The Concept and Practice of Democracy in Zimbabwe: A Call for Consensual Democracy

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Abstract: With the coming of independence, a new form of governance: majoritarian democracy was adopted in Zimbabwe just as it was suggested as the best in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. The British rule that influenced the adoption of majoritarian democracy in Zimbabwe argued that it enables transparency and fosters checks and balances on corruption. We argue that, in a democratic system, functioning from a majoritarian perspective, there ought to be space of enjoying freedoms and rights. There ought to be sufficient representation and contribution of citizens in democratic procedures and organisations. For many, a good democratic system should speak to their bread and butter issues: their socio-economic well-being. However, these have not been enjoyed by the masses in Zimbabwe. The political atmosphere is a sad one; politics is practised for the sake of gaining power and control- both in the ruling and opposition parties, something that is immanent in multiparty under majoritarian democracy. This study seeks to outline these ills and address them with a suggestion of embracing consensual democracy as it was conceptualised by Kwasi Wiredu. The central argument is that democratisation has failed due to a well curated system that seem to prioritise rivalry in politics as opposed to nation building. The study suggests that consensual democracy can address persistent political ills in contemporary Zimbabwe and build a unified and prosperous nation. The essential tenets that can enable this emanate from a historical record of political thought in indigenous Zimbabwe, characterised by the conceptualisation of rational deliberation in decision-making and inclusiveness: a consensual system in politics.

Keywords: Consensual Democracy, Consensus, Majoritarian Democracy Wiredu, Zimbabwe

Introduction

At present, Zimbabwe and many other African countries portray a situation that is undesirable, a dependent and collapsed continent that seeks for answers from elsewhere. Most of the suggested solutions are designed to keep African people passive and dependent, whilst the perceived superior percentage loots and amass beyond measure. Democracy, as power of the people/rule of the people, in Zimbabwe, just as in many other civilisations, has evolved by acquiring different meanings. Hence it is important to trace its development and evaluate some of the elements that were of value and can still be transmitted in modern-day Zimbabwe. This study, with the intention of evaluating the concept and practise of democracy in Zimbabwe, will firstly look at the general concept of democracy. This evaluation also puts into consideration the relationship that is there between human rights and democracy, the study argues that they are two distinct tenets, but are closely linked and one can say cannot be separated. The role of education in democracy is also illustrated as being important to enjoy healthy democratic spheres; the masses need to avoid indoctrination and be able to spot lies from political playmakers. Having established this foundation, the study will then go on to how democracy is envisaged in Zimbabwe, from a majoritarian perspective. This will then move to show how it is actually practised, raising ills that ought not to be present. Political manifestos in Zimbabwe have only but shown malicious campaign for power, both in the ruling and opposition parties. This raises questions on the effectiveness of majoritarian democracy for the people of Zimbabwe who have long a waited for development, peace and prosperity. The final consideration seeks to elucidate on Wiredu's consensual democracy and offers it as a plausible system for Zimbabwe. This is not a proposition of continuing with traditional African polity in modern-day Zimbabwe, but it is vital and a fortuity to be able to obtain, from the older ways, certain features of past civilisations and utilising them in the present, but with an ability of letting go unhealthy aspects and embracing moderations for the present and future.

Democracy as a concept

Democracy is a complex phenomenon. Walter Gallie argues that aesthetic, moral, and political notions, such as art and democracy, are profoundly questioned.[1] Although there might be a broad agreement on some elements or principles that constitute the concept of democracy, reaching agreement on universal meaning or proper application is almost impossible. This can be seen in how many classifications of democracy we have and how these play out in different spaces and contexts. Some like Plato, who in the name of Socrates, had already started questioning the practice of democracy through voting. For him, voting ought to be a skill and not a random intuition, one had to display that they had thought rationally and deeply about issues at hand before they could be allowed to vote.[2] This brought about the difference between an intellectual democracy and a democracy by birth right. This already shows how democracy is difficult to explicate and apply, it is a multifaceted phenomenon. However, the basic denotation emanates from its original Greek *dēmokratia*: *demos*-people and *kratos*-rule.[3] We argues that, this should be the basis of developing and implementing a democratic theory.

