a relationship of affinity (Radcliffe-Brown 1950:4-6). The reality of a kinship system is embedded in a social structure with social relations of person to person as exhibited in their interactions and behaviour in respect of one another. A kinship system therefore presents a complex set of norms, of usages, of patterns of behaviour between kindred and deviations from the norm which have their importance. Capacity to assume leadership responsibility is a real issue in the kinship relations output of the political process. Gerontocratic notions in Africa cannot be wished away in this political process as Bayart seems to do given the legacy of kinship ties today.

The structural organization of society in Africa as explained by anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown, Hilder Kuper, Monica Wilson, Max Gluckman, M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard among others, followed the outlines of kinship ties. In explaining Neo-Patrimonial patron-client networks of prebendalist Africa, Bayart summarises the driving force of the African political process as belly politics. This is simply superfluous because governance is explained in terms of colonial tactics of effective governance and is defined in terms of colonial relics called State Houses, in terms of physical domination rather than effective political exchange relation within a panoply of ethnic coalitions and varied societal interests (Reno 1995:111). The ethnic institutional structures which absorb, reshape and negotiate with African gerontocratic heritage are not examined. The driving force of these gerontocracies is tradition, embedded in ethnic identity. African perceptions of power and authority have been inextricably linked to their attendant gerontocratic values. Authority was basically gerontocratic in Africa and political actors were recruited, inducted and legitimated within an ethnic universe, which sheer emphasis on discourse and language may find itself too anaemic to confront and unravel.

The Problematic of Ethnicity

Ethnic groups are said to refer to particular forms of political organization which are kin-based. Kin-based groups should be treated as a pre-class universe that has its intersection with the liberal and neo-liberal thought and their societies. Genealogy, kinship and clanship lie at the bottom of the African gerontocratic problematic. Authority and power and their legitimation are closely bound with it and so is political solidarity. There is therefore need to understand the African character of power and authority and pose it in more forceful theoretical terms.

However, there are problems of demarcating class from kinship ties or the broader expression of kinship in the framework of ethnicity. Nevertheless, the second important intersection of gender and ethnicity can be found in the ideologies, stereotypes and practices employed to underline the specificity of an ethnic group (Wilson and Frederiksen, 1994:5). An ethnic group bears its identity and consciousness. The latter is a preservative instinct to perpetuate that identity.

The confusion in the study of ethnicity has been exacerbated by the postmodernist cultural praxis. Postmodernism has greatly influenced the study of ethnicity. The postmodernist tendency has a double aspect, it is both a mode of theorization and a form of sustentative analysis. In a reaction against modernist attempts to capture the nature of the social world in holistic and totalizing formulations, postmodernist discourses embrace the notion of fragmentation. This fragmentation sometimes goes too far, resulting in the denial of significant structuring of power which leads to mere empiricism. Empiricism which is not thrashed with theory is mere concealment of reality.

Post-structuralism which heavily rests on the Nietzschean inspired Michel Foucault is an episteme that has greatly inspired the postmodernist discourse. Neo-liberalism in post-Fordism is yet another paradigm whose prescriptions are a failure in Africa. The new

institutions created by modernization have failed to find roots in the indigenous social and cultural traditions of Third World societies (Brohman 1995:130). That is why Latour's statement that we have never been modern holds true for Africa if modernity is perceived in the Western sense.

Rational Choice Marxism, Post-Fordism and Moral Economy

Post-Fordism was part of the exercise in re-thinking Marxism under the influence of neo-classical and post-structural paradigms, which have not been able to deal with the problematic of ethnicity. Jon Elster and John Roemer's Rational Choice Marxism was key in the making of post-Fordism.

Post-Fordism is old conservatism in new clothes. The rational choice it embraces has decoupled agrarian relations from their material base. Social relations of production have been recast in terms of power exercised from below (everyday forms of resistance by ethnic conglomerates thought of only in terms of peasants in the defense of a moral economy) not in terms of power exercised from above in its form of class essence. Western concepts still pay little attention to the types of structural constraints based on class, gender or ethnicity (Brohman 1995:130) to enable us understand the problematic of ethnicity in Africa.

