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TESTING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF WIREDU'S NON-PARTY DEMOCRACY

ABSTRACT Kwasi Wiredu's proposal of a non-party system of democracy argues that we should have political associations rather than political parties. It advocates cooperation and consensus between these associations and encourages the removal or reduction of some constraints of the multi-party system, such as periodic elections. A critic has argued that this proposal is a recipe for despotism, whilst a supporter has stated that the critic misreads Wiredu's statements. I attempt to resolve the disagreement by subjecting Wiredu's non-party infrastructure to a test, a thought experiment that examines the consequences of having this system run by persons with the worst possible intentions. The outcome is that Wiredu's non-party polity is too poorly equipped to protect us from the damages accruable from the unrestricted rule of such persons. Parties and elections could only be eliminated if supplanted by a political infrastructure that secures a more productive and moral leadership.

Keywords: Kwasi Wiredu, non-party system of democracy, non-party polity

INTRODUCTION

Practicing the multi-party system of democracy has not been easy in Africa. This has led some African scholars to reject the system. Kwasi Wiredu, one of the most influential philosophers in Africa, argues that the multi-party system is inherently divisive and un-African. In contrast, he proposes an alternative that dispenses with the adversarial tendencies of the multi-party system: a non-party system modelled on traditional consensual practices in which political associations rather than political parties come together in a constitutionally pre-established harmony to decide what is best for their countries. Wiredu also wishes that certain adversary promoting mechanisms, such as elections should be removed or reduced to some minimum, so that representatives from different political associations could deliberate well and deeply instead of the more superficial focus on what gimmicks could win the next election.

This proposal has been greeted with some controversy. Carlos Jacques thinks that the idea amounts to roughly the same as the one-party charades we have been witness to in some African countries, and notes that Wiredu's arguments are almost entirely the same as that of the proponents of the one-party system. Helen Lauer is of the opinion that this is an unfair reading of Wiredu, and cites Wiredu's own numerous statements condemning the one-party systems. I attempt to resolve this disagreement by subjecting Wiredu's non-party system to a test in which I imagine it being run by persons with the best and worst possible intentions. My analysis shows that Wiredu presumed too much regarding the character of the representatives who will run this system, and his system lacks the mechanisms that could protect us from representatives whose intentions are not very genuine.

I have divided this chapter into seven sections. The first outlines Wiredu's concerns about the multi-party system whilst the second engages with his prescription for the non-party system. In the third section, I discuss the disagreement between Carlos Jacques and Helen Lauer regarding the vulnerability of Wiredu's non-party system to one-party-like manipulation. In the fourth section, I begin my intervention in this debate by discussing the relationship between political infrastructure and the intentions of the persons running the political infrastructure. The fifth section imagines Wiredu's non-party system being run by representatives with the best interests for their constituencies, and finds Wiredu's proposed system a fantastic alternative to the multi-party system. But when in the sixth section I imagine Wiredu's non-party system in the hands of persons with the worst possible intentions, I find the system terribly ill-equipped to protect citizens or subjects from the damaging effects of the kind of leadership provided by such persons. In the seventh section, I argue that real-world political representatives do not generally possess the excellent intentions I explored in section five, making it imperative to be quite careful about adopting a political infrastructure that largely presupposes that they do possess such intentions.

WIREDU'S CONCERNS ABOUT THE MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM

Wiredu blames the multi-party system of democracy for the exacerbation of conflict in African countries and thinks that a return to a system modelled somewhat on the consensual democracy practiced in traditional Africa is the way out. He clarified that it is not that conflict by itself is foreign to Africa, but that the kind of conflict generated by the multi-party system is foreign to Africa and is *an epiphenomenon of colonialism*.¹ Wiredu argues that the system is dangerous *in view of the ethnic configurations and other divisions in many African countries*.²