Trying to escape some of the problems, David Beetham makes a distinction between the concept of democracy and theories of democracy.[4] There ought to be a general concept of democracy and its elements and perhaps theories of how it is to be practiced. The concept of democracy entails a system of government in which power is vested in the people; hence rule of the people. They should have the right to participate in the decision-making processes of their society, be it State or nation. It is a notion that has been extensively promoted, celebrated and embraced. It is attached to tenets that have been said to be indispensable to human life: freedom and equality. As it is applied by theories, Conrad Waligorski gives some denominations of democracy as including, 'liberal democracy, constitutional democracy, participatory democracy, direct democracy, representative democracy, economic democracy, social democracy, elite democracy, majoritarian democracy, mass democracy, limited democracy, and people's democracy.'[5] He cautions on the correct definitions of these as they have been used by theorists and societies differently.

Despite all these differences, there are certain characteristics that ought to be evident in whatever system that any society terms as democracy. In this view, Giovanni Sartori argues that, 'what democracy is cannot be separated from what democracy should be.'[6] In any society that deems itself democratic, there always ought to be governmental responsiveness to citizens. There are rights and liberties that the citizens ought to enjoy in the society. For example, in liberal democracy, elements such as: right to vote, constitutionalism, equality before the law, accountability, transparency and good governance should be existing and respected. In a democratic environment, it is correct for the citizens to demand their rights. They have the responsibilities to determine i) One who should rule, ii) How they should be ruled or governed, iii) Who ought to rule in resource sharing, and iv) How ought the society be organised.

Relationship between democracy and human rights

Human rights were not a common topic of international conversation until the 1940s. Akwasi Aidoo states that, 'modern human rights as codified in international and domestic laws are strictly a post-World War II phenomenon, drawing their impetus from the monstrous violations of human rights during the Nazi era.'[7] Before this, the notion of human rights was very much present, but it was only advocated for by individuals and some non-governmental groups. Post World War II, they emanated as a concept of protecting individual and group rights from transgressions and abuses. Human rights have to do with basic freedoms, principles of equity and equality, and the

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[1] Walter B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, no. 56 (1956): 174. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4544562.
[2] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett 3rd ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 2016), 484a-489c.
[3] Han Shuifa and Hu Jinglei, "The Concept of Democracy," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 3, (2008): 623. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40343902.
[4] David Beetham, "Liberal Democracy and the Limits Democratization," in *Prospects for Democracy; North, South, East, West*, ed. David Held, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 55.
[5] Conrad Waligorski, "Democracy," in *The Political Theory of Conservative Economists* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 10.
[6] Giovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory Revisited*, (New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, 1987), 7.
[7] Akwasi Aidoo, "Africa: Democracy without Human Rights?" *Human Rights Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1993): 706, http://www.jstor.org/stable/762403.

preservation of human life and dignity. Human right are also said to be inseparable with democracy. Respect for human rights in democracy includes the respect of freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of association. The United Nations showing the nexus between democracy and human rights states that, 'the link between democracy and human rights is interdependent, intricate, mutually supportive and symbiotic – with some participants proposing that the most appropriate term to use is 'mutually constitutive.'[8]

One of the principles that can help illustrate this is political equality, which is a democratic right. It means that each citizen has an equal opportunity to participate in the political processes, including the right to vote, run for office, and express their views. If one group or individual wins, they ought to respect the rights of those who have lost. The nexus between democracy and human rights is almost intrinsic. Akwasi Aidoo argues that, 'in Africa today, more than ever before, the struggle for democracy is by definition also taken to mean a struggle for human rights.'[9] This is very much apparent in Zimbabwe where the general population is demanding for democratic change based on the absence of basic human rights. This is also echoed by the United Nations saying, 'the exciting call for change in Africa and the Middle East was viewed as a combination of a call for sustainable and inclusive democratic governance with a call for rights. Democratic reforms and the restoration of human rights protections are seen as parts of the same vision of change.'[10]

It is important to note that human rights are not given, Aidoo rightfully argues that, 'whereas it is not possible to have human rights in undemocratic conditions, democracy will not automatically guarantee human rights.'[11] This brings about the notion that human rights are demanded. For example, the United Nations noted that despite many countries having proclaimed as working from a democratic perspective, there are some groups that have been excluded, 'especially from a gender equality perspective.'[12] It is for civil associations and individuals to democratically demand for their rights. Democracy and human rights are therefore linked, but are not the same. There is an instrumental relationship between the two: in some cases, democratic expressions have been used to demand for human rights. On the other hand, as Ian Shapiro argues that to be democratic, competition must take place within a setting moved by respect of rights and freedom: the right to association or to free speech and such rights must be equally shared.[13] These are two distinct tenets, but are closely linked.

Role of Education in democracy

The complex relationship between democracy and human rights shows the need for education in democracy. One of the fundamental roles of education in a democracy is to provide citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate actively in the democratic processes. An educated populace is more likely to be informed, engaged, and capable of making rational decisions when it comes to voting, advocating for their rights, and holding their elected representatives accountable. This is why the likes of Plato had shunned voting for all, emphasising that education is essential to democratic choices. For instance, Chris McGreal reported back in 2001 that, 'it is no coincidence that it is the better educated and more prosperous Zimbabweans who are pressing for reform and the very poor who are most open to manipulation by Robert Mugabe.'[14] Political parties thrive on the ignorance of the people and encourage the use of emotions in political participation and voting.

This trend has continued in Zimbabwe, looking at how the less educated fail to grasp the simple realities of abuse, thuggery and un-constitutionalism at work in Zimbabwe. The skills and values of democracy are learnt, they are not intrinsic to human nature. Human rights education is also essential. It is fundament in the implementation of human rights as every human being needs to know about her/his rights. This will extend in building a democratic

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[8] The United Nations, *Democracy and Human Rights: The Role of the UN*, (The United Nations: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, September-2013), 7, accessed June 29, 2023
https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/democracy-and-human-rights-the-role-of-the-unitednations.pdf.
[9] Aidoo, "Africa: Democracy without Human Rights," 704.
[10] The United Nations, "Democracy and Human Rights," 7.
[11] Aidoo, "Africa: Democracy without Human Rights," 705.
[12] The United Nations, "Democracy and Human Rights," 13.
[13] Ian Shapiro, *The State of Democratic Theory*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 57.
[14] Chris McGreal, "Give them hard cash," *The Guardian*, September 3, 2001, accessed July 15, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/03/race.uk1.

environment that shows forbearance through the precincts of regions, ethnic groups, religions and political opinions. The education that this study severely pushes for is that which transforms these attitudes into a citizenry that engages rationally on matters. Grounding knowledge in the context of a society like Zimbabwe, so as to enhance practical political analysis in the citizens. It also accounts for an education and appreciation of historical facts of a people.

The exercise of democracy in Zimbabwe

Democracy is not sorely a thought-out theoretical process, it emanates from any group that decides to come together and experience/tackle life as a society. In this regard, Zimbabwe from its early societies had the concept of democracy at work in the political systems that were employed.

Primitive democracy

Using the term primitive democracy does not mean an inability to intellectually construe the concept among the people. It points to the idea of a system that was not written down, showing a conceptualised systems that is described in complex ways. In Zimbabwe, there were some forms of governance that were at play from its early civilisations. For example, people of the Mutapa State[15] were among the first African cities. The king, who was called Mwene Mutapa (Master Pillager), was a central figure who commanded respect. According to Peter Garlake, Mwene Mutapa, in theory, ruled with absolute power, but in reality and practice this was limited by custom. Much depended upon popular agreement which involved people like priests, officials or representatives and also relatives of the Mwene Mutapa which included women: his mother, sisters and wives.[16] A. J. Wills further argues that the Mwene Mutapa derived much of his political authority from his religious function, as one who was sort of a mediator between the living and ancestral spirits and also with Mwari.[17] Deliberations of the societal matters were held at different levels of authority. Ken Mufuka argues that, the villages had their own councils and these were more democratic than the royal council. Every *samana*-headman and *sadunhu*-chief had their own *dare*-court which were similar to that of the king.[18]

These local courts held consensus dear to their deliberations. Mufuka argues that, every person was equal, respecting the rational capacity of each person. Furthermore, the chief was only *primus inter pares*- first among equals.[19] This gave the chief the aptitude to be more in touch with communal views and desires. This meant that the local chiefs had an upper hand than the king in knowing the status of the State and the aspirations of the people. It was therefore the chief's court that kept the light and power of democracy alive.