Also emanating from a post-structural posturing are the so-called new social movements or subaltern studies and the moral economy projects. These projects are both neo-populist and politically conservative. While the subaltern notion poses history as critique, the moral economy concept reduces peasant consciousness to trade union consciousness. Peasant resistance is reduced to attempts by conservative peasants to employ violence in defense of their peasant value defined paternalism. In neo-liberal discourses, when violence

does not attract attention, it is regarded as evidence of chaos and as evidence of bad policies (Reno 1995:111).

Moral economy is seen as a kind of consumer protection or enforcement by riots of the peasant in a quest to maintain a paternalist model. It entails a claim to subsistence. It is backward looking and conservative. According to this moral economy approach, the stereo-typicality of post-modernism with regard to the peasant is given. The assumption that peasants are economically backward because they choose to be so on the grounds of conservative cultural reasons makes the operation of moral economy or peasant resistance to be mediated in the form of popular culture (Staniland 1985).

Although the moral economy and subaltern project has been imported into Africa by African scholars as a basis of studying African peasant and workers movements by some Africanists, this approach is insufficient in enabling us to understand the political economy of conflict in Africa. The peasant community is characterized as undifferentiated and homogenous. The peasant community coincides with the ethnic group and the distinction between a peasant community and other different strata is as perceived to be relative (Mamdani 1996). This way discourse gets stuck in the populist subaltern notion which fails to capture the social relations that are internal to the producing unit.

The subaltern notion is methodologically allied to the moral economy perspective which is derived from the Rational Choice Marxism of John Roemer and Jon Elster. Yielding from this perspective is the choice-theoretic thinking of Douglas North. North built a rational choice model within the Foucauldian post-structural perspectives and philosophy. He applied this model to aspects of institutions which dealt with property rights and their related transaction costs and incentive structures. He developed this model against a background of a critique by Popkin (1979), in which Popkin took issue with a group of scholars

called moral economists. He critiqued the pioneering work of Scott (1976).

To Popkin (1979) the moral economy approach errs both in its depiction and analysis of pre-colonial peasant societies and in its description of their responses to capitalism. It misconceives the nature of peasant revolutions. The moral economy view of peasant society holds that peasants are distinguished by a pre-occupation to safeguard subsistence. This makes them extremely wary of innovation and risk-taking. In other words, it assumes that the peasant village possesses a moral economy because the rules of village life produce moral outcomes.

The Foucauldian post-structural cultural praxis is apparent in this approach of moralizing peasants. But the moral economists perception of conservativeness in peasants is contestable. Their argument that peasants revolt in order to stem the advances of capitalism against their social and moral integrity, and that peasants' anti-imperial movements are resistances against corrosive inroads of capitalist individualism and acquisitiveness and not colonial policy injustices is epistemologically cheeky.

The result is the caricaturing of peasant movements as ethnic despite the shift to state-civil society paradigms in post-type discourses. This is what I call tribalising peasant movements. Peasant resistance is also placed within the amorphous populist subaltern movements, workers movements or so-called popular movements in civil society. It is a detribalization of peasants hence the perspectival poly-morphousness of these post-typical discourses (Aseka 1996).

There is yet to be made an attempt to come to grips with the notion of peasant society beyond the romantic celebration of the moral potential of peasants. Neither has there been a critique of the imperialist knowledge beyond the diversionary efforts of subaltern studies. An

engrossing study of peasant movements inevitably leads to the reckoning with the long-standing problematic of ethnicity. The colonial policy of segregation and marginalization of peasants raises a fundamental conceptual problem that cannot be tackled by perceiving the historical question of the peasantry from the standpoint of their morality or in mere metaphors. The identification of the lineage of peasant narratives as a discourse which is modern is sheer anthro-pologization of history. Pnina Motzafi-Haller (1994) talks of historical narratives as political discourses of identity in the light of the post-modern challenge in Southern Africa.

The reduction of historical explanation to mere narratives or the use of metaphors does pose clear obstacles. The use of metaphors, despite their evocativeness, turns out, on closer inspection, to be just metaphorical devices rather than conceptual tools. Metaphors are not only foundational, they also conjure up images and prove to be blunt instruments for coming to terms with analytic issues such as: where is the distinction between tribalism and ethnicity in the constitution of consciousness? Is ethnic identity the result of a historical process or is it simply invented by statecraft or imagined by intellectuals? What goes into the making of ethnicity? When is the rural society or civil society, peasant, ethnic or tribal? In whose terms is the nation-state defined?

Towards a New Political Economy of Ethnicity

I am aware that post-structuralism has greatly influenced gender studies and the study of ethnicity. Ethnicity is perceived as a form of identification alongside other overlapping, fluctuating, shifting and mutually interlinked identifications such as gender, class, language, religion, social movements etc. These are forms which are said to constitute basic levels of identity and differentiation which underlie and interact with other layers. Conflicts and tensions are said to be lived and worked out imaginatively (Frederiksen 1994:61). The concepts of ethnicity, gender and class are fragmented further by denying the

pertinence of overarching theories of race, patriarchy and capitalism. Ethnicity is described as the politicization of culture. Wilson and Frederiksen (1994) argue that conflicts over definitions of identity are violent and the politics of identity have come to stay (Wilson and Frederiksen, 1994:1-2).

Ethnicity is described as a group's way of conceptualizing and relating to the enveloping society. It may be mobilised to be constitutive of a nation (Wilson and Frederiksen 1994:2). Resonating with the postmodernist notion of primordial ethnic identity, increasing historical accounts are being made on the changing nature of ethnicity formation in Africa (see Lawrence and Manson 1994).

Arguments have been posed (see Kandeh 1992) that ethnicity is a type of primordial identity and that ethnicity and cultural differentiation have a great mobilization potential. It has been stated that ethnicity has effective primacy over class in Africa (Kandeh 1992:98). It is a strategy for state control, but at the same time it has crystallized into an opposition to other forms of politics. It is true that in the post-Cold War era, ethnicity has been highly politicized. In explaining the politicization of the ethnic collectivity, the Gramscian notion of power is applied to Africa. Power is thought of as a two-faceted and sometimes contradictory force. It is a combination of force and consent (Haynes 1995:96). Indeed, power has always been a central component of development. Without power there is little that the majority can do to change their situation (Brohman 1995:130).

Neo-Gramscians argue that capitalist rule is maintained by the ruling class maintaining and reproducing its position through consent and by the voluntary acceptance of its positions by the masses. That the ruling class's position is dependent on its cultural and ideological influence, and not on its economic and political power.

The potency of petty bourgeois nationalism, the militancy of the peasantry and workers necessitated the need for reform and the initiation of the decolonization process. These forces forced a modification on colonial structures and institutions to contain emerging forms of political consciousness and their inherent dangers to colonial power. It involved the need to define reform programmes which were abstractions from a series of local and imperial policies whose eventual execution reflected an adjustment in political behaviour of the imperial colonial elite (Aseka 1989). Workers and peasants' social movements emerged as responses to conflicts and contradictions in the colonial political economies which in a dialectical way created need for resolution in the form of policy reforms. These classes did not necessarily form an essentialist political imaginary by posing class as a positive identity as post-Marxists would have us believe.

The policy reform process and policy execution generated, intensified and accelerated other conflicts and contradictions which made decolonization a culmination of a long historical process and not an imperial plan. It was a process which began with political and economic reforms in the post-war years as piecemeal and conjunctual responses to particular problems and crises (Aseka 1989).

When responded to each of these further shaped the changes in the structure of the colonial political economies. Out of them emerged a more self-conscious and purposive logic of decolonization which poststructural inter-subjectivism, over-determinism and anti-essentialism miss in their rejection of the logic of cause and effect. With their rejection of this logicity, their claim to methodological scientificity is questionable. But there can be no change without movement, motion or process. History is all about dynamism and not static conditions. It is both a process and a condition. Every condition bears a dynamic which makes it amenable to the process of change and change does not necessarily lead to delinkaging with the past. The

rejection of the so-called structuralist economism has to be reworked in terms of a proper philosophy of history that goes beyond post-modernist eclecticism.

Change is a result of a process which may be located in given historical contexts and contexts may be interlinked. Historical processes are characterized by social struggles and conflict is a continuous feature in human society. It has its cause and effect and to deny this logic is to absolve imperialism of the social impact of its policies in the colonial and post-colonial eras.

We need a new political economy of ethnicity which articulates the interface between loyalty and grievance, aspiration and resignation, social solidarity and cleavage, totality and fraction, the abstract and the concrete. We must inquire into the problematic of the relationship between social conditions, aggregated or disaggregated categories, conjunctural and disjunctural processes, monolithic and multiple forms or processes.

However, one of the significant social conditions worth noting is that of inhibited capitalism. This condition generated the profligacy of petty bourgeois political actors who were reacting to this exigent colonial condition (Aseka 1989). The petty bourgeois class emerged in the process of colonial transformation as did a deprived peasantry which was marginalised through the exclusivist policy of creating ethnic (native) reserves and through the application of racist policies of education and commerce.

The imperialist effort to control processes of production and exchange subordinated and excluded Africans from possibilities of equal competition or partnership and blocked them from some of the avenues of capital accumulation. The lack of full capitalist development generated stunted social classes whose politics

corresponded to their stunted character. It was a politics which was ethnically defined and must be captured in a new philosophical project.

Inhibited capitalism was unable to destroy traditional peasant linkages and relations and the African politics was unable to transcend the ties and relations of ethnic solidarity and sociality. Its particularism was legitimated by the domain of the customary (see Mamdani 1996) whose urban purveyors were ethnic welfare associations. In the rural villages, the dispensers of customary justice were the cadres known as chiefs. Conflict over the customary was unavoidable given the social tensions which were emerging that were grounded in two intersecting realities. These were the realities of the traditional regime which was waning and the colonial compulsions with their modernizing pretences which were gaining prominence (Mamdani 1996).

It is then clear that tension-producing developments interlocked and created a conflictual social arena in which the ethnic factor was a major resource that was resorted to by those contending for power. These facts of life still obtain in many contexts in post-colonial Africa and cannot be fully comprehended by sheer isolation of ethnicity as an element in a person's identity which helps demarcate his or her scope for social action.

Frederiksen (1994) states that ethnicity is socially constructed and is situational. This is a discourse which she says, brings out lived conflicts between different ethnic groups and the debate about inter-ethnic conflicts. Conflicts and tensions are highlighted and the destabilization of the process is said to be attributable to politicization of ethnicity. This is a mobilization which is said to activate other tribes as counter-forces in turn.

But Frederiksen's (1994) postmodern analysis of the politicization of ethnicity in Kenya, which shows how the multi-party transformative politics degenerated into feats of ethnic cleansing, loses sight of the

historical sequence of events. The historical process is marred by narratives which are of no extrapolative utility. In Sierra Leone, Kandeh (1992) describes the politicization of Creole, Mende, Temne and Limba identities. He argues that these identities have played a dominant role in shaping political processes in post-colonial Sierra Leone. He feels that the linkage between competitive politics and the politicization of ethnic identities in that country suggests that political ethnicity is primarily an instrumental construct. It tends to collapse the distinction between ethnic identity on the one hand and political choices, affiliations and loyalties on the other.

Ethnicity is described as the politicization of culture and under its banner, people seek to defend and promote their culture in opposition to others. The aim is to get more attention from the state, may be to bring it down or to take it over, may be to work from within it by questioning, undermining and subverting it (Kandeh 1992). But all this is part of the wider project of anthropologization of disciplines. Cultural identity in the so-called modernization discourse has tended to be squeezed into the mould of national culture (see Booth 1992). The anthropological culture is fast capturing the post-colonial state, the arena of a new concept of multicultural life. But we must be warned that the return of anthropology invites the return of anthropological myth in Africa. As Mwanzi says, anthropology, must either become history or nothing at all because whenever anthropology is associated with history, there has been nothing but recognizable error (Mwanzi 1972:1).

A great deal of the discourse on ethnicity is actually an intellectual exercise in the politics of myth creation. This is best captured by such terminology as invention or re-invention or imagined otherness. This is an imperialist trap to domesticate the African discourse and knowledge. Aestheticization of narratives, illusions and delusions miss the essence of intellectualism in social transformation. Ethnology's vocation and imperialism are beautifully mixed in the same cultural logic, as Frederic

Jameson would say, that post-modernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism.

Frederic Jameson like Eagleton says postmodernism is complicity with commodification. Jameson subscribes to Nietzsche's condition of linguistic materiality as basic to the postmodern condition. This is not far from Baudrillard's technological determinism to whom knowledge is the key commodity in moving out of an economy of production, which is Fordist, into the post-Fordist economy. To both Jameson and Baudrillard, we have entered into the culture of the simulacrum (Waugh 1996:115).

To think anthropologically is to validate ethnicity as a category and correlate ethnicity and otherness. Is ethnicity therefore an imperialist tool? Is it an illusion, a useless category of interpretation when inquired into in terms of identity and difference? Many scholars would agree that ethnicity is an imperial tool. African ethnics were constructed by the colonizers to enable the imperial state builders to divide and conquer. The colonial definition of the customary was therefore an exercise in ethnic creation. Ethnicity was constructed to maximize possibilities of ethnic choice.

Questioning the Notion of the Subalterns

The subaltern effort to practice history as critique as embraced by Mahmood Mamdani is yet another methodological disappointment. His *Citizen and Subject*, and his article on the theme of 'Genocide and the State' (*New Left Review* No. 216), which examine historical conditions of conflict in Southern Africa and Rwanda respectively fall into the folly of history as critique. The subalterns in the traditions of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak attempt to give voice to the colonial subjects or the so-called developing world subalterns. Spivak is a Marxist deconstructionist critic who has attempted to capture the tension between the Western culture and colonised subjects' culture in terms of

what she calls 'Voices of Resistance'. To her, the subaltern speaks. The colonial subjects are positioned to speak from distinct but complimentary perspectives (Chakrabarty 1991). Subaltern subjects are allowed to represent themselves with maximum authenticity (Wald 1992:17).

An attempt is made to transform history without sufficient philosophical retooling. This has led to the emergence of raw and philosophically untutored historical consciousness which merely sees subaltern classes and groups as the subjects of their own history. It lost the emancipatory political philosophy based on class consciousness by relapsing into a post-modernist episteme focussing on culture and hermeneuticism which is apologetic of capitalism. The project of post-modernity is allied to the philosophically naive Fukuyamite notion of the death of history.

There can be no end of history without an end of mankind because every human activity is historical. The attempt by post-structuralism and post-coloniality to put history in a deep freezer is sheer methodological perfidy. The post-structuralist rejection of historicist ideas of history is suspect, an imperialist project to create a historical amnesia which began with Martin Heidegger.

A bizarre methodological retooling began in Ludwig Wittgenstein with his emphasis on language and Walter Benjamin with his notion of the importance of allegory and narratives in historical explanation. This reassertion of the place of narratives and metaphors led Hannah Arendt, Heidegger's student, to embrace historical imagination and the redemptive power of narrative, which resonates with Frederic Jameson, the postmodernist. Knowledge in the form of post-modernism is generating a dangerous intellectual consumerism. They are operating from the philosophical bellies of post-colonial critics like Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha and another brand of post-colonial belly of J.-François Bayart, Anthony Kwame Appiah and

Valery Mudimbe. The post-colonial motif emerges in their social discourse as a kind of writing. Post-colonial theory engages with forms of textuality, practices representation and modes of investment in colonial histories. In Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), the language of critique is effective to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation, a place of hybridity.

The postmodern junking of history is a relic of Heidegger. It is however contestible. Heidegger is a Nietzschean and Husserlian phenomenologist whose project was the constitution of the subject in a new concept of being. To him time has ceased to be anything other than velocity, instantaneousness and simultaneity, and that time as history has vanished from the lives of all peoples. The Fukuyamite notion of end of history stems from this. Heidegger was Nazi and he admired and quoted the racist scholar Alfred Rosenberg in support of Adolf Hitler's party. His idol, Nietzsche, was a psychotic case who ended up in a madhouse at the age of 45. They were advocates of cultural imperialism.

History is not just such cultural imperialism. Historical sensibility goes beyond narrative. History is both a process and a condition and as a process it is causal and dynamic. Without motion it would be static. In any case even though narratives may underspecify causality in the processes described in the narrative, narratives themselves give an idea of causality because of the chronological order of events. Narratives combine things that are determined by general laws with things that are contingent, producing a plausible followable story. As Vandsemb (1995) says: 'in the postmodern sequel, narratives illuminate the logic of individual action and the effects of structural constraints within which life courses evolve'.

Post-Structuralism and Neo-liberal Perceptions of Governance

According to Mamdani (1996), hegemonic construction by the colonial state dealt with the ethnic question in terms of the native question. Direct rule was for civilized society whereby the so-called civilized citizens had access to European rights. The uncivilized were excluded from these rights and segregation was rationalized as more of a cultural affair. The uncivilized would be subject to an all-round tutelage with a modicum of civil rights. They had no political rights. The rationale of civil power was that it was the source of civil law that framed civil rights in civil society.

Therefore, the anti-colonial struggle was located in the quest to eradicate this form of colonial governance, which racially defined the citizenry and its associated regime of rights. The anti-colonial struggle was a struggle of embryonic middle and working classes, with the native ethnics in limbo in their struggle for entry into civil society. That entry brought about the expansion of civil society, itself the result of an anti-state struggle. This is a reasonable political economy of the nationalist struggle given our perception of the historical formation of ethnicity in the colonial era.

It is therefore correct as Mamdani (1996) says: the nature of political power ought to be perceived in terms of concrete accumulation processes and the struggles shaped by this. But he seeks to go beyond the starting point of analysis of the labour question by Marx by turning on the imperative of the Gramscian quest for the maintenance of political order. He argues that to understand the form of state forged under colonialism one has to place at the centre of analysis, the riddle of the native question, in other words, the problematic of ethnicity.

Mamdani's perception of the colonial state is characterised by peasants governed by a constellation of ethnically defined native authorities under the supervision of white officials from a racial

pinnacle. This influences his identification of the need to deracialise civil society by the post-colonial state in Africa. It also influences the need to detribalise the native authority and the need to develop the economy given the unequal international relations. For him, reform processes were unable to tackle the dual legacy of the bifurcated state since the post-colonial state and the exercise of its power, fashioned through radical reform, was underlined by the despotic nature of power. The question of resilient despotic power has necessitated the call for political and economic reform in Africa in a new quest for good governance.

With regard to post-Cold War notions of governance, Moore (1996) doubts whether there is a civil society organised enough to demand reforms from a state which sees itself as acting on behalf of organised interests. The emergence of such a civil society had to be institutionalised by various American-designed capacity-building projects to hasten the institutionalization of good governance. This good governance leans towards instituting public accountability of donor funds and the good governance of the entire political process. Good governance policy discourses were conceived in the language and practice of instrumentally constructing democracy through the conditionalities of SAPs without unraveling the problematic of the colonial legacy. But can democracy be constructed in Africa on the basis of an empirically defined reform package? Has the emancipatory agenda lost meaning? Without the centrality of this agenda, is the quest for good governance not undermined by imperialist conditionality?

The good governance discourse was given justification by the belief that state financial mismanagement was the cause of the post-1970s African crisis. Moore (1996) correctly argues that structural adjustment became the developmental bottom-line as waves of (post-Fordist) Thatcherite and Reaganomist neo-liberalism took root as the West was buffeted by the debt crisis, the near excess basic needs, the

pressures from the dependency theory and political and economic threats such as the call for a New International Economic Order. There were many terrains of global conflict which reverberated in Africa. Good governance offered a double opportunity to instill Western values in African countries among the missionaries of good governance. These Western values undermine the political legitimacy of African so-called democratic governments.

The concept of governance has come to occupy a prominent place in the discourse on democracy. Hyden and Bratton (1992) identify what dimensions of regime management are particularly important for understanding how political systems can be sustained and developed. They argue that governance is a concept which is best suited to the regime level. It differs from policy-making levels of government and administration located at the level of bureaucracy. Just as politics is dynamic, so are its underlying social variables: governance and civil society. This is a notion which draws its inspiration from the rational choice theory. Rational choice approaches to the study of politics are of growing prominence in political science, especially in comparative politics, international relations and political theory.

Hyden states that it has become common place to embrace rational choice theory because its epistemological and methodological premises permit a degree of logical consistency in assumptions about human behaviour. They therefore explore the usefulness of governance and other concepts in the study of politics, politics which to them is a creative force. They go with the World Bank's (1989) identification of Africa's crisis as a crisis of governance. It is a crisis characterized by extensive personalization of power, the denial of fundamental human rights, widespread corruption and the prevalence of un-elected and unaccountable governments. But the imperialist nature of the Bank's Structural Adjustment and other programmes undermine the structure and procedure of democratic governance they envisage to set up.

