

The Purpose of Political Power: An African Dimensional Contemplation

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Abstract

This paper is a contribution to the persisting debate among social scientists on the dynamics of political power. The African dimension of the paper derives from the intention to contribute to the specific debate on political accountability in Africa. Hence, the general objective of the study is to identify in specific terms, what should constitute the purpose of political power, particularly in Africa. The methodology of the study is logical argumentation. The theoretical framework is the public choice theory. Consequently, among the study's most salient conclusions is that the purpose of political power must be the democratisation of power, in generic terms, by the trustees or holders of political power.

Key words: purpose, political power, African dimension and contemplation

Sumário

Este artigo é uma contribuição para o debate que persiste entre os cientistas sociais sobre a dinâmica do poder político. A dimensão Africana que este artigo assume deriva da intenção de contribuir para o debate específico sobre a responsabilidade política em África. Assim, o objectivo geral do estudo é identificar, em termos específicos, o que deve constituir o objectivo do poder político, particularmente em África. A metodologia do estudo é uma argumentação lógica. O referencial teórico é a teoria da escolha pública. Por conseguinte, entre as conclusões mais relevantes do estudo é que o propósito do poder político deve ser a democratização do poder, em termos genéricos, por todos os que foram confiados ou detentores de poder político.

Palavra-chave: objectivo, o poder político, a dimensão Africana e contemplação

Introduction

The concept of power has remained fundamental to the study of political science, particularly the sub-sphere of international politics (Omeje, 1999, p.1). In domestic affairs, the dynamics of power are also increasingly receiving critical attention, principally due to the upsurge in the number of politicians at the domestic level who are desperate for power. Furthermore, in general terms, power is neither sought nor granted for its own sake. Thus, within the specific context of political power, it is amazing how an increasingly humongous number of beneficiaries of political power



tussles have seemingly concluded that they have obtained power merely for its own sake. Thus, the love of power is obviously the ruling motive of many politicians (Russell, 1977, p.43). The issue of this study actually emanates from this amazing misconception.

Within the African context, this misconception of the purpose of power – the purpose of political power – has led to developmental immobilisation. And so, according to Adebani and Obadare (2015, p.387), as the first decade of the 21st century came to an end, Africa was plagued with a limitless list of negatives: civil wars, armed conflicts, different forms of social violence, sub-human poverty, famine, the ravages of diseases, including HIV/Aids, cholera, malaria fever, polio, etc.; economic crises and collapse; political crises, including the uses of democratic means for autocratic ends; travesties of all forms in the name of elections, the crisis of citizenship and indigeneity; inter-faith and inter-ethnic and inter-racial violence; a lack of access to basic modern amenities by the largest proportion of populations within the different national boundaries; and many more.

Furthermore, in the face of the above stated natural and unnatural calamities, political leadership in Africa blatantly appears powerless. The African state, therefore, seems to have defied all solutions (Adebani and Obadare, 2015, p.387). Consequently, post-colonial Africa presents a picture of a source of terror, astonishment, and hilarity, all at once (Mbembe 2001, cited in Adebani and Obadare, 2015, p.387). But the chemistry of terror, astonishment and hilarity must rank as converse to the purpose of political power. Hence, the general objective of this study is to identify, in specific terms, what should constitute the purpose of political power. The methodology of the study is logical argumentation. The theoretical framework is the public choice theory.

Political Power: Operationalising a Key Concept

Hans J. Morgenthau sees power ordinarily as “man’s control over the minds and actions of other men” and further situates the concept of power into the domain of politics by operationalising its meaning as: the mutual relations of control among the holders of public authority and between the latter and the people at large (Omeje, 1999, p.2). From a sociological viewpoint, Marshall (1998, p.519) posits that power is the concept that is at the heart of social stratification and it is therefore not surprising that we have seen so many disputes concerning its meaning. Invariably, stratification connotes inequality of relationships, which alludes to power. Marshall (1998, p.519) further cites Max Weber as having defined power (in general terms) as the “probability of persons or groups carrying out their will, even when opposed by others”. Power is therefore a social relationship (Marshall, 1998, p.519). Weber’s definition, however, has not been adjudged the supreme definition. Marshall (1998, p.519) further highlights:

If we examine Weber’s definition, it obviously has built into it a notion of conflict and intention. The notion of intention can be seen in the view of someone or some group ‘carrying out their will’. This implies a quality of conscious, rational, and calculated action in pursuit of a specific goal. Now, this may well characterize some power relationships, but does it characterize

them all? Can power be exercised unwittingly? Should we perhaps see power as involving the achievement of one’s preferences - whether by intention or not - rather than as the pursuit of one’s will? The other problem we can see in Weber’s definition is the assumption of conflict or antagonism, which it incorporates. As various critics have noted, the definition suggests that A has power over B to the extent that he or she overcomes the resistance of B if it is offered, implying that – at least some of the time – the interests of B are being sacrificed to those of A. Weber was certainly interested mainly in power in situations of conflicting interests...Does this mean power can never be exercised in a consensual context; that is, where subordinates accept it as being used legitimately?

From a completely different perspective, VeneKlasen and Miller (2002, cited in VeneKlasen and Miller, 2006) see power as the degree of control over material, human, intellectual and financial resources exercised by different sections of society. Hence, the control of these resources becomes a source of individual or social power (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2006). The control of these resources can also become a source of political power. But what is political power?

According to Laski (2008, p.295), since the time of Aristotle, it has been generally agreed that political power is divisible into three broad categories. There is, first, the legislative power, which enacts the general rules of the society and lays down the principles by which the members of the society must set their course. There is, secondly, the executive power, which seeks to apply those rules to particular situations. There is, thirdly, the judicial power. This determines the manner in which the work of the executive has been fulfilled. It sees to it that the exercise of executive authority conforms to the general rules laid down by the legislature. It may...declare that the particular order issued is, in fact, *ultra vires*. Judicial power settles also the relationship between private citizens, on the one hand, and between citizens and the government on the other, where these give rise to problems, which do not admit a solution by agreement (Laski, 2008, p.295).

This categorisation, it must be admitted, is not baseless. The individual legislator certainly exercises political power in carrying out the law-making function. The judge also wields political power in making certain judicial pronouncements. Moreover, in the broadest sense of the definition of politics, it will become plausible to adduce that all the actions of the judge in his official role, border on the exercise of political power. On the part of the executive, it is more obvious that all the actions stem from political power. Harold Laski further adds:

It may be admitted at the outset that these categories are of art not of nature. It is perfectly possible to conceive of all these functions being performed by a single body or even in the name of a single person; and in the modern democratic state the distinction between them cannot, in fact, be consistently maintained (Laski 2008, p.295).

However, the issue remains: what is political power? Morgenthau pictures political power as a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised (Omeje,

1999). This is because it allows the former to control certain actions of the latter by virtue of the influence the former exerts on the latter's mind. This psychological influence, translated by Morgenthau as political power, derives essentially from the object's expectation of benefits, fear of deprivations and deference to men and institutions vested with authority. Hence, for Hans Morgenthau, power possesses relational attributes in two respects. First, power is relational in the sense of describing the relationship between one state and another in a specific situation. A state is therefore not powerful in an absolute term. A state can only be considered powerful in relation to another state and in a given circumstance. Second, power is relational in time although he (Morgenthau) concludes that the evaluation of national power is very difficult, if not an impossible task, even for an all-knowledgeable policy maker. Moreover, Morgenthau distinguishes power from force. For him, an actual use of or resort to physical violence is force or military power while the threat of its use is political power (Morgenthau, 1967; Omeje, 1999, p. 2/3).

From the foregoing, therefore, it becomes manifest that political power is immensely difficult to conceptualise. Nevertheless, to begin to sum up the preceding expositions, in the first place, power, like many other concepts in the social sciences, is an intellectual abstraction and not a quantifiable mass or possession; it is an abstraction from political reality. Hence, as a conceptual abstraction, power is first a relative notion and not an absolute term. It is relative in respect of circumstance and time. However, as an abstraction from actual political processes, power has some operational indices and the probability of the outcome of an actor's exercise of power in a specific circumstance and time can be evaluated (Omeje, 1999, p.10). We therefore embark on operationalizing the concept of political power in this study. To this effect, political power is the power wielded by political actors. These actors may be State actors, individual or institutional actors. Their operational platform may be the domestic or the international podium.

Public Choice Theory and its Application in this Study

Public choice theory seeks to understand and predict the behaviour of politicians and bureaucrats in the polity by utilising the analytical tools of development from economics, based on the postulate of rational choice. In public choice, individuals, interest groups, bureaucrats and politicians are assumed to seek their own self-interest as in the marketplace. Decisions made depend on the situation whereby each group attempts to maximise their own net benefits. The theory, just like classical economics, assumes that politicians and bureaucrats are rational agents. This means that they try to maximise their interest first and produce goods for others as a by-product (Izueke, 2014, p.173). Public choice originated as a distinctive field of specialisation through the works of Buchanan and Tullock (1962), among others.

The public choice school has been successful in pointing out that there are alternatives available for the delivery of services to citizens (Izueke, 2014, p.173/174). Consequently, the public choice theorists recommend a minimal state, so that the role and influence of venal and corrupt politicians and bureaucrats can be minimised (Sen, 2003 cited in Izueke, 2014, p.175). Furthermore, Izueke (2014, p.175), inter alia, identifies the tenets of public choice theory to include the fact that public

officials seek and maximise their personal interest; their decisions are guided by their own self-interests and that the individual is the unit of analysis in public choice theory.

Subsequently, in applying public choice theory to this study, our focus is on why individuals in political parties and as agents of states behave the way they do in their handling of political power. We contend that public officials (politicians, bureaucrats, individuals, etc.) seek and maximise their personal interests, in their handling of political power. We highlight the fact that decisions made by public officials are guided by their own self-interest, hence they abuse political power. We have largely made the individual our unit of analysis as we posit that there are alternatives to the way some African states and political parties currently interpret the purpose of political power.

The Purpose of Political Power

The International Dimension: When Nation-States Possess Power

According to Omeje (1999, p.1) the use of power is more associated with international politics. He attributes this to a general awareness that in relation to the domestic state system, the international system lacks the adequate authoritative mechanisms for conflict resolution. This is why many scholars profess the possession and exercise of power as the *summum bonum* in international politics. In fact, a major theory in international relations, built around this perceived centrality of power to international political processes today, finds expression in a classical paradigm that is generally regarded as the realist viewpoint (Omeje, 1999, p.1). Hans J. Morgenthau, in his classic treatise on international politics, *Politics among Nations*, was the major developer of what might be called the 'grand theory' of international politics. Morgenthau argued that the diverse data of international politics could only be coherent within the terms of a model of power politics (Holst, 1972, p.9). Kenneth Waltz was another outstanding scholar of what became known as neorealism. Waltz wrote three major books but his magnum opus was his 1979 *Theory of International Politics*, which is widely regarded as the definitive text of modern Neorealism (Desch, 2013).

Indeed, these exponents of the realist/power school of thought have left an image, unequivocally persuasive, that power is the decisive factor in international politics. It is both a norm and a theory of politics; hence, it is little wonder why Morgenthau (1967, p. 25) defines international politics, and indeed all politics, as the struggle for power (Omeje, 1999, p.1). Furthermore, despite the essentially normative orientation of realist political theorists, what appears very striking and persuasive about their argument is that they (basically) draw their generalisation from the conduct of states in world politics, from the analysis of international history. The history of states in international politics, these exponents of power theory have tried to show, is the history of perpetual conflict, with actors invariably relying on their respective power positions for prospective outcomes (Omeje, 1999, p.2).

Another conception of power, which is akin to Morgenthau's analysis of the concept, is provided by Madariaga (1967, p.36). He simply views power as the inherent force of a nation. This 'inherent force' has some superficial manifestations, which Madariaga tries to distinguish from its observable empirical indicators. Such manifestations as the financial, economic and military

capabilities of a nation are superficialities that do not give a genuine picture of the power of a state. On the other hand, the elements that according to Madariaga provide a true photograph of a nation's power, include: the physical and demographic size of the nation, the technical capacity of its members in manipulating the physical and social forces of nature, the social discipline of the citizenry, and the ability of the leadership to wield the inherent force of the nation through an efficient capacity to organise its domestic and external affairs effectively (Omeje, 1999, p.3). Holsti (1972, p.155) however, straightforwardly states that power can be defined as the general capacity of a state to control the behaviour of others.

The meaning of political power in the international sphere, we opine, is subsumed in this (Holsti's) definition. However, the germane issue remains: what is the purpose of power (political power) in international relations? When nation-states are in a position of power in relation to others, to what purpose should it be deployed? Consequently, devoid of over elaboration, it is submitted in this study that the purpose of political power in the international dimension – when nation-states possess power – should be to guarantee the safety of the underdog.

In the above regard, we highlight that the concept of equality of states in international relations has never been in absolute terms. All animals are equal but some may be more equal than others (Orwell, 1946). All states may be denoted as equals in international relations but in empirical trajectories, some are more equal than others. Therefore, where, for instance, a non-African state is evidently more equal than its African counterpart, it would be logical for the latter to seek the accommodation of the former in its international relations tendencies. Invariably, an African state, which is more equal than others, carries the responsibility of protecting the less equal states in international relations.

We highlight at this point however, that the purpose of political power in international relations can only be realised by states in anonymity. Whenever the national leader becomes the perverse personification of the state, the purpose of political power at the international level becomes a 'wild goose indulgence' at best, and at worst, a calamitous internationalism. For instance, under Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan state became enmeshed in this contradiction – an otherwise powerful state, with 'big-brother credentials' – which was also widely perceived as being notorious for international atrocities. Brooks (2011) gives a striking account of the Gaddafi ambivalence and Libyan ambiguity in international relations (under the leadership of Gaddafi).

In Blaise Compaore's Burkina Faso, the Burkinabe inter-African relations became synonymous with Compaore's personal machinations (see Kargbo, 2014). After identifying Compaore as one of the architects and financiers of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and enumerating his own misgoverning brutalities in Burkina Faso, Kargbo (2014) labels Blaise Compaore as a man who literally destroyed three countries.

Igwe (2010, p. 142) further decries what he depicts as failed diplomacy in Africa. This refers to a situation whereby an African diplomat posted to a more equal state, stays in the country of his posting and apparently learns nothing important about the superior ways of his hosts, which he might transmit home for developmental purposes. In public choice analogy, this individual

diplomat remains at his post as a representative of himself, his family, and his hangers-on, perhaps also as a private representative of the domestic player in his home country, to whom he owes his appointment. His posting would hardly serve any overall political or representative purpose for his home state. States that hold political power in international relations and other states that aspire to powerful positions in the international system of course do not send such deviant diplomats as their envoys.

Within National Boundaries: When Individuals Hold Political Power

What should the purpose of political power be for the individual holder? This question arises because men have often sought power for good and ended by exercising it for its own sake (Laski, 2008, p.39). Furthermore, it has been contended that it is beginning to appear as if Africa is incapable of producing model political leaders (Idike, 2012, p.22). What then should the purpose of political power for model political leaders be? In the first place, political power must pass the test of legitimacy. The purpose of political power becomes illegitimate when a priori, political power is acquired illegitimately. For example, when (for a military regime), an individual assumes the office of Head of State of any nation-state after overthrowing a democratically elected government on the grounds of corruption, and he (the new power-holder) turns out to be evidently more corrupt than the democratically elected regime, this translates into illegitimacies. In a democratic dispensation, when an individual assumes the position of President via an evidently fraudulent electoral process, he has assumed this presidential position by means of an illegitimate process, and the purpose of his presidential political power remains illegitimate.

Hence, the purpose of political power is validated by the legitimacy of the process that makes the individual politically powerful. Ifesinachi (2004, p.75) thus adds that governments that command so little legitimacy and which are so ineffectual, depend heavily on force. The individuals who exercise power in such governments are usually inclined to the application of force. They create constitutions but detest constitutionalism (Ifesinachi, 2004, p.84). In the Nigerian state, for instance, the period of Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency (from 1999-2007) was one such example. Shopeju and Ojukwu (2013, p.269) depict this period as an era of civilian dictatorship in Nigeria. Such tendencies invariably personalise the purpose of political power.

What was the purpose of political power for African 'leaders' such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and General Sani Abacha of Nigeria? Mobutu stashed at least \$5 billion away in foreign banks and in addition to billions stolen from other sources, Abacha and his men stole \$1 billion from Nigeria's foreign reserves (Ifesinachi, 2004, p.77). When Mobutu lost power, he fled Zaire and subsequently died in ignominy in Morocco. His Nigerian counterpart, Abacha, also died disgracefully while in office. According to Kogbara (1998), Abacha was a sadist, psychopath and control freak. He took pleasure in humiliating, hurting and killing people. He had no conscience and never expressed remorse or guilt and he never listened to advice or reason. He had no real friends and hardly ever left his presidential fortress. He did something no other Nigerian dictator had ever wanted to do: he terrorised Nigerians, who were notoriously noisy, irreverent, arrogant

and uncrushable and made them wear badges with his nasty little face on it. A heart attack struck the him out of the blue and most Nigerians were overjoyed (Kogbara, 1998).

And so, power is in its nature dangerous to those who exert it (the individuals); and whatever may be the reasons for its extent, they are reasons also for the creation of safeguards against its misuse (Laski, 2008, p.38/39). This view certainly must be maintained by anyone who regards power as a trust, subject to continuous scrutiny because it is subject to continuous abuse (Laski, 2008, p.42). And here enters the institutional function: continuous scrutiny is the institutional function; as power is subject to continuous abuse by the individual. In other words, the purpose of power (political power) is usually lost on the individual in the absence of strong institutional mechanisms of continuous scrutiny.

We strongly opine at this point that when individuals hold political power within national boundaries, the primary purpose must be to render service. This may sound trite but it represents reality. We then begin to wonder: in Zimbabwe, what service is Robert Mugabe rendering to Zimbabweans? (See *The Washington Times*, 2013). Robert Mugabe has unleashed brutal attacks on political rivals, executed rampant violations of human rights and crippled the economy during the 33 years of his autocratic regime (*The Washington Times*, 2013). At the age of 89 in 2013, Mugabe was re-elected president for his seventh term of office.

What service did Laurent Gbagbo render to the citizens of Côte d'Ivoire? His must have been a tragic service. Gbagbo was a history professor who obtained a doctorate from Paris Diderot University in 1979. He was president of Côte d'Ivoire between 26 October 2000 and 11 April 2011. Gbagbo loved power like it was personal property. He concluded that in Côte d'Ivoire, political power belonged to him. He was finally disgraced out of office, arrested like a common criminal by opposition forces and taken to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, charged of crimes against humanity (see Wikipedia, 2015).

As a matter of fact, for the purpose of political power to become feasible, service should be rendered to all citizens, irrespective of their class or status. Okofo-Dartey (2013) argues that political power, when entrusted to any individual, must be managed to bring peace and prosperity to others. Hence, according to Laski (2008, p.42), those who sit in the seat of government (those who possess political power) must be judged by their elevation of humble and ordinary men.

Hence, the purpose of political power should essentially be to liberate the masses from sordid cares by a certain measure of security, by availing them of a sufficient share of power, to be able to exercise initiative as regards to the course and conditions of their lives (Russell, 1977, p.15). This is why Russell (1977, p.43) further contends that the problem of the distribution of power is a more difficult one than the problem of the distribution of wealth. Therefore, in a manner of speaking, the purpose of political power is the democratisation of power.

We argue that the antithesis of power democratisation is dictatorship. We therefore still raise the question: what then is the purpose of political power in dictatorships? In an historical African context, what was the purpose of political power for Idi Amin of Uganda and also his co-Ugandan dictator, Yoweri Museveni; Marcias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea and his successor-

nephew, Teodoro Obiang Nguema? What was the purpose of political power for Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida in Nigeria, Hastings Kamuzu Banda in Malawi and Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal? And in this endless list of bellicose holders of political power who interpreted the political space as the same as the marketplace, what was the purpose of power for Felix Houphouët Boigny in Ivory Coast (now Côte d'Ivoire) and Jean-Bedel Bokassa of Central African Republic? In Burkina Faso, what was the purpose of political power for Blaise Compaore? What is the purpose of political power for the heirs apparent to these men of power of yesteryear?

In the Gambia, what is the purpose of political power for Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh? Hence, Jeffrey Smith of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights in the United States, quoted in Porzucki (2015), says that the Gambian president, Yahya Jammeh, has ruled his country for 20 years with 'an iron fist'. There have been eight unsuccessful coup attempts to overthrow the Gambian strongman, highlights Nina Porzucki. Jeffrey Smith further describes Jammeh's Gambia, as a 'horrible, horrible dictatorship'. Gambia, under Jammeh, is thus a place where people have little access to information, and no rights of expression or assembly (Porzucki 2015). Smith further reminds us that Yahya Jammeh is the same president who gunned down 14 school children in 2000 who were protesting against his regime. And we ask again: what is the purpose of political power, for the likes of Jammeh?

What is the purpose of political power for Cameroon's Paul Biya, who has been in office for a period spanning over 33 years? Having changed the constitution in 2008 to remove presidential term limits, Mr Biya seems quite content to remain at the helm for some time to come (Sa'ah, 2012). In addition, what is the purpose of political power for President Idriss Déby of Chad? Hence, in the 2015 *Index of Economic Freedom*, an annual guide published by *The Wall Street Journal* and the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, Chad is ranked 40th out of 46 countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region and described as a place where the state continues to interfere heavily but ineffectively in the economy and the quality of governance is low. The Heritage Foundation (2015) further has the following entries on Chad:

President Idriss Déby seized power in 1990, [and] won a fourth term in 2011 in a highly dubious election. President Déby continues to face armed revolt by the opposition as well as charges of corruption. Security forces foiled coup plots in 2006, 2008, and 2013... Although several high-profile officials were arrested on corruption charges in 2013, Chad remains one of the world's most corrupt countries. The president's inner circle continues to siphon off the nation's oil wealth. The rule of law is weak and the president names most key officials in the constitutionally independent judiciary.

We could go on and on to highlight these instances of benumbing perfidies, self-centeredness and political irresponsibility on the part of past and present political elite in Africa (we hesitate to address them as leaders). Their questionable acts have continued to lead to the fundamental question: what is the purpose of political power for this generation of African elite, who has

remained incapable of initiating a demarcation between personal and public interests? But we must pause at this point to also interrogate the role of the political party in Africa in all of this.

When Political Parties are in Power

Whether they are conservative or revolutionary, whether they are a union of notables or an organisation of the masses, whether they function in a pluralistic democracy or in a monolithic dictatorship, political parties have one function in common: they all participate to some extent in the exercise of political power, whether by forming a government or by exercising the function of opposition, a function that is often of crucial importance in the determination of national policy (Duverger, 2014). And according to Marshall (1998, p.503) political parties are formal organisations for representing the aims and interests of different socio-economic forces in the political sphere. They are the organisational means by which candidates for office are recruited and ideologies are propagated. Parties seek to organise and dominate the organs of government and to provide national leadership. Hence, it will be utterly erroneous to think that the purpose of political power, for political parties, is to guarantee democracy. This is because; the next critical question will be what type of democracy? Democracy for whom? Is it internal party democracy? Are there not political parties that are operated as aristocracies, particularly in emerging democracies? For political parties, where does aristocracy stop and democracy begin?

According to Amuwo (2009), political parties are premised on the concept of political inclusivity and anchored in political participation. In practice, however, political parties (particularly in Africa) are born mainly due to political exclusivity, that is to say, for purposes of obtaining power and controlling the masses. These parties are, therefore, in practice more like aristocracies. Laski (2008, p.43) thus concedes that a democracy must, if it is to work, be an aristocracy by delegation. He adds that this is vital. This is because, when you are delegated, you serve the purpose of the delegators. In other words, party leaders, party bureaucrats and aristocrats are delegates of democracy. The purpose of political power for them must transcend the interests of the party as a collectivity and the interests of the individual party elite. Such a political party, with such transcendent interests, usually secures legitimacy and invariably remains in power or usually returns to power. Laski (2008, p.41) also argues: That organisation of society is best when it is most likely to produce a breed of upstanding men. There may be a single ultimate centre of control involved in such an effort. It may also be that the ethical limitation upon the use of power involves an administrative limitation. We opine that political parties should provide the ethical limitations occasioning administrative limitations.

Furthermore, the purpose of power for political parties may be fatally assumed to positively relate to the distribution of public sector positions. It may equally be poorly assumed that the purpose of power for political parties is the maintenance of powerful 'centre-centre' relations, between the public and private sectors of the political economy. Purposeful political parties, however, stand on societal exclusiveness to achieve national political inclusion; the party becomes a political integer in an environment of societal pluralism.

Under president Obasanjo in Nigeria, there was a dubious attempt to amend the country's constitution. Currently, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, under President Joseph Kabila and in Burundi, under President Pierre Nkurunziza, there are existing attempts to tamper with the constitutions of these countries so that the president can run for another term (see Crisis Group, 2015; Higgins, 2015). From Presidents Obasanjo to Kabila and Nkurunziza, there are political parties under which these tenure extension gambits would be actualised. What then is the purpose of political power for the political party when the president's ambition places the party's influence at a secondary level? Abonyi (2010, p. 25) denotes this phenomenon as the politics of self-perpetuation. Why do political parties in Africa appear handicapped in the face of such politics of self-perpetuation?

In Uganda, Yoweri Museveni has been in power for the last 28 years, yet a member of the Ugandan parliament, Evelyn Anite, had to kneel down before Museveni to present the petition that endorsed the president as the sole candidate for his party, come the 2016 elections (see Akumu, 2014). In this instance, even where it is implied that in some Ugandan ethnicities, women kneel for men as a sign that they are subservient (Akumu, 2014), are there no other men in Museveni's party and in the entire Uganda worthy of this subservience than the imperial Museveni?

