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**Colonization and Self-Independence of Africa: False Policies and the Derailment of Democracy**

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**Abstract (Proposal)**

The colonization of Africa by the Portuguese, Danes, French, Dutch, and British left an unprecedented wound on the continent of Africa. Since 1957 when Ghana, a sub-Saharan country with a population of 18 million led the continent to wrestle power from their colonial regimes, the countries on the continent have slipped into the dark abyss of constitutional democracy. By 1967, almost if not all the sub-Saharan countries had attained independence. The independence of these countries foretold a brighter future for the continent. Many of the leaders who championed the struggle for independence were men of probity and integrity and from the beginning of their administration demonstrated a sense of statesmanship. Led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, the continent was on its way to political maturity. However, after the political euphoria waned, the leaders of the various countries realized that the journey to political maturity was long and arduous. Leaders like President Nyerere of Tanzania, Kaunda of Malawi, Haile Salaise of Ethiopia, Modibo Keita of Guinea, Azikwe of Nigeria, etc. were all leaders who believed in the process of constitutional democracy but did not know how the complex machine of democracy works. At the beginning of their reign, the leaders of many of the countries on the continent of Africa experimented with the notion of democracy but found out that it was not easy to introduce constitutional democracy to their people who either had little education or no education whatsoever.

The question to be posed is why some countries succeeded in making democracy work to their benefit while other countries still struggle with it. In this vein, Francis Fukuyama posits the question “What is the relationship between the effectiveness of a state and democracy? Are the two mutually supportive, or is there a tension between good public administration and broad political participation?” (Fukuyama, October 2013). The problem with African countries that have come out of colonization is that they have all been plagued with “varying degrees of clientelism, corruption, and ineffective service delivery to large parts of their populations.” (Fukuyama, October 2013). In fact according to Fukuyama, “The inability to make democracy deliver in terms of shared growth broadly available public goods has in turn weakened the legitimacy of democratic governments (Fukuyama, October 2013). Martin Shefter makes a case to try and answer Fukuyama’s question. Shefter argues in his 1993 book *Political Parties* and the *State* that the availability of an effective bureaucracy in the present depends on the historical sequence in which state modernization was undertaken relative to the opening of the franchise to broader democratic participation (Shefter, 1993). Being political neophytes the recently gained independent countries on the African continent party patronage coalitions to broaden their political base and perpetuate their leadership. However, this state of patronage is a remnant characteristic of the colonial leaders. In this vein, Acemoglu and his colleagues have argued that the correlation between democracy and poverty can be explained by the fact that countries that embarked on divergent political-economic development paths at critical junctures in history were either taken to poverty and autocracy or economic growth and democracy (Acemoglu et al. 2008). In the case of Africa where all the countries were colonized, the divergent political economic growth took them to poverty and autocracy. Many of the countries on the continent pined for independence but after attaining it did not know how to steer it. The measure of democracy as introduced by Ted Robert Gurr and Harry H. Eckstein offers four dimensions of democracy to underscore its significance and power in helping to engage all citizens in working towards the achievement of a welfare state (Gurr, 1975). They noted that democracy must be based on the competitiveness of political participation, the competitiveness of executive recruitment, the openness of executive recruitment, and the constraints on the chief executive. These four dimensions of democracy are what is eluding many African countries. I argue that Ghana is among these countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that have experienced colonization, self-independence, and the derailment of democracy. Democracy is of course an intrinsic good and it is about knowledge, skills, and the acquisition of some of its dispositions. It is not enough to vote but enough to understand the mechanics of democracy. The problem of derailment of democracy rests on the embers left behind by the colonizers. In his analysis of how the British did not pay too much attention to the education of the indigenous people in their colonies was to perpetuate their hold on the colonies and thus adopted what David S. Brown points out in his work “Democracy, Colonization, and Human Capital in Sub-Saharan Africa” the “Adaptationist” approach whereby local tribal leaders were given a free to perform many of the same old functions before the arrival of the colonizers. In this manner, the British refused to install a single administrative model throughout Africa. It also allowed them to adapt their rule to the prevailing circumstances in the colonies. The British also limited their involvement in designing an educational curriculum that spanned from primary to secondary school. Rather, they stopped short of primary school and this adaptationist approach affected the progress of the practice of democracy and its subsequent implications. The lasting effect of the adaptationist approach can still be seen in Ghana.

With almost 99% of illiteracy that plagued the continent, the leaders struggled to find different ways of making democracy work on the continent. Some of them like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah began a mass literacy campaign in his country Ghana. All school children were to register and go to school with minimum tuition. Adults who did not read the alphabet were given the chance to begin night school to learn to read and write their names. This move was daunting because it meant infusing the economy with a chunk of funding. This new move caught on in Africa and many of the leaders followed Nkrumah’s dream. Having entrenched themselves in political leadership and experienced political upheavals, these leaders appropriated to themselves ideologies that made them look like little gods in their various countries. I intend to contextually analyze some of the past regimes on the continent of Africa after the attainment of independence by paying attention to what the colonial regimes left behind politically and economically and how the native heads of state handled the affairs of their respective states.

Since the attainment of independence in 1957, Ghana has struggled to maintain a genuine constitutional democracy due to the lack of a proper civic education program. In the nearly forty-seven years since the ousting of the first president of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghanaian citizens have failed to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values of democracy that any modern country needs for nation-building. The reasons for the lack of civic education programs in the country include a series of military interventions and the mismanagement of the socio-economic and political affairs by subsequent governments who were democratically elected. On account of the deficit of some of the basic elements necessary for the nourishing and nurturing of democracy (e.g. education of the citizens, and character development through civic education), Ghana remains trapped in political ignorance because a majority of the literate population remains illiterate in civic knowledge necessary for the maintenance and sustenance of democracy. For many of the citizens, democracy belongs to the elites in the society. Citizens therefore must attain a well-rounded education to participate in democracy for nation-building which includes the participation of the citizens in all spheres of the society— culture, religion, economy, politics, etc. Therefore, the objective of my research will be to study the current understanding of civic education in the country with an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and the values of democracy, to implement this knowledge in a pilot program for teaching in secondary schools. For this reason, my research proposal will focus on the younger generation.

The recent census conducted by the National Population Council indicates that nearly two-thirds (63.6%) of the population aged 15 years and older are literate, 46.4 percent literate in both English and the Ghanaian language. While the percentage of literacy in the country may be laudable, education in civics has not been prominent in the academic curriculum. Since 1992 when the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) was incorporated in the Constitution of Ghana (Article 231-239), and inaugurated in 1993 with a mandate to prepare the people of Ghana for political participation and civil engagement, the commission failed to vigorously implement the program. For instance, between 1988 and 1989, the district-level election turnout indicated only 59.3% and in 1994, the results even dropped to 29.3%, and in 1998 only 41.6%, in 2002 was 31.3%, and in 2006 was 39.3%. These figures are confounding indicators of a major problem in the education of the citizens in Ghana. The reasons for NCCE’s failure are couched in fine political language. In short, it did not receive the necessary resources and support from the government and therefore the selected schools could not fully benefit from the program. I think that if I am awarded the scholarship with the necessary funding, I will be able to revive the civic education program in the country with very efficient programs.

My perspective on Ghana is that Ghanaians in general do not recognize that the country has been struggling with nation-building for the last forty-seven years. Ordinary basic social services are virtually absent and this fact is seen in the provision of proper educational resources, constant power outages, routine water shortages, long lines at gas stations, open sewers, trashed streets, and the prevalence of bribery and corruption in every sector of the society. It has often been said that democracy is not about casting one’s vote but rather participating in public affairs which is done through civic programs. Therefore, with a well-designed civic educational curriculum to help the citizens, especially the younger generation, Ghana’s future will be rendered more meaningful when they understand the power they have to influence their well-being through civic participation. Thus, my research will focus on preparing the younger generation to be schooled in the affairs of democracy so that they can acquire the ability to be responsible citizens for their country. The study of civic education will prepare them to become critical thinkers and develop character traits necessary for exploring ways of engaging community issues and enhancing their skills in communicating with their government. More importantly, civic education programs will equip them with the moral and ethical dispositions of democracy that are significant for the sustenance of the common good.