An Assessment of Africa's Philosophy of Local Electoral Democracy and its Ideology of Centralism

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Abstract: **This study promotes the belief that Africa's local electoral democracy is rooted more in an ideology of centralism and hegemonic desires of the higher tiers' political elites over local administration. In this study, we contend that the local electoral democracy across Africa is in a state of crisis, producing practices at variance with the philosophy of Western liberal democracy which the continent pretends to imitate. Utilizing the political culture theory, the study's argument is anchored on the evidence that the process of local electoral democracy across Africa rather emanates from an espoused political culture dictated by a desired centralizing ethos and inclinations of dominance of the local government by the higher political authorities, especially the state/provincial level. Its methodological construct is akin to the descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design. By analyzing observed experiences and documentary data using the qualitative content analysis approach, we contemplate the ingrained philosophy behind local electoral democracy in Africa as different from the idealistic sