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"How to...and not to understand democracy: towards an African consensual theory"

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Abstract While democracy has triumphed as the political system of choice in post-independence Africa, it is showing an increasing degree of popular disaffection. Resultantly, the average citizen is feeling estranged from the political process and the more-or-less permanent political class. There is an urgent need to not only confront the rough and tumble of democratic practice but also to provide a profound sense of what democracy is all about. I argue in this paper that some of the approaches to what passes as democracy, particularly in modern Africa, are causing a crisis in its meaning, hence the current state of disaffection. This phenomenon necessitates a redefinition of democracy to establish its African context or instance.

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of democracy in any society leads to a fundamental distinction that each society has a concept of democracy that emerges according to the specifics of its cultural and social orientation; and which makes the democratic practice to evidence a peculiar mixture of familiarity and strangeness. That is to say, the practice of democracy in any particular culture is both *similar to* – and *significantly different from* the notions of 'democracy' to which one may be accustomed. If for instance, one is accustomed to a particular form of democracy in his/her own society, then what passes as democracy in another society may be regarded as significantly different, yet both may be regarded as democracy in their own social and cultural contexts. As such, democracy should be allowed to emerge according to the specifics of a people. Consequently, there is no harm in talking about African democracy. The question that ensues in this regard is *what is the African understanding of democracy? Is an African understanding of democracy similar or otherwise to the European or American understanding of the same?* Implicit in these questions is the larger issue about the nature and meaning of democracy – about the universality of democratic ideals and practices. To my mind these concerns invite the bigger question of what democracy is and how to assess it in a setting socially and culturally diverse as Africa's. In view of the foregoing, I seek to expose in this paper a critical and analytical understanding of the concept of democracy; and provide the context within which it is to be understood in modern Africa.

The concept and practice of democracy

How should democracy be understood? How should it be defined or *not defined*? Simply put, the question is, *"What is democracy?"* I contend that this is a rather innocent sounding question containing serious consequences. It is important to state from the onset what such consequences entail. That is, prior to the unravelling of what democracy is, it is crucial to unravel the fundamental issues underlying the concept of democracy itself. To my mind, at the centre of what democracy *is* or *is not* lie three fundamental issues, namely: the *political standing*, the *quality of life*, and the

explanation[1] of democratic practice. What passes as true meaning of democracy should, to a greater extent, encompass these three fundamentals issues, which I choose to call the three questions of democracy. An exposition of these three questions helps in understanding system of governance as either democratic or not.

(i) The Political Standing question

The political question is fundamentally the first question in understanding democracy as such - whether a system of governance is a democracy. What this means is that political power holders must know whether they are dealing with democracies or otherwise. This distinction is very crucial because, "democracies behave differently from the rest" (Tilly, 2007: 6). That is to say, they meet their commitments or even break them differently; and this affects the political question particularly international relations and political alliances.

(ii) The Quality of Life question

The quality of life question refers the support people give to democracy. This can be instrumental or intrinsic. It is intrinsic, on the one hand, when democracy is regarded as *good-in-itself* – possessing intrinsic value by rendering the populace a collective power to determine their socio-economic and political fate. According to Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, the intrinsic value is embedded in the fact that democracy will deliver the citizens from authoritarian formulae – thus leading them to appreciate political freedom and equal rights that democracy entails (Bratton and Mattes, 2001:448).

On the other hand, the support is instrumental if it is based on whether democracy actually delivers better living conditions with regard to provision of and access to social services – education, medical care and security *et cetera*. In consequence, democracy is not worth its salt – its name- if the populace cannot put food in their stomachs!

(iii) The Explanation question

Explanation means that democracy occurs under rare social and cultural conditions. Nevertheless, it has profound effects on the lives of the citizens in respect to how they identify and explain its impact on their collective or communal wellbeing. In respect to these three questions of democracy, if we define democracy in a mistaken manner, then we belittle its meaning as well as reduce people's chances for better lives, which is quintessentially the *telos* or purpose of democracy. What is at stake, therefore, is to contextualise the extent and character of democracy. There is an urgent need to not only confront the rough and tumble of democratic practice but also to provide a profound sense of what democracy is all about; and a new ideological imagination that can contextualise and throw light on discontents associated with it. In consequence thereof, I have laboured to offer a critical analysis of the extant approaches to the definition of democracy in order to establish which approach adequately responds to the aforementioned three questions of democracy; at least in some way.

Critical analysis of the approaches to the definition of democracy

In order to take the discussion about democracy seriously, it is critical that we establish what exactly we are talking about. It is imperative that we develop a precise definition if we have to analytically explain the variations and change in the extent and character of democracy. Implicitly or otherwise, it is to be noted that scholars generally identify four different typologies[2] of definitions of democracy – the *constitutional*, *substantive*, *procedural* and *process-oriented* (Tilly, 2007:7). An analysis of each of these approaches is both urgent and necessary if we have to delineate the true character of democracy,

The constitutional approach

A constitutional approach or definition of democracy, as the name suggests, puts emphasis on the constitution or laws that a regime enacts concerning its political activity. Generally, this is the legal *referent* that differentiates polities and distinguishes them as oligarchy, monarchy or even as republics (Tilly, 2007:7). For most contemporary polities, democracy is a matter of constitutional declaration. Most states make prominent mention in the constitution, of their polities

[1] One cannot take the question of democracy seriously without exposing the concept to such threefold understanding and analysis. The concept of "democracy" has become so universally sanctified that it means too many things – as to mean anything at all. From the most authoritarian regimes to the most open political systems, all swear by democracy (see Tilly. 2007: 6-7; Sartori, 1987: 22; Schaffer, 2000).

[2] It is generally agreed that these are the main types or approaches from which most scholars on democracy and democratisation choose their definition (see David Held,1996, O'Donnell, 1995, Ortega Ortiz, 2001)

being a democracy with the hope that because the constitution so declares, the people will "obey" and have the political will to be nothing else but democratic – that is to say, the populace will think and act democratically.

An analytical look at the opening chapters of the Constitutions of both Kenya and South Africa[3] reveals this phenomenon. The Republic of South Africa makes a constitutional declaration of her "democratic-status" in Chapter One, as follows:

1. The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values:
(a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms.
(b) Non-racialism and non-sexism.
(c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law.
(d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voter roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness (Constitution of The Republic of South Africa, No. 108 of 1996, Chapter1, Section 1).

In a similar manner, Kenya makes an explicit claim to democracy in the second chapter of its Constitution, which is specifically dedicated to the nature of her Republic in the following manner:

4. (1) Kenya is a sovereign Republic.
(2) The Republic of Kenya shall be a multi-party democratic State founded on the national values and principles of governance referred to in Article 10 (Constitution of Kenya, 2010. Chapter 2, Article 4, Sections1&2).

Article 10 referred to above, spells out the values associated with democracy in Kenya as follows:

(2) The national values and principles of governance include—
(a) patriotism, national unity, sharing and devolution of power, the rule of law, democracy and participation of the people;
(b) human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalised;
(c) good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability; and
(d) sustainable development (Constitution of Kenya, 2010. Chapter 2, Article 10, Section 2).

It is evident from the excerpts above that there is a glaring connection between democracy and the values that *ought* to accompany its practice.

However, one does not fail to raise a very simple yet fundamental question of whether the explicit mention of a polity as democratic really makes it so in respect to the values associated with it. I strongly argue that there is bound to be large discrepancies between the announced principles and the daily practices – that is, the empirical lesson often goes counter the constitutional proclamation. To my mind, a constitutional approach to the definition of democracy is misleading. Such a definition puts us in the danger of *knowledge is virtue* of Socrates – and, of course, if to know good is to do good, then there would be only one law to know yet this is not and cannot be the case. Those who know often go contrary to what they know – here lies the essence of free choice.

If the above argument is given, then, in essence, the constitutional approach to the definition of democracy does not pass for the two reasons. First, democracy is a *good-in-itself* that must go beyond self-declaration of the state, which merely portrays how a state views itself. The opinion of the state about itself cannot be the truth and the essence of the state *per se.* It appears to me that this phenomenon is what explains why in most cases there are institutions that monitor the democracies of different states based on both political and civil rights.[4]

Second, it is apparent that in most Africa's modern democracies, despite their constitutional declarations as being democratic, there exists a consolidation of autocratic power and inner-circle control over revenues; and as the clique surrounding the political leadership grows richer, the rest of the country usually grows poorer! Susanna Wing rightly observes this fact and says, "Since 1989, when democracy's third wave began to sweep across Africa, over fifty-seven new constitutions have been adopted in fifty-one African countries. And yet only a handful of these laid the groundwork for more democratic states" (Wing, 2008:1). The logical question that arises from such an argument is simply this: why has African constitutionalism failed so consistently to produce a viable democratic practice on

[3] The reason for my choice of these two states is simple. They are the ones about which I am well conversant – I am a Kenyan by birth and have had the chance to live in South Africa for some time; and I have looked at their respective constitutions with a keen yet critical and analytical eye.

[4] Freedom House (based in New York) is one such institution that monitors the democracies of different states. It assigns annually every recognised country ratings on both the political and civil rights based on a scale of 1 (high) to 7 (low). It is to be noted that such institutions reserve the right to define what passes as both political and civil rights. However, a country may do well on the political right wing but terribly fail on the civil right wing. This may make it *less* democratic. Thus, how a country balances between the two rights is fundamental to its democratic ranking (For in-depth discussion on this See Charles Tilly 2007: 2-3).

the continent? To my mind, the answer to this fundamental question lies in the fact that democracy depends, not just on formulating and reformulating the rules that govern society nor by writing new constitutions but on establishing governmental and institutional legitimacy.

In sum, despite the sonorous self-description – as a democracy – a state characterised by ills such as described above, cannot pass as a democracy in any usual sense of the word. The question that ensues is, 'how should we decide how a system of governance qualifies to be a democracy or otherwise? In other words, 'what makes democracy democratic? This leads to a critical look at the *substantive approach* of defining democracy.

The substantive approach

One of the misgivings with the constitutional approach to the definition of democracy as I have laboured to show above is that human welfare within the state may be flagrantly opposed to what the constitution declares. Consequently, the substantive approach raises the fundamental question of whether a regime fosters or promotes human welfare – individual liberty, equity, deliberation, security, deliberation, peaceful conflict resolution *et cetera.*

In contradistinction to the constitutional definition, the substantive approach simply holds that if a regime promotes human welfare, then it is democratic. This definition, one easily notices, runs into the trouble of how to handle trade-offs among estimable principles – for instance, one wonders whether a desperately poor regime with citizens enjoying rough equality would be more democratic than that which is prosperous but in which the citizens are fiercely unequal (Tily, 2007:7). It is important to know, therefore, under what conditions and how a regime can be said to promote human welfare. A focus on possible political outcomes undercuts the effort of learning that some political arrangements – democracy included - are more desirable than others. This is what leads to the procedural approach of democracy.

The procedural approach

Under procedural approach to the definition of democracy, a narrow range of governmental practices are singled out to determine whether a regime qualifies to be democratic on not. It is a minimalist approach to the definition of democracy, which is essentially identified with Joseph Schumpeter that democracy is a political system in which free elections with universal suffrage create vertical accountability, as governors depend on the vote of the mass of population rather than being horizontally accountable to an undemocratic assembly of notables (Schumpeter, 1952: 269). It is to be pointed out that by making "free elections" the essence of democracy, Schumpeter basically ignored the empirical evidence of widespread existence of *un-fr-ee* and *unfair* elections that abound in most states in the world – leave alone Africa. Such minimalist definition of democracy is vulnerable to the 'fallacy of electoralism' (Karl, 2000: 95-96). That is to say – unfortunately – it is bound to privileging elections over all dimensions of democracy. In consequence, I argue that while free elections are necessary for a state to be termed democratic in the Schumpeterian thinking, they are not sufficient for democracy *per se´*.

Tilly raises a fundamental concern about this approach. He argues that since this approach pays attention to such procedure as elections, the question that emerges is whether genuinely competitive elections, engaging large numbers of citizens regularly produce change in governmental personnel and policy? (Tilly, 2007:8). At best, the unravelling of Tilly's concern logically produces hypothetical results. That is, procedural approach focuses mainly on elections – and, if elections actually cause significant governmental changes, then there is *´procedural'* presence of democracy.

George Philip also regards the equation of democracy to competitive elections as a minimalist approach to the definition of democracy as such (Philip, 2001: 164). While it can be appreciated against this view that democracy requires a more complex set of conditions – rule of law, respect for minority rights, respect for individual liberty *et cetera,* it is important to note that there may not be an approach without problems. Some scholars identify criteria that determine procedurally whether a regime is democratic or otherwise to include:

1. A competitive, multiparty political system
2. Universal adult suffrage for all citizens (with exception for restrictions that states may legitimately place on citizens for criminal offences)
3. Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and in the absence of massive voter fraud that yields results that are unrepresentative of the public will
4. Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning (Paino and Puddington, 2004: 716)

I choose to argue here that these elements render the determination of a regime as democratic or otherwise a difficult exercise for they are a mere crisp of convenience working with an extremely thin conception of the political processes under consideration. But, the proponents of this approach would further advance the argument that this approach offers citizens the possibility to exercise their freedom of choice. While this is

agreeable to some extent because by it, citizens do not only enjoy rights, but also exercise *choice*, a choice to make and remake the social world in accordance with their will (Pratap, 2003:8), to my mind, this idea is so basic to the meaning of democracy.

I am persuaded to think that the argument for choice falls flat! It definitely does not succeed in two respects: first, it is unclear whether the idea of choice itself is a meaningful claim or simply an illusion in contemporary African politics. Second, even if it is a meaningful claim, the exercise of political choice by the populace, their use of political opportunities that 'democracy' affords, does not necessarily – and empirically so – lead to the creation of a better social order. In fact, it can be argued that political choices have come to bear the imprint of social inequality that permeates democratic practice in contemporary Africa. Accordingly, I contend as Samwel Huntington does that, democracy should be a collective political action. There is an inherent danger in defining democracy following the matrix of periodic elections. In fact, "we cannot declare a country democratic by virtue of the fact that it has successfully held two peaceful elections, which have ushered in change" (Huntington, 1991: 226). The context of Huntington's argument is simple and clear – elections do not necessarily connote any great popular participation in the polity or empowerment of the populace as such.

In view of the foregoing, this paper puts forth the strong argument that even though the right to participate in choosing one's electors is the most dramatic way of affirming democratic equality of all citizens, such a right is only a *meagre* right whose exercise in Africa is a periodic ritual with little or no bearing on the enhancement of the wellbeing of those who exercise it. There is an inherent failure of *choice* to determine whether a regime is a democracy or not – this necessitates an analysis of the process-orientated approach.

The process-oriented approach

In contradistinction to the constitutional, substantive and procedural ways of defining democracy, this approach is an amalgamation of processes that must be continuously in motion for a system of governance to be termed democratic. Robert Dahl acknowledges that there is an enormous and impenetrable thicket of ideas regarding democracy from which he identifies five criteria for process-oriented approach as follows:

***Effective participation*.** Before a policy is adapted by the association, all members must have equal and effective opportunities for making their views known to the other members as to what the policy should be.

***Voting equality*.** When the moment arrives at which the decision about policy will finally be made, every member must have an equal and effective opportunity to vote, and all votes must be counted as equal.

***Enlightened Understanding*.** Within reasonable limits as to time, each member must have equal and effective opportunities for learning about the relevant alternative policies and their likely consequences.

***Control of the agenda*.** The members must have the exclusive opportunity to decide how and, if they choose, what matters to be placed on the agenda. Thus, the democratic process required by the three preceding criteria is never closed. The policies of the association are always open to change by members, if they so choose.

***Inclusion of adults*.** All, or at any rate most, adult permanent residents should have the full rights of citizens that are implied by the first four criteria (Dahl, 1998: 37-38)

Dahl's criteria differ in meaningful ways from the constitutional, substantive and procedural yardsticks for democracy. By avoiding building social prerequisites and consequences into the definition, Dahl specifies no constitutional provisions. His "enlightened understanding" refers to experience within the organisation rather than consequences or prerequisites (Tilly, 2007:9). It is argued here that ´enlightened understanding' is a necessary component of deliberation which is democracy's *conditio sine qua non*. His conception of modern representative democracy – which he terms as "Polyarchal democracy" – is that which consists of political institutions that endure. He identifies those institutions as: elected official; free, fair and frequent elections; freedom of expression; access to alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; as well as inclusive citizenship (Dahl, 1998:85, Dahl, 2005: 188-189).

In this paper I hold the view, therefore, that the process-oriented approaches to the definition of democracy lead to a more plausible conception as to what democracy actually entails; and that a more precise definition of what passes as democracy in contemporary Africa ought to be hinged on such an approach.

Towards a consensual theory

The literal meaning of democracy which is the most basic and the most widely used is that which relates to its Greek origin, *demokratia* that can be broken down into *demos* meaning 'the people' and *kratos* meaning 'rule'. Literally, therefore, the term

"democracy" translates to *'rule by the people'*[5]. Though this definition" spells out the centrality of *people* to the understanding of democracy, it requires one major amendment from the onset. This amendment is occasioned by the fact that when we speak of democracy at a large-scale nation-state, the acts of government are usually performed *not* by the populace but rather *indirectly* by the representatives whom they freely elect on equal basis. In consequence, democracy may be defined not only as a government *by the people* but also, as a government *in accordance with the people's preferences* (Lijphart, 1984:1). That is to say, an ideal democratic government would be one whose actions are always in perfect correspondence with the preferences – arrived at through consensus – of all its citizens. A government that has a complete responsiveness to the populace.

While it can be advanced that no such government has ever existed, it is argued here that a government whose actions are in perfect correspondence with the preferences of all its citizens remains an *ideal* to which a democratic government should aspire. A government that continually aspires to meet the preferences of her *demos* by deed and not by sheer rhetoric can, thus, be regarded as true democracy. It is in this sense that the "people" as Kwame Gyekye argues, must remain the yardstick of defining democracy in Africa today. That is, the degree of adequacy allowed for the expression of the will of the people; and the extent to which the people themselves are involved in decision-making process (Gyekye, 1997: 124).

In view of the foregoing, democracy ought to generate *hope* and *aspiration* in the lives of the governed – by establishing, on the one hand, the principle of political equality, freedom and dignity; and on the other hand, it ought to also generate aspiration in the lives of the populace – by bringing about a concrete sense of empowerment and opportunity (Pratap Mehta 2003: 2). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that this is what really confounds true meaning of democracy to a greater or lesser extent – not all people in a democracy share the same aspirations. The landless peasantry, internally displaced persons (IDPs), bonded labour, the untouchables of the society, middle-class lawyers who draw a country's constitution – all have different aspirations and, on this understanding, it is to be noted that the most fundamental features of democracy have turned out to be elusive in contemporary Africa – rendering democracy's hopes and aspirations at experimental crossroads. Resultantly, there is the ever-persistent social inequality and a mistaken view of a state's proper function and organisation. These two factors have modified and impeded the workings of democracy and its effects in all kinds of perverse ways.

What, therefore, should count as democracy or its instance in contemporary Africa, must not only literally consider Dahl's five criteria for the process-oriented definition, but also in a more profound manner, consider the expansion of the same to encompass a form of *consensus building*. That is, as far as consensus is concerned, democracy must reflect deep mutual understanding of the needs and aspirations of the citizens. Such consensus may be the product of compromise ironed out between hostile camps; it may rise from a desire to conform to social norms (Schaffer, 2000: 58). In this context, democracy should involve deliberation or consensual quality[6]. This consideration gives rise to a fundamental prerequisite aspect of a consensual democratic order, which is dialogue and consultation in the decision-making process. K.A. Busia captures this aspect of consensual democracy when he writes:

When a Council, each member of which was the representative of a lineage, met to discuss matters affecting the whole community, it had always to grapple with the problem of representing sectional and common interests. In order to do this, the members had to talk things over; they had to listen to all different points of view. So strong was the value of solidarity that the chief aim of the counsellors was to reach unanimity, and they talked till this was achieved (Busia, 1967:28).

In view of the above consideration, consensus building appears to be the most plausible way to approach democracy even in contemporary Africa. This is because the challenges of liberal democracy in Africa today relate to the form of decision-making which, based on mere aggregation of numbers, ends up creating cleavages in every sphere of political life. Ani particularly notes of this phenomenon that:

[5] 'Rule by the people' is a notion famous for multiple meanings. It appears as a modifier to the term democracy, but it does not set limits to how the term 'democracy' may be used. The translation of democracy as *rule by the people* implies decision making. Nevertheless, to primarily view democracy in this way covers only *some* of the meaning often assigned to the word (Catt, Hellena 1999:4).

[6] It to be noted that what makes democracy possible is an underlying societal consensus. Dahl for instance wrote that, "prior to politics, beneath it, enveloping it, restricting it, conditioning it, it is the underlying consensus on policy that usually exists in the society among the predominant portion of the politically active members. Without such a consensus, no democratic system would survive the endless irritations and frustrations of elections and party competition" (Dahl, 1956:132).

Preoccupation with multiparty aggregative democracy in Africa has produced superficial forms of political/electoral choice making by subjects that deepen pre-existing ethnic and primordial cleavages (2013:207)

This challenge is further compounded by the fact that aggregative democracy regards voting[7] as the basic standard for decision-making, instead of its usual function of being a last resort in cases of intractability (Ani, 2013:208). Wiredu sees voting in modern African polity as a foreign political import – the hinge upon which majoritarian democracy turns – leading to a government of "consent" without consensus (Wiredu, 1996:183-184). In view of this, I argue that it is not gainsaying that modern democracies so characterised by heterogeneity, need to incorporate the art of deliberation for the realisation of national integration. In fact, deliberation plays a key role in this respect for two reasons. Firstly, it is a process in which the members of a political community participate in public discussion and critical examination of communally binding public policies and not the pursuit of some individual interests.

Secondly, the process of deliberation through which these policies are reached is not just a model of political bargaining, but a commitment to the common good. The very nature of consensus demands that the interests of no particular member of the polity have *a priori* precedence over those of any other (Valdez, 2001:30). This explains why Wiredu argues that consensus, as a procedure of political decision, requires persuasion of each representative not only of the optimality of each decision, but also of the practical necessity (1996:89).

In respect to the political rhetoric of modern democracies where politicians campaign promising heaven without the potentiality of delivering the sky, it is important that consensus is brought to bear. This is because consensual democracy as is the case with deliberative democracy is based on rationality and it aims at truth. As Matolino notes:

...the dialogue is aimed at rendering bare the opposing views, understanding their content and aims; and most crucially the dialogue would be directed at building bridges between disparate opinions (Matolino, 2009:40).

My reading of Matolino is that he is basically alluding to the force of argument in consensus building as having the most weight as opposed to mere political rhetoric and empty persuasions of politicians. The context of understanding may be interpreted to mean that consensus is not manipulative and coercive, and is not an emotive appeal for fostering sectarian or jingoistic interests of politicians in modern times. Rather, it is a willingness to modify their proposals on the basis of the most complete and compelling information available.

The process of consensus building provides consensual democracy with a foundation for political legitimacy. Since consent is at the centre of democratic decision making, consensus remains the vehicle through which the populace can justify self-imposed laws and policies that are communally binding (Valadez, 2001:32). Consensual democracy refines the process of autonomous self-governance by placing conditions on the deliberative process, which ensures that the outcomes of deliberation do not merely aggregate existing desires but reflect a higher degree of collective knowledge and mutual responsibility. The political legitimacy of consensual outcomes is based not merely on the will of the majority, but on the results of collective reasoned reflection, which respects the moral and practical concerns of all the populace.

In sum, consensus is a *conditio sine qua non* for the realisation of cohesion in modern democracies in order to ward off the challenge of mere aggregation of numbers – of the majority over the minority – which, in Wiredu's own conception is the quintessence of uncooperativeness, an epiphenomenon of colonialism, and antithetical to the spirit of communalism (Wiredu, 2010:1060-1).

CONCLUSION

True meaning of democracy should be hinged on consensus. What makes consensus to be a preferred democratic political approach and/or option for Africa to the liberal or majoritarian type is that it – consensus – operates in such a manner that it does not place any one group of persons consistently in the position of a minority as is common with the majoritarian democracies of modern times[8]. While consensus does not guarantee a total agreement, the most important thing to note is that the interlocutors at a discussion may reach an agreement on what ought to be done without forsaking their opinion about what is true. Consensus ensures that the interest of either group is catered for – be they in the minority or otherwise. This is basically because consensual democracy guarantees a substantive

[7] Ani recognises the existence of intractability in every sphere of life making voting a basic human solution to it (see Ani, 2013:208). Wiredu does not share this view and sees voting as a unfortunate foreign political imposition (see Wiredu 1996:184)

[8] Majoritarian democracy as a "tyranny of numbers" in most modern democracies operate in such a way that larger communities in a multi-ethnic society come together in a coalition to win an election. By so doing, they render smaller ethnic communities to be in perpetual political limbo.

representation that goes over and above mere formal representation.[9] In sum, what makes consensus an important element in democratic practice is its concern not with the good of oneself, but rather the good of the whole – the common good.

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[9] For a detailed analysis of the two kinds of representations see Wiredu (1996:186).