Implicit in this perspective is the call for liberalization and democratization. The World Bank's position was influenced by activities of the Carter Centre on Governance in Africa at Emory University in which Goran Hyden, Robert Bates, Donald Rothchild and Michael Bratton were involved. Richard Joseph of the Centre was instrumental in conducting seminars in 1989 under the auspices of the Centre's African Governance programme to popularize the concept of governance among Africanists (Hyden and Bratton 1992). It was accepted as a more useful concept than government and leadership in tackling problems of the state/society dichotomy. To them, government and leadership largely refer to the formal-legal institutionality of the state. Yet this is a public realm which encompasses both state and society.

Governance captures both state and society as a process that consciously managing regime structures. Regimes are distinct from government or state because they are less permanent than a state. Government provides the structural framework within which resources are allocated. But governance entails the management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm (Hyden and Bratton 1992). Political legitimacy is a dependent variable produced by effective governance. Legitimacy translates into social capital. In this conception, a lot is drawn from Max Weber's concept of power and the structural-functional discourse on legitimacy. The edifice of structural-functionalism is re-introduced with a semblance of Marxified welfare economics reconstituted as rational choice. They also draw from the anti-postmodernist, yet Weberian and Parsonian, Jürgen Habermas's modern critical theory especially what he calls the theory of communicative action (see Habermas 1994), which he says is capable of producing social awareness, in other words, social consciousness. The governance approach can thus be cast in a post-materialist and post-positivist veil. Can national dialogue generate a national consensus and reconciliation of divergent interests?

Governance is viewed as an interactive process by which state and social actors reciprocally seek for consensus based on the rules of the democratic political game. They promulgate governance reforms as being necessary in the process of political change (Hyden and Bratton 1992). Is the sense in which protest and reform are deemed as necessary in political change by neo-liberal discourse enough for social transformation in Africa? As protesters continue to press and escalate their demands, governments are forced by circumstances to embark on constitutional reforms. The conference on governance was followed by the conference on civil society in North Carolina in 1991, at which the Polish scholar Bronislaw Geremek expounded on the place of civil society in democratization. In this conference, Geremek drew from the experience of the Catholic Church and the Solidarity Movement in the fight against communist dictatorship in Poland to popularize the notion of civil society.

Strategies have been devised of re-appropriating civil society from the state. The state becomes the object of action by the citizens. The conception of civil society is conceived to include the international community as custodians of the democratic agenda. The African democratization project had to be one of transforming the state by conscious intervention. The postmodernist epistemology trivializes the class composition of the state. It decouples state and class in an anti-state discourse whose project is to re-appropriate civil society from the state (Aseka 1996). This decoupling trivializes the class character of the state, yet without this class characterization, it becomes impossible to say the kind of socio-economic contradictions which permeate programmes and objectives of the state. What is needed is a national philosophy of transformation.

The assumption that an (imperial) international civil society can effect change in modes of governance to the benefit of African people is superficial. This is basically instrumentalizing democracy. We must

insist on the domestic origins of reforms. There is a lot of rhetoric about transparency, accountability, good governance and empowering civil society which has been produced in certain historical forms. We need to know what kind of practice produces rhetoric and identify the hiatus between rhetoric and practice.

The dominant discourse in the formulation of these concepts is post-modern. It therefore carries with it the philosophical and ideological baggage of imperialism. It is embedded in the global terrain of contested ideologies. An African discourse must be constituted which transcends this postmodernist discourse. Whenever the structures and procedures of democratic governance are undermined, political legitimacy also gets compromised. However, contemporary discourse on governance and civil society is not only comprador but also programmatic. Neither is it sufficiently analytical. It is more anthropologically ideological rather than historically logical. To cut through its pretensions requires a new cut of historical analysis.

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Abstract: The paper presents the issues of ethnicity, governance and prevention of conflicts in terms of their political management through the proper exercise of power. Conflict cannot be prevented, it can only be managed. The crucial determining factor in ethnic, gender and class relations is power. The paper traces notions of power in the works of various philosophers and outlines the significance of perceiving the impact of paradigmatic shifts on political discourse. These shifts are perceived as intellectual itineraries from structural-functionalism to the contemporary North America Critical Theory and postmodernist theory. The problematic of ethnicity is posed within debates emanating from the ensuing perspectival contests and paradigmatic struggles. The moral economy, rational choice, and subaltern approaches are also interrogated and critiqued. The paper contends that when the structures and procedures of democratic governance are undermined, political legitimacy also gets compromised.