For political parties in Africa, are votes, money and violence (Basedau, Erdmann and Mehler, 2007) the purpose of political power? The National Democratic Institute (2015) further highlights:

Political parties are an essential component of democracy. By competing in elections and mobilising citizens behind particular visions of society as well as through their performance in the legislature, parties offer citizens meaningful choices in governance, avenues for political participation, and opportunities to shape their country's future. In many countries however, political parties fail to respond to citizens' concerns and are widely distrusted by the public. When public confidence in political parties is compromised, the entire democratic process suffers. In all sustainable democracies, the party system must be deeply and durably entrenched in the fabric of society.

We consequently begin to search for the political party in Africa with tendencies that could be deeply and durably entrenched in the fabric of society. In Nigeria, between 1999 and 2015 (a period of 16 years), the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) inundated the Nigerian nation with a mantra that theirs was the largest political party in Africa. Nevertheless, on the eve of the party's handover of power to the All Progressives Congress (APC), which had defeated the PDP in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, the country of an estimated 173 million people could only generate 2 988mw of electricity (Asu, 2015). The PDP in Nigeria may have been the largest party in Africa for 16 years, but what change did it bring about in the African (Nigerian) condition during these years?

The mere possession of power tends to produce a love of power, which is a very dangerous condition because the only sure proof of power consists in preventing others from doing what they

wish to do. Therefore, the essential theory of democracy is the diffusion of power among the entire population, so that the evils produced by one man's possession of great power shall be obviated. But the diffusion of power through democracy is only effective when the voters take an interest in the question involved. When the question does not interest them, they do not attempt to control the administration, and all actual power passes into the hands of officials (Russell, 1977, p.42).

Consequently, one of the sources of evil in modern, large democracies is the fact that most of the electorate has no direct or vital interest in most of the questions that arise (Russell, 1977, p.44). The purpose of power for political parties, therefore, should never become the love of power. So that when the party slogans are bellowed, the immediate response of onlookers is accordingly: power! The purpose of power for political parties should indeed be to continuously impede the process of multiplication of evil in the polity by answering most of the questions that arise, thus sustaining the interest of the voter.

When Statesmen Possess Political Power

In this study, a statesman is 'a senior politician, especially a man, who is widely respected for integrity and impartial concern for the public good'. He is a senior politician, either by his years of experience, the number of years he has put into political participation, as elected or appointed officeholder, or by the seniority or strategic position of the office he currently occupies. By gender differentiation, a statesman is invariably a man. (Female gender activists are yet to place their activist focus on this particular political nomenclature, to agitate for re-conceptualisation or female accommodation). A statesman is noted for his integrity and impartiality. Above all, he is noted for his concern for the public good.

Hence, when statesmen possess political power, they hold it for the public good. They exercise power with integrity, they promote gender tolerance and they genuinely preach peaceful coexistence. They do not shy away from wars but they resort to war when all avenues of peaceful conflict resolution have been explored, to no avail. Statesmen believe fundamentally that political power is transient. When statesmen possess political power, they affirm the concept of power dependence.

According to Marshall (1998, p.521) power is often categorised as 'zero-sum'. That is, something that A has over B, such that if A gains in power, B correspondingly loses. However, the notion of power dependence suggests that power is also a relational concept such that the power of A is dependent on B. Statesmen firmly hold on to this specific worldview. When statesmen are in power, therefore, they tend to negate the notion in public choice theory that individual politicians are primarily guided by their own self-interest.

When statesmen are in power, they establish the benchmark for purposeful political conduct. They fail to erect in their own honour, meaningless monuments and personal effigies. They nurture in the polity, a culture of political accommodation. They are never guilty of over-government, the grand cousin of dictatorship. The governmental tendencies of statesmen are usually devoid of futile exuberances. When statesmen possess political power, they do not engage in celebrity

and popularity contests. They often take very tough decisions but always in the public interest. We do not, however, imply that statesmen are saints. As political creatures, they encounter many obstacles and in confronting these, they exhibit some shortcomings. However, the reality remains that their shortcomings are less weighty than the ignominious shenanigans and political perfidies of the non-statesmen.

Indeed, for leaders of their states, true greatness that makes them statesmen is indicated by the excellence of their thoughts, propounded in their ideas. It is not marked by conquests on the battlefield and the brutalities unleashed by the leader on many citizens and sundry institutions of his state. Greatness in holding political power is, of course, not measured by how many decades a particular individual has clung to power. Indeed, who among the modern-day power wielders (in Africa and elsewhere) could become as great as Alexander the Great? But he ruled for only thirteen years. He started at the age of 20 and died of natural causes (he died of fever) at the age of 33 (Clement, 1980).