Introduction of Majoritarian Democracy in Zimbabwe

Like many other African realms, Zimbabwe was colonised by the British government, from 1895, only gaining its independence in 1980. During this period nothing much can be said in terms of democracy. Claire Palley argues that, although the colony's first formal constitution was drafted in 1899, it was sorely for the whites.[20] The natives of the land were put under administration, with many abuses evident. It was only upon independence that the British lost power through an electoral process, which they established and encouraged. This was the beginning of the development of a majoritarian democracy that is still at work, with its elements of regular elections and a multi-party democratic political system.[21] Majoritarian democracy works with the political scheme of multipartyism where various political parties countrywide contest in national elections. Every party has the chance to win, meaning they get hold of the control of government offices, independently or in alliance.

Majoritarian Democracy as a concept in Zimbabwe

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[15] An ancient State which was made up of the modern day Shona people of Zimbabwe.

[16] Peter Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, (Aylesbury: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 176.

[17] A. J Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa: Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe*, (Oxford: OxfordUniversity Press, 1985), 24.

[18] Ken Mufuka, *Dzimbabwe: Life and Politics in the Golden Age 1100-1500 A.D*, (Harare: Harare Publishing House, 1983), 39.

[19] Mufuka, *Dzimbabwe: Life and Politics in the Golden Age 1100-1500 A.D*, 39.

[20] Claire Palley, *The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1888-1965: with special reference to imperial control*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 63.

[21] Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013, article 2, sections a and b (CoZ, 2013 hereafter)

Majoritarian democracy, established with decorated concepts of respecting liberal rights and freedom was sold to the African nations by those who had conquered; with the likes of the United States of America and United Kingdom, who later on went to form the United Nations. Roger Normand and Sarah Zaidi, argue that the forces that promoted liberalism to protect their hegemony they did so, 'from within the framework of an explicitly imperialist and racist world order of which they were leaders and beneficiaries.'[22] We do not have the space and time to further investigate this assertion. In Zimbabwe, majoritarian democracy is embodied in the system of representative democracy where citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. This is also coupled with its presidential democracy tenet, as prescribed by the constitution on Zimbabwe.[23] The phenomenon of presidentialism in Zimbabwe involves the centralisation of State power in the hands of a president or their office.

In many parts of Zimbabwe, citizens enjoy their democratic right in choosing who represents them in parliament and as the president. This is through multiparty elections where multiple political parties are allowed to exist and participate in elections and are said to have the right to govern the country if they win. It is also important to note that Zimbabwe has had only one ruling party since its independence: Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front).[24] Despite this fact, political competition has been present in Zimbabwe. Lucky Asuelime and Blessing Simura postulate that, the eve of the new millennium was when the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) became the first fierce and strong opposition to Zanu-Pf.[25] However, their treatment by the ruling party and arms such as the judiciary and army proved to be intense and disregarding the claimed spirit of democracy and constitutionalism.

The Evidenced Case of Majoritarian Democracy in Zimbabwe

Michael Parenti argues that, 'the best measures of democratic rule are not its procedures (for instance, multiparty competition, voting) but its substantive outputs.'[26] Its tangible benefits, and its social justice outcomes are what determines, in the minds of people true democracy. In light of this, one can begin to elaborate on some of the ills that have been evidenced in Zimbabwe with its democratic processes and how these have manifested negatively on the masses. The current democratic situation in Zimbabwe can be described as a sad story, exhibiting unconstitutional and undemocratic behaviours evidenced by government led abuses, socio-economic decline and political brutality. The prominent mantra is informed by a politics of entitlement, the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)[27] uses the language of being liberation heroes who are entitled to rule. The electoral legitimacy is challenged, the current president: Emerson Mnangagwa just as the previous one: Robert Mugabe have had their legitimacy challenged in courts and broad media. The electoral processes and results in Zimbabwe breed what Adam Przeworski reasoned when he said,

 voting is an imposition of a will over a will. When a decision is reached by voting, some people must submit to a decision different from theirs or to a decision contrary to their interests . . . Voting generates winners and losers, and it authorises the winners to impose their will, even if within constraints, on the losers. This is what 'ruling' is.[28]

One can be bold enough and say, Zimbabwe lacks a government that serves, it has rulers who are self-serving and in that trampling on any form of definition that can be given to the word democracy.

Moreover, elections in Zimbabwe are handled by a single party which has power of manipulating radio stations, television programs and choosing an electoral commission. It is the same party that runs a government that fails to provide enough ballot boxes and after elections uses the army to go on stuffing the ballot boxes with favourable

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[22] Roger Normand and Sarah Zaidi, *Human Rights at the UN: The Political History of Universal Justice*, (Bloomingtom: Indiana University Press, 2008), 28.

[23] CoZ, 2013, articles 88 and 89.

[24] Zanu-Pf hereafter.

[25] Lucky Asuelime and Blessing Simura, "The Movement for Democratic Change(MDC) and the Changing Geo-Political Landscape in Zimbabwe," in *Selected Themes in African Political Studies*, edited by Lucky Asuelime and Suzanne Francis, (London: Springer International Publishing, 2014), 70. (pp.69-81)

[26] Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 23.

[27] Zanu-Pf hereafter.

[28] Adam Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense," in *Democracy's Value*, eds. Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), 47.

votes, and committing a host of crimes against their people: human rights violation. Additionally, constitutionalism is used to undermine freedoms and rights. This is caused by constitutional coups where the majority have power to change laws in favour of draconian laws they devise, an example being the new Patriotic Bill[29] that was signed into law on the 31st of March 2023. These are some of the effects of majoritarian power in a government, rules are passed based on affiliation instead of rational deliberations to reach deliberative consensus.

There are other factors that render majoritarian democracy inapt in Zimbabwe. For example, it has become a competition based on regional contests: the tribe or even the village which has more influence wins. The opposition parties in Zimbabwe have also shown that politics is all about gaining absolute power. The recent fights which led to the infiltration of the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) party, portray a political behaviour that is directed at gaining absolute power. The above mentioned ills are not unique to the ruling party. The fault lines followed by political parties in Zimbabwe have largely been on ethnic, linguistic, religious, tribal defences, the much used narrative of generational gap and above all the desire to rule. Political ideologies or policies have played very little part in Zimbabwean political debate and contestation. This makes one then argue that majoritarian democracy is all about the acquisition power. Debate id based on party affiliation. There is lack of rationality in political deliberations, representation, electoral campaign and voting. Peter Ekeh, as early as 1975, before Zimbabwe had gained its independence, had already warned of systems such as multiparty democratisation. According to his analysis, these systems are colonial ideologies which, 'justified their penetration into Africa but also justified to their fellow countrymen their continuing actions.'[30] These ideologies were meant to distort the idea of political organisation in pre-colonial Africa. The peculiarity of adversarial politics is emphasized even more by the fact that quite often this kind of politics degenerates into opposition for the sake of opposition. This adversarial politics undermines the principle of solidarity in traditional African political culture, which was evident in indigenous States in Zimbabwe such as the Mutapa State.

Proposal for Consensual Democracy

Addressing the issues raised above would require an honest evaluation and proposition of a new system that moves from a politics of ego to a system that portrays nation building; implementing the over used dictum by President Munangagwa, *nyika inovakwa, igotongwa, igonamatigwa nevene vayo*- the nation is built, ruled and prayed for by its own citizens. It should be mentioned that seeking an alternative of majoritarian democracy does not collapse the plausibility of majoritarian democracy, just that in Zimbabwe it has failed, perhaps in other contexts is has worked or thrived. Traditional Zimbabwean political structures show indigenous societies that unveiled concepts and values in governance that can enrich modern-day Zimbabwean polity and other African societies by extension. The diagnosis made should not lead to a blame game, but inspiring efforts in building something for contemporary Zimbabwe with epistemic richness from the past.