He sums up his proposal as follows, *My argument will be that consensual governance in our tradition was essentially democratic; that the majoritarian form of democracy seen in the multiparty systems in Britain and the USA is drastically antithetic to both our own traditions of democracy and the complexities of our contemporary situation and that, although the kinship basis of our political systems of old cannot be re-invoked in this day and age, it is still a practical proposition to try to fashion out a contemporary non-party form of government based on the principle of consensus*.³

Wiredu takes exception to the representative form of democracy, and argues that the elections only get us representatives and do not guarantee that they will properly represent the wishes of their constituents.⁴ Next, Wiredu takes a shot at the principle of checks and balances by which different arms of government moderate the behavior of one another, and observes that the checks could sometimes become unbalanced, for instance when the executive and legislative arms of government are controlled by different parties, and opposition could turn into an obstruction, resulting in the phenomenon we now call 'gridlock'.⁵ The principle of majority earns Wiredu's next criticism, and he complains that winning by a simple majority often means that nearly half of the polity supported the opposition and is not in favour of the government, creating what Wiredu calls *a relative disenfranchisement of a section of the population or a pre-established disharmony*.⁶ Wiredu notes that the opposition and its supporters often engage in "all kinds of anti-administration schemes, only falling short, mercifully, of an armed coup" and that the other side also counters these gestures in kind.

Wiredu also argues that in the multi-party system, as it is presently practiced, winners take all power, and losers get nothing, and stay out of power during the duration of their loss. Wiredu asks us to imagine what being out of power means, one of which is that the opposition *will not receive the consideration due to their ideas in the*

¹ K. Wiredu, "The State, Civil Society, and Democracy in Africa", in H. Lauer, K. Anyidoho (eds.), *Reclaiming the Human Sciences and Humanities through African*, vol. 2, Accra 2011, p. 1060.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1064.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1058.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1060.

*formation of government policy.*⁷ This adversely affects the psychology of losers, and the victors *are known not to hide their joy at the opportunity to implement their whims or programs, if they have any, to the exclusion, as much as possible, of those of the losers.*⁸ Wiredu calls this *the quintessence of uncooperativeness*, an adversarial approach to politics that is *antithetical to the spirit of communalism*, whose principle is *the adjustment of the interests of the individual to the interests of others in society.*⁹ For an alternative, Wiredu asks us to turn to the refreshing practices of consensus by elders in traditional African societies. Taking inspiration from such practices, he outlines his conception of a non-party democracy (or polity) based on cooperation, consensus, and coalition. To this, I now turn.

UNDERSTANDING WIREDU'S NON-PARTY PROPOSAL

Wiredu writes, *By and large, what we can learn from the traditional system concerned are two things, namely, the non-party basis of representation and the reliance on consensus in decision-making.*¹⁰ I shall begin with Wiredu's own formulations of the non-party polity. According to him, such a system is composed of political *associations* (rather than political *parties*), which consist of persons with *like mind as to what is best for their country coming together to explore ideas and set up a mechanism of persuasion to attract as many people as possible to their point of view.*¹¹ Should there be one of these associations or more than one? Wiredu answers this question quickly, *If political bodies of such a description operate under a constitution in which winning a certain number of seats or votes in a general election does not entitle a group to form a government to the exclusion of other groups, then conditions conducive to cooperation, compromise and, consequently, consensus should be at hand.*¹² So Wiredu makes it clear that there may be several political associations, but they could be compelled into cooperation by a constitution that does not simply give power to an association that wins the majority of votes. This is similar to the Swiss and Belgian arrangements. For instance, instead of a Presidency, the Swiss operate a Federal Council comprising the four major political parties, and the seven executive positions in this council are distributed in a ratio of 2:2:2:1 among the parties, according to their representative strengths in the legislature. As it appears, the sharing formula was crafted to satisfy ethnic, in addition to political, participation, with German, French, and Italian slots.¹³ In Belgium, the Cabinet has to be composed

⁷ Ibid., p. 1061.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 1063.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 1061.

¹² Ibid., pp. 1061-1062.

¹³ A. Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-one Countries*, New Haven–London 1984, p. 24.

of a roughly equal number of French-speaking and Dutch-speaking Ministers.¹⁴ These arrangements support Wiredu's appeal to a constitution that compels different associations (and hopefully ethnicities) to work together in an environment that encourages (or compels) cooperation. Wiredu indeed acknowledges that these democracies have made some strides in the direction of a consensual democracy, but, as he writes, *These, however, still remain party-based, and the consensus aimed at is limited, being a kind of understanding among parties. The polity we have in mind, on the other hand, is completely party-less and motivated by a quite radical commitment to consensus.*¹⁵

The problem, however, appears when Wiredu writes, *Under such a dispensation, elections need not even be officially contested by associations, their presence in an elected assembly being felt only by the persuasions of the elected. It can be rationally expected that in an assembly composed in this way, deliberations would be, in a deep sense, non-partisan.*¹⁶

Wiredu, however, moderates this position into a softer one when he writes, *Electing a representative by a simple constituency vote is a majoritarian procedure, unless there is a score of 100%. Any element of majoritarianism is a loss of consensus. It seems unlikely, however, that such elections can be altogether obviated in the setting up of any modern representative government. But supplementary bases of representation with relatively flexible mechanisms of election can be considered. Occupational groups, for example, could select supplementary representatives by some agreed procedure that minimizes adversarial competition as much as possible.*¹⁷

This attempt at moderation is, however, a bit confusing. Wiredu would need to come clean on what he means by "relatively flexible mechanisms of election" and how occupational associations could "select" representatives in a way that minimizes adversarial competition as much as possible. At present, the moderation seems like an unsuccessful attempt to chart a middle course between election and appointment. More clarity would be needed to forge ahead with this direction of reflection, but let me address Wiredu's general caution regarding elections, whose demerits he has enumerated along with those of the multi-party system in the foregoing.

One understands that Wiredu is concerned about the effect of having to seek re-election on the representative's approach to the task of representation, as the desire for re-election overshadows the need to focus on her job. It is also Wiredu's concern that elections amplify the desire for power, and the loss of cooperation that comes with it. It is against this backdrop that one could understand the last sentence of the above citation of Wiredu: a disappearance of elections would allow representatives to engage in deep, non-partisan deliberations. Before I respond to Wiredu's non-party proposal, let me highlight some responses it has received in the literature, to which I now turn.

¹⁴ Article 86B of the Belgian Constitutional Amendment 1970, quoted in A. Lijphart, *Democracies...*, p. 24.

¹⁵ K. Wiredu, "The State, Civil Society...", p. 1064.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1062.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1065.

THE DEBATE ABOUT NON-PARTY AND ONE-PARTY SYSTEMS

Carlos Jacques observes that Wiredu's premises for his rejection of multi-party politics are the same as those of the nationalists who have operated oppressive one-party systems in African countries. He observes that the common position between Wiredu and the nationalists is that the multi-party system is un-African, and the common premises are that it is divisive, discourages cooperation, and is antithetical to communalism. Indeed, Jacques does not see any originality in Wiredu's arguments or any difference between Wiredu and these despots, except *a very thin difference* or a difference only in name between one-party and non-party systems.¹⁸ He writes, *But is the naivety of the nationalists not equally to be found in Wiredu's non-party state? Some historians of traditional African politics have pointed to the authoritarian nature of many traditional African political regimes. And at least one writer has suggested that Akan forms of government were totalitarian. But again, the historical issue must be left to one side. What I do wish to suggest however is that the naivety in this dispute is to be found in the positions of both parties and that it lies at a deeper level than the arguments over how many political parties should be allowed to compete for power.*¹⁹

Jacques notes that Kenneth Kaunda, himself a nationalist, had claimed that institutionalized opposition is foreign to Africa and Sékou Touré had argued that it is the obligation of a *national democracy* to surmount *the minor and irrational antagonisms, dividing every society*.²⁰ Then Wiredu describes the multi-party system as divisive and contrary to communalism and Kwame Gyekye argues that coups and authoritarian politics *can hardly be said to derive from African traditions*.²¹ Jacques notes that the common argument uniting all these writings is *that unity is distinctly African, whereas division is foreign, something brought with colonialism...*²² In support of Paulin Hountondji, he calls it *the unanimist illusion, presupposing as it does that unanimity among Africans was both a fact before colonialism and a goal to be sought after independence*.²³

Helen Lauer argues that Jacques' claim that Wiredu's non-party idea is the same as the one-party despotisms we have seen is unfair. To defend her point, she cites Wiredu's own statements criticizing the one-party syndrome and stranglehold on power. She notes that Wiredu observed that the nationalists used arguments similar to his for selfish purposes, and that Wiredu tried to distance his non-party vision from one-party

¹⁸ C. Jacques, "Alterity in the Discourse of African Philosophy: A Forgotten Absence", in H. Lauer, K. Anyidoho (eds.), *Reclaiming...*, pp. 1025-1026.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1026.

²⁰ K. Kaunda, "The Future of Nationalism", in G.-C.M. Mutiso, S.W. Rohio (eds.), *Readings in African Political Thought*, Nairobi 1975, p. 476; A. Sékou Touré, "National Democracy", in G.-C.M. Mutiso, S.W. Rohio (eds.), *Readings in...*, p. 493.

²¹ K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, Bloomington 1996, p. 179; K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, New York 1997, p. 135.

²² C. Jacques, "Alterity...", p. 1026.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1027.

oppression.²⁴ She notes that Wiredu wrote, *The fundamental difference [...] is that the [non-party system] embraces the freedom of political association while the [one-party system] execrates it.*²⁵ She points out that Wiredu even argued that the one-party system is worse than the multi-party, since, according to him, in the latter there is at least an appearance of press freedom, which is lacking in the former.²⁶ She argues that in general, Wiredu was aware of the dangers of oligarchy in multi-party and one-party systems.²⁷ She concludes by remarking that we ought to interpret a scholar's writings accurately before criticizing him or her.²⁸

For the purpose of focus, I will not discuss how accurate Jacques' interpretation of Wiredu is, or how accurate Lauer's assessment of Jacques is. I will address Jacques' concern that Wiredu's non-party proposal is not different from the one-party charades we have seen in Africa. First, I believe that Wiredu sincerely dislikes the one-party systems. I also believe that he is sincere in trying to fashion a system that will encourage cooperation and reduce divisiveness, and that he does this from his belief that societal development itself depends on a good measure of cooperation. I do not believe that Wiredu wishes his political arrangement to end up like the one-party systems. Indeed, I think he hates the fact that he has to employ premises similar to those employed by the notorious one-party leaders in his proposal for the non-party system. So, I think that Lauer rightly argues that Wiredu wishes for a system that will do better than both the multi-party and one-party systems.

In spite of all this, I have realized from analysis that Wiredu's non-party system, contrary to his wishes, can also lead to an oligarchy. I will demonstrate this by discussing the relationship between political infrastructure and the intentions of individuals who have been entrusted with running a political infrastructure. This discussion is intended to demonstrate that when we propose a political infrastructure or system for operation in a society, we must test its safety as an infrastructure by subjecting it to at least a thought experiment aimed at showing how it would fare when individuals with the worst possible intentions run it.

INTENTION, INTERNAL MOTIVATION, AND POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE/FACILITIES/SYSTEMS

Two variables are indispensable for the good operation of political systems: first is the infrastructure put in place, and second, the intention or internal motivation of those

²⁴ H. Lauer, "Jacques on Wiredu: Appendix to Chapter Fifty-Seven", in H. Lauer, K. Anyidoho (eds.), *Reclaiming...*, pp. 1032.

²⁵ Ibid. Also see K. Wiredu, "The State, Civil Society...", p. 1065.

²⁶ K. Wiredu, "Tradition, Democracy, and Political Legitimacy in Contemporary Africa", *Rewriting Africa: Toward Renaissance or Collapse?*, The Japan Centre for Area Studies, Osaka 2001, pp. 167.

²⁷ H. Lauer, "Jacques on Wiredu...", p. 1033.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 1034-1035.

entrusted with operating the political facilities or infrastructure put in place. Let me briefly explain how these two variables relate to each other.

To begin, if all political leaders had perfectly good intentions, there would be absolutely no need for a political infrastructure constructed to protect their subjects from their bad behavior. If we were in a world in which all rulers had the purest of intentions and the innocence of angels in heaven, the highest possible dedication to improving the lives of their subjects, and every other thing we dream our leaders should have in the most ideal sense, there would be no need for structures such as democracy or even a multi-party system. We would feel no need to remove a perfect angel from office, and there would be absolutely no desire to ask her for an account of how she is doing her job (there would be no possibly better way to do the job anyway!). But rulers in the real world lack these saintly qualities, hence the need for a political infrastructure protecting subjects from their rulers, and enabling subjects to demand good stewardship from rulers and giving subjects the ability to punish rulers failing stewardship.

Political infrastructures are therefore built either to give leaders with good intentions the maximum opportunities for implementing their good intentions, or, more commonly and realistically, to prevent leaders with the worst possible intentions from damaging the societies under their leadership, and to compel lazy leaders to work. We have no control over people's intentions, motivations, thoughts or introspective activities. Neither could we train everyone to grow into good intentioned, good willed, and morally minded agents. We can only construct social and political systems to increase the social effects of people's positive intentions and minimize the damages incurred from their negative intentions.

It all means that we only get worried about political infrastructure when we notice that leaders are exploiting a weak political structure (or the absence of a political structure) for selfish gain at the expense of their subjects. For example, it is because of the scorching tyranny of feudalism that certain scholars, theorists, politicians, and statesmen began to conceive the idea of a liberal democracy involving elections, in which leaders are elected periodically and could be butted out of power if they failed to deliver the goods of leadership. These thinkers also emerged with the idea that different persons could contest for political positions, and try to out-perform one another in proposing to voters what they would achieve as leaders. The victory is supposed to go to the best bidder, who begins office knowing she still needs to bid in the next round of bidding. It is obvious that this idea was taken from market-place economics. This is the social and political infrastructure of multi-party democracy. Obviously, it was conceived to save humanity from life-long tyrannies, entitlement-minded and rent-seeking rulers, leaders who run societies as if these societies were their private property, who loot public funds with impunity and feel accountable to no one, and so on. This political infrastructure (multi-party democracy) has obviously made some impact on general levels of accountability in leadership around the world, in large part because it saddles political office holders with the challenge of re-election. Its universal appeal is seen in the fact that even tyrants make a pretence these days to seek re-election, run against an opponent, and give account.

The multi-party infrastructure, however, has also had some difficulties, the most prominent being that the operation of multi-parties has polarizing tendencies in more pluralistic societies. Conceived originally in more homogenous societies, the multi-party system was intended to aggregate politicians with different ideologies into different camps (or parties). In the United Kingdom, for instance, we have the Labour and the Conservatives, and in the United States we have the Republicans (who are more conservative about the values of the early European settlers in North America) and the Democrats (who are more liberal, intellectual, and are more accommodating towards multicultural policies). But in some other parts of the world with multi-ethnic settings, parties can polarize along ethnic lines, leading such countries into a vicious cycle of ethnic duelling for power. This is Wiredu's worry when he argues that the multi-party system is counter-productive for the ethnic configuration of African countries.

A response to the ethnically polarizing tendency of the multi-party system would be to improve some technicalities of the system by legislating that every party must be a nationally relevant party with membership and supporters across all ethnic groups. This is what was achieved in Nigeria in the People's Democratic Party, the ruling party for sixteen years (1999-2015). The other parties are not as nationally all encompassing. The All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) is an Igbo-dominated party that wins regional elections in the Igbo South East. The Yoruba-dominated Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) merged with the Hausa-Fulani-dominated All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), and a faction of the Igbo-dominated All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) to form the currently ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). The mechanics of the politics is that no party, however regional, can win a national election unless it metamorphoses into a substantially national party. In Ghana, for example, the ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP) is widely regarded as an Akan-dominated party whilst the National Democratic Coalition (NDC) was founded by Former President Jerry John Rawlings, who hails from the Volta region. But to produce a President, these parties have managed to acquire national appeal and membership, and each won votes broadly across the nation in the 2016 and 2020 Presidential elections.²⁹ The choice usually faced by policy makers is either to abandon the multi-party system or to continue tweaking and improving the system until the problem of ethnicity is brought under more effective control.

History may have recorded a few benevolent leaders who did not need constraining political systems forcing them to be good leaders. But this is not the norm, and it is, at best, naïve to think that leaders *in general* lead well of their own volition. Wiredu and other scholars have argued that traditional African democracies did well without elections. But the ultimate test of democracy is the removal of an erring leader from power. Wiredu and some other scholars have also argued that in the Ashanti political system,

²⁹ See "Ghana's 2016 Presidential Election Results", *Electoral Commission Ghana*, 2016, at <<http://www.ec.gov.gh/elections-results/71-2016-presidential-results.html>>, 2 February 2018; "Presidential Results Summary Sheets by Constituencies", *Electoral Commission Ghana*, 2020, at <<https://www.ec.gov.gh/constituency-summary-sheet/>>, 25 February 2021.

bad leaders were deposed.³⁰ If, then, we are to do away with the multi-party system, what we need is an effective instrument for removing ill-performing non-elected leaders. This would be consistent with pre-colonial African tradition, and, at the same time, serve the purpose for which the multi-party system was imported from the Western Hemisphere.

One of the biggest gains from the multi-party infrastructure is the disappearance of a sense of entitlement to rule. Aspiring leaders must convince their intended subjects why they should be voted, and risk being removed if they do not make good on their promises. But perhaps the biggest gain from the multi-party infrastructure is its potential for checking the centralization and sedimentation of authority in one person or group by institutionalizing a political opposition. It seems to be against this gain that sceptics are concerned about Wiredu's proposal of the non-party system, and fear that it would end up like the one-party system. As such, what I would do next is to imagine how the non-party infrastructure would work under persons (or leaders) with quite different intentions. We take the two variables (infrastructure and intention) and subject them to a thought experiment by examining how the non-party infrastructure would tend to fare under leaders with a set of positive intentions (we will call this the non-party polity A) and leaders with a set of negative intentions (non-party polity B). This is in line with the idea that political infrastructures are usually constructed either to encourage leaders with good intentions to have access to maximum opportunities for implementing their good intentions, or to prevent the scenario of leaders with bad intentions from doing maximum damage to the societies under their leadership. For fairness, I shall perform this experiment with the positive and negative intentions and their social effects that we are familiar with.

NON-PARTY POLITY A

To rehash Wiredu's prescription for a non-party system: a polity in which (1) we have political associations rather than political parties, (2) different associations with different ideas about how to move the country forward are compelled to come together and work by a constitution that makes it impossible for any association to take over government by simply winning a majority of votes, (3) there better be no elections (or re-elections) so that deliberations among persons from the cooperating associations would be deep and non-partisan.

Let me assume in this section that the individuals involved in this arrangement are all (1) very patriotic (love their country and would do nothing to undermine its wellbeing), (2) do not desire power, (3) would resist the desire to embezzle public funds, (4) would resist the desire to place self, family, and ethnic group above national interests. Persons with these qualities would make perfect operators of Wiredu's prescribed system. If we had persons like these, it would be better to remove infrastructure such as elections and competing political parties, since such structures presuppose that what we have are

³⁰ K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals...*, p. 185; K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, p. 117; B. Matolino, "Rationality and Consensus in Kwasi Wiredu's Traditional African Polities", *Theoria*, no. 146 (2016), p. 45.

persons lacking these qualities. The most ideal environment for persons with these four qualities would be to give them free space and least constraints to maximize their qualities. Being in power for a longer time means these persons could execute longer-term visions and planning of the economy and society, instead of the developmental hiccups, discontinuities, and short-term planning we see in elective democracies. We would not wish to pitch persons with these qualities against one another in rival political parties, we would rather wish that they come together to cooperate about leading their societies. When there are disagreements, we estimate that such would be resolved in the national interest. When there is revenue surplus or windfall, we assume that the money would be used to achieve another national milestone. Ordinarily, no one would desire elections if our representatives possess the four qualities outlined above and never fall short of them.

It is obvious that our democracy would reap the highest dividends from such a benevolent group of representatives. The question is whether our real-world representatives resemble these representatives, or whether our real-world representatives possess the four qualities outlined above. We may not answer this question yet until we have explored the second set of representatives in non-party polity B.

NON-PARTY POLITY B

The set of representatives in this polity lacks the qualities possessed by representatives of the non-party polity A. They (1) are not patriotic, (2) desire power, (3) cannot resist the desire to embezzle public funds, and (4) place self, family, and ethnic group above national interests. In a society where individuals possess these weaknesses, one immediately sees the need to fabricate political systems that protect such a society from the moral imperfections of these representatives and that compel such representatives to perform patriotic duties in spite of their lack of appetite for patriotism. One, therefore, sees the need for periodic elections, which compels such representatives to work to be rewarded by being re-elected, to make (at least hypocritical) allusions to patriotic ideals and face the concrete challenge of living up to the allusions, to suppress their greed and use public funds for public purposes against the fear of being butted out of office, and to have some space in their hearts for national interest in spite of their preference for personal and family interests. None of us in her right mind would prescribe a vague political system lacking a lot of details, since selfish representatives would willingly fill the systemic void and vagueness with self-serving policies and practices.

I had concluded in non-party polity A that Wiredu's prescription of a coalition of persons and associations with elections and other multi-party constraints removed would work perfectly if the representatives are patriotic, do not desire power, do not desire self-enrichment, and place national over personal and family interests. I must now evaluate his non-party polity in the light of representatives who lack these qualities. And what we see is a disaster. To begin with, replacing the adversarial proclivities of a multi-party system with the cooperative tendencies of a coalition of corrupt persons is a prescription for collusion. Removing the need for elections entrenches this collusion

into an oligarchy. Such an oligarchy, in fact, meets the descriptions of the one-party systems that have attracted the concerns of Jacques (and Bernard Matolino).³¹ Wiredu is completely silent on how these systems would fare in the hands of these kinds of persons. As such, Wiredu may not have intentionally prescribed a one-party polity, but the mechanics of his prescription contain tendencies, given the existence of corrupt representatives, to lead to it. Indeed, the multi-party infrastructure fares better than its one-party and non-party alternatives when we imagine it in the hands of leaders with the worst possible intentions. For example, incumbent misbehaviour invariably popularizes a political opposition. But subjects under a one- or non-party system have no choice than to accept their leaders in whatever way they are. Proponents of the one- and non-party systems do not tell us how we could be protected from megalomaniacs who could seize control of the unitary and cooperative structures they have proposed.