H.A. Clement, in his timeless documentation, described Alexander as one of the greatest generals in history. He was an all-conquering leader. He was a military genius who created the biggest empire of its time. His military conquests were also often cruel and short-lived. Hence, his 'greatness' did not emanate from these conquests. Historians have therefore dubbed him 'the Great'; not because of his military conquests but because of his work for civilisation (Clement, 1980, p.165). Today's despots truly need to hear this. Alexander the Great had a great love for Greek learning and civilisation. When he saw that the Greeks had a superior way of living on the whole, he did all he could to spread the knowledge of Greek customs throughout the East. It is reckoned that he founded or caused the founding of 70 cities, where many Greeks settled down and introduced Greek manners, Greek art, Greek knowledge and the Greek language (Clement, 1980, p.165).

Two of the most famous cities founded by Alexander the Great, Antioch and Pergamum, became centres of Greek learning and beauty. Alexandria, later named after him, was the greatest and most famous city founded by Alexander. Actually, many of the developments in this city were not put up by him but by his successors, who carried out his ideas. Alexander showed his genius in picking upon this particular spot for a new city, whose very name has made him immortal. It became an important centre of commerce and attracted men of all nations. Alexandria also became a centre of learning – one of the greatest of the ancient world (Clement, 1980, p.168). But contrary to the Alexandrian example, the preponderance of the activities of the men who want to be great today, particularly in Africa, is in the area of tenure elongation, political gansterism, war, conquest and genocide.

It, of course, cannot be argued that Africa has been completely bereft of statesmen. In this regard, we need to highlight that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania was an African statesman (see Mwakikagile, 2006; Chachage and Cessam, eds: 2010). Nyerere was undoubtedly a man who had an impartial concern for the public good. Rohilala Nelson Mandela of South Africa was another indisputable African statesman. He was a man of unsurpassable courage and immense

integrity (see Maanga, 2013). Nelson Mandela was indeed, an exceptional African legend. These men had valid political power but they relinquished it for others.

In the Nigerian state, Owelle Nnamdi Azikiwe, first President of Nigeria, was arguably an African statesman. He was a man imbued with an uncommon and unsurpassable capacity for political compromises; all aimed at nation-building in Nigeria. Igwe (2015) has presented a grand account of Nnamdi Azikiwe's pan-African and pan-Nigerian contributions. Indeed, Azikiwe's greatest contribution to the Nigerian project, in particular, is his capacity for political compromises. Thus, from his indubitable position as the foremost Nigerian nationalist at independence in 1960, he accepted the role of a ceremonial president, while Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became Prime Minister. Consequently, Azikiwe's position as a pioneer African irredentist became impaired by his Nigerian-specific constitutional limitations. But we shall suspend the illustrations at this point, lest we delve into un-academic disputations. Critically stated, statesmen are the consummate possessors of valid political power.

Conclusion

In this study, we have not touched on all the curious historical African scenarios in specifics that partly informed the study. However, we have perhaps reignited interest in all the possible scenarios where people came to power with assumed good intentions, gradually gravitated towards 'over government' (and a morbid messiah complex) and finally predicated their leadership inclinations as full-blown despotism. In all of this, there was the complete disappearance of the purpose of political power. Essentially, the central issue in public choice is how to limit government and check the natural tendency for 'over-government' (Bhattacharya, 2003 cited in Izueke, 2014, p.174). The central issue in this paper is how to limit the tendency of nation-states, individuals and political parties, to engage in the abuse of political power. 'Over-government' and abuse of political power are positively correlated.

When the purpose of political power is accurately identified, it impedes the tendencies to over-govern or abuse political power. In this regard, this paper concludes that the purposes of political power in the international dimension are as follows: when nation-states possess power, it must be to guarantee the safety of the underdog. Within national boundaries, when individuals hold political power, the purpose of political power must be to democratise power to the level that citizens of the polity will be able to exercise initiative with regard to the course and condition of their lives. It is further concluded in this paper that the purpose of power for political parties should indeed be to continuously impede the process of multiplication of evil in the polity by sustaining the interest of the voter in most of the questions that arise. The study has also led to the conclusion that the true purpose of political power is evidently realised when political power is entrusted to indisputable statesmen.

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