Kwasi Wiredu (1931–2022), an African philosopher of Ghanaian origin, suggested a political system that seeks consensus as a viable democratic system for Africa.[31] This was suggested as a system that is inspired by traditional politics. There is no doubt that some of the traditional concepts are anachronistic, superstitious and inelegant. Despite them having meant something to the people in the history of indigenous philosophy, they need constructive self-criticism which may need new frameworks that can work in contemporary world. However, some are very practical and are universally applicable. The inventive outcome of a study of African indigenous philosophy, as expounded above in the Mutapa State, is also exemplified by Wiredu's concept of democracy as consensus, an elegant feature of African historical experiences and indigenous traditional philosophy. This is born from his reading and constructive examination of the Ashanti[32] concept of consensus as to have been a good democratic system that was a result of deliberative discussions. This can therefore stand as a practical solution or

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[29] It discourages Zimbabweans from meeting foreign countries or organisations discussing Zimbabwean issues that could lead to imposition of sanctions on the country. In essence the Bill is a grave attack on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

[30] Peter Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no.1 (1975), 96, https://www.jstor.org/stable/178372. (91-112)

[31] Kwasi Wiredu, "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for Non-party Polity," in Eze, EC (ed) *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 310.

[32] This is an ethnic group with forms part of the Akan. In some writings Wiredu uses Akan and in some he specifies them as the Ashanti, the distinction here is not of paramount importance to our project.

resolution to the decadence that is prevalent in the African political sphere: built up and intended essentially for an African public. D. A Masolo argues that this is a revolution in African thinking and can be seen as comparable to the intellectual revolution in Western civilization in the seventeenth century.[33]

To this we can also add the approach that African philosophers like Kwame Gyekye have proposed: *Sankofaism*.[34] It comes from the Akan mythical bird, which is illustrated as turning back, but flying forward. The thought and practice then encourages going back in the past to take some values that are to be used in the present and future. This shows that traditional values, thoughts and practices are not extracted to be applied in a vacuum, they engage contemporary thought systems and practices. Although Wiredu was not conversant with this theory in his writings, his approach to African political thought systems is austerely undistinguishable to *Sankofaism* and should be read and applied from this theoretical framework. Africa had concepts and values in their governance that unveiled a rational system suitable for their contexts. This is what Wiredu identifies and tries to encourage Africa to realize and appropriate in their political spaces. He is not naïve that times have changed, and he does not propose consensual democracy as an armament of opposition to change and modernization. Masolo argues that Wiredu's idea introduces the concept that knowledge is dialectically connected to reality and history and they are always in a dialectical movement.[35]

This scheme, as Emmanuel Ani argues, will tolerate a more comprehensive worth as compared to sheer voting.[36] The inclusive government of Zimbabwe, Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2008, can work as an example, where people initiated dialogue for the progress of the nation. This consultative approach at its core has traits that were evident in the rudimentary stages of indigenous Zimbabwean governance systems. Thinking in line with Wiredu might appear as mere reminiscence at work, desiring to bring back archaic systems of governance into the present-day Africa. Some can justifiably resist. However, the fact that the practice of present-day majoritarian politics has failed in Zimbabwe cannot be ignored. The issue relying on votes: highest numbers cannot fix the problems that are being encountered. Helen Lauer shows an illustration of people like Jacques that have called Wiredu's idea a sentimentalised delusion and unreal.[37] This argument rests solidly on the idea that in the modern world choosing consensual democracy as superior to majoritarian democracy cannot be simply realised, if at all it can be attained.

Wiredu accepted that consensus will not involve complete agreement, there is diversity obvious in it, but dialogue can make way to levelling disagreements. The ones involved in deliberation can come up with resolutions out of agreement, but still having their own opinions of what could have been done. In such a case, Wiredu views consensus as the quest for common interest which identifies that human wellbeing is the basis of all discussion and the interests are the same, he says, 'consensus is not just an optional bonus … it is essential for securing substantive, or what might be called decisional, representation for representatives and, through them, for the citizens at large. This is nothing short of a matter of fundamental human rights.'[38] Therefore, consensus leads to a political system guided by scheme that includes of all involved in making decisions: government. It further promises a democratic situation that leads to development and prosperity of all. In this line of thought one can actually argue that consensual democracy carries with it an instrumental value of evaluation what democracy is.