THE REAL-WORLD POLITY

Having estimated the consequences of Wiredu's non-party prescription for representatives with quite different sets of intentions for the polity they represent, we must now answer the question about which polity is in fact the sort we have in the real world. It is obvious that polity B is closer to the real-world polity compared to polity A. Whether in Western, Eastern, and Southern Hemispheres of the world there are hardly patriotic, unambitious, selfless, and altruistic leaders. The history of political organization teaches us that leaders, for the most part, *take pleasure* in the privileges that accrue to leading. They desire to sustain these privileges, and are often prepared to injure others to achieve this. It is universal and consistent that leaders prefer to give members of their families better living conditions than they are prepared to give their general subjects. It is even worrying in sub-Saharan Africa that leaders loot public funds and deposit colossal sums of money in European and North American banks, whilst the poverty and disease levels in their countries continue to mount. This is more like the real world of political representatives. We must, therefore, ask ourselves whether we are prepared to accept Wiredu's prescription in a world dominated by these kinds of representatives – unelected and without institutionalized opposition. And the answer is no. We would be far better off conceiving political systems that indebt such representatives to their subjects, empower their subjects to demand and extract premium service, and enable such subjects to remove their representatives from office if the need arises. This means that we would be better off either in a non-electoral political system equipped with features that discourage bad leadership and encourage good leadership, or an electoral system that achieves similar goals, at least in better ways than the status quo multi-party system. A non-electoral system would need a robust accountability mechanism. If we are concerned about the conflictual and expensive nature of the multi-party system, we need to begin designing

³¹ See B. Matolino, "The Nature of Opposition in Kwasi Wiredu's Democracy by Consensus", *African Studies*, vol. 72, no. 1 (2013).

and developing such an alternative accountability mechanism. To be sure, such a mechanism should be capable of securing more accountability compared to what is currently obtainable. I, therefore, do not necessarily object to eliminating elections, but I propose that doing so would need to be preceded by the design and institution of more effective instruments for keeping leaders humble, accountable, and able to moderate their ability to misappropriate the public till. This is no little task, and I think we would subsist with current designs until it is achieved. I am, in fact, designing one such system in what I call a points system, but outlining such a system is not the focus of this essay.

I appreciate Wiredu's argument that the absence of elections and an institutionalized opposition enables a group of persons in power to concentrate on deep and non-partisan initiatives. But this only presupposes that the persons have the excellent qualities outlined in non-party polity A. By overlooking the basic nature of most political leaders and aspirants, such a prescription is inadequate. Let me now quote Wiredu's attempt to distance his non-party proposal from the one-party charades we have seen. He writes, *The fundamental difference between a non-party system and a one-party one is that the former embraces the freedom of political association while the latter execrates it. The one-party system is, in fact, not only incompatible with freedom of political association but also with the freedom of expression, for the expression of ideas among persons is already a kind of association. It is obvious, then, that those who use the name of the non-party system but look unkindly upon political associations do take that name in vain.*³²

From the foregoing, one notices that this distinction is not entirely successful, since it assumes too much about the personal qualities of the persons who would operate such a non-party system. I, therefore, think that the apprehension of Jacques should not be dismissed.

CONCLUSION

Admittedly, the multi-party system is adversarial, and does not often augur well in culturally diverse societies. An obvious initiative would be to make it less adversarial by eliminating the winner-takes-it-all mentality. As we have also seen, Wiredu has suggested to modify the constitution to compel more cooperation between persons and parties, and to remove some of the adversary-promoting practices such as periodic elections.

The fear among scholars such as Jacques, however, is that a non-party initiative transforms the proposal into a one-party dictatorship, the likes of which we have seen in some African countries. The reason Jacques offers is that Wiredu's arguments are exactly the same as those of the one-party nationalists. But the similarity of arguments is not enough to establish that Wiredu's non-party system amounts to a one-party system. Lauer objects to Jacques' critique by pointing out Wiredu's several criticisms of the one-party system. I think that this is also not enough to establish that Wiredu's non-party system avoids one-party problems. The most practical route, which I have taken in this article,

³² K. Wiredu, "The State, Civil Society...", p. 1065.

is to subject Wiredu's non-party system to a test, in which we imagine the system as run by persons with the best and the worst possible intentions. This test shows that Wiredu's non-party system presumes too much about the good intentions of leaders and is poorly equipped to protect society from the damaging effects of a non-party system being run by political representatives whose intentions are not very genuine. The non-party initiative would, therefore, need to construct a political infrastructure that could perform the same accountability checks for which the adversarial system was designed.

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