According to Wiredu, consensus is the foundation of democracy. This is a political system characterised by consent through persuasion as a means of political legitimation, showing an absence of disruptive competing political parties.[39] For Wiredu, non-party consensual democracy was evident in traditional African societies as it was in line with the communalistic ethos of the societies. This means that decisions were made collectively through discussions and debates, with the aim of obtaining everyone's agreement or consent. Wiredu asserts that the emphasis on consensus prevents the tyranny of the majority and ensures that the interests of minorities are not neglected.

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[33] D. A Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 1994), 194.
[34] Kwame Gyekye, "Africa Critically Needs What We Term Sankofa Prof-Gyekye," *SupremoVisions* (blog), December 4, 2016, https://supremovisions.wordpress.com/2016/12/04/africa-critically-needs-what-we-term-sankofa-prof-gyekye/.
[35] Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity,* 194.
[36] Emmanuel I. Ani, "On Traditional African Consensual Rationality," in *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 33, no. 3 (2013): 311.
[37] Helen Lauer, "Wiredu and Eze on Good Governance," in *Philosophia Africana* 14, no. 1 (2011): 42.
[38] Wiredu, "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics," 310.
[39] Kwasi Wiredu, "Democracy by Consensus: Some Conceptual Considerations," *Philosophical Papers* 30, no. 3, (2001): 228.

Multiparty system, in Wiredu, is also identified with the tenet of majoritarian democracy, which according to him has failed Africa terribly. Wiredu points out three specific flaws that are linked with majoritarian democracy; firstly, their nature of organisation along political party lines makes competition for power exclusionary. Furthermore, their idea of democracy is constricted as it only gratifies the procedural feature of representation while failing to satisfy the substantive requirement of representation. Finally, and perhaps most binding to his argument, majoritarianism favours the majority at the exclusion of the minority.[40] There is no cohesion and harmony in such a political sphere, whereby the runner who gets the majority ballots is regarded the victor, whilst the one who gets fewer polls is considered as the failure who should be continually be subdued. These ills have been present in Zimbabwe, the opposition and its supporters are even not given State help because of the party they support.

The idea of political association, like in indigenous societies, should be geared towards political participation of all basic units and not to gain power.[41] One of the main advantages is that it promotes inclusivity and unity among the citizens by actively involving everyone in the decision-making processes. It also creates a sense of ownership and responsibility among the people. This, in turn, strengthens social cohesion and fosters a collective sense of progress. Political instability is unlikely, due to the absence of unguided competition for political power. Wiredu argues that when decisions are made through consensus, they are less likely to be contentious and face opposition from different factions. It does not imply total agreement but a concerted effort at deliberation to reach mutual agreement. He argues that, 'consensus does not in general entail total agreement … consensus usually presupposes an original position of diversity.'[42] It involves deliberation, and rational discussion which fosters a culture of dialogue and compromise.

This is the call that is presented to Zimbabwe; trying to move from an antagonist trait that is prevalent in adversarial politics of majoritarian democracy. These are foreign systems and they are fundamentally opposed to the communal and humanistic values that can be drawn from traditional systems. Unlike consensual democracy which takes into consideration the wellbeing of all through maximal representation, majoritarian democracy unswervingly sentences a group of people to the opposition realm, outside of power, out of the reach of fair representation and this does lead to political instability.[43] Another issue is that the use of majoritarian system in Zimbabwe has seen the deploying of violence to win an election at all costs. This in turn has encouraged arbitrary rule and tyranny of the majority, by the ruling Zanu-Pf party. The opposition has not been innocent of the same crime. These traits undermine core principles of democracy.

Some Challenges

Emmanuel Eze comes out as a critique to Wiredu's consensual democracy. He argues that majoritarian democracy should not be to blame for the ills prevalent in Africa, but the blame should be on the leaders. The post-colonial leaders through greed and selfishness have created conflicts in Africa. Eze gives an example of the military government of Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, which was despotic.[44] This is also true in Zimbabwe with its current militarily sustained government. This exposition seeks to thwart Wiredu's assertion that majoritarian democracy has failed in Africa, hence seeking for a consensual one. The problem is not on the system at work, but the people who are in control of the system. The implication will be that even if a new system is sought, despots such as Mnangagwa would still use a tyrant approach. Eze's critique is of value, but ignores the fact that a consensual democracy allows demand for accountability and transparency. The inclusive government of Zimbabwe, Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2008, can work as an example, where people began to dialogue for the betterment of the nation. It is because it worked that despot like Mugabe quickly went out of it in 2013. They pushed the agenda that there was need to restore a democratic environment and by that they meant majoritarian democracy, emanating from voting, a system they can easily manipulate.

Another challenge was raised by Bernard Matolino. Matolino moves from looking at some concepts of Wiredu's consensual democracy and questions the whole prospect of consensual democracy. He engages with three key

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[40] Wiredu, "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics," 1997, 307-10.
[41] Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural universals and particulars: an African perspective*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 187.
[42] Wiredu, "Cultural universals and particulars," 183.
[43] Wiredu, "Cultural universals and particulars," 189.
[44] Emmanuel Eze, "Democracy or Consensus? A Response to Wiredu," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 314.

questions, firstly asking, if consensus is a democratic system at all. Secondly, he asks if consensus is any different from one-party systems which the likes of Wiredu distances themselves from. Lastly, he asks whether consensual democracy is truly superior to majoritarian democracy as Wiredu and his supporters had asked.[45] Nonetheless, he does not claim that his treatment of these questions actually destroys the whole project that Wiredu had set out to do. Matolino's treatment of the matter shows an exclusive focus on language analysis: how the term democracy is construed and the procedural matters. This approach neglects the phenomenological considerations such as applying the problem to a context as this study has done.

Most of the reproaches have mainly been theoretical without an effort of studying the concept within a specified context and offering a reinterpretation to consensual democracy creating models such as Government of National Unity. The context of Zimbabwe, from a consensual perspective, offers a new perspective to Africa: people are interested in socio-economic development more than political contestation and consensual democracy offers just that. In Zimbabwe, there is a willingness to compromise among the general masses, which requires rational deliberation. It implies, as Wiredu argues, 'the adjustment of one's stand to allow a better decision prevail not to one's detriment but to one's benefit in the long run.'[46] The discussion is not an exhausted one; there are many considerations to be made, but the most important one is educating people on the true meaning of consensual democracy. The masses of Zimbabwe have felt its effects, partly in the GNU of 2008; but there is need of establishing an attitude towards it not as an intervention for a short period of time, but as a lasting working system for the nation.

Conclusion

The political atmosphere in Zimbabwe is characterised by greed, privilege, opportunism, freedom linked and enjoyed only by those with economic and political status. The actual concept of democracy, as visualised for by majoritarian democracy, is missing in Zimbabwe, but we can presume it dead. As illustrated in the study, it is a broken place in many respects: poverty, sterile political rivalry leading to political direction lessness from both the ruling and opposition parties. With a background of what democracy ought to be, in Zimbabwe majoritarian democracy has simply failed to take its roots. Human rights that ought to be a crucial arm of democracy are not respected and among the voters there is lack of knowledge, leading to manipulation. Against those who would think democracy in its entirety has failed, we have argued that it can be pursued from a different system: consensual democracy. This was well articulated by Wiredu and also evident in indigenous societies in Zimbabwe. Just like any other system of democracy, consensual democracy will encounter problems, as some have been raised against it, but it is sustainable for a context such as Zimbabwe, compared to majoritarian democracy. The communitarian value systems that emanates from traditional indigenous Zimbabwe suffices for consensual democracy.

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[45] Matolino, "Consensus as Democracy in Africa," 148.
[46] Wiredu, "Cultural universals and particulars," 183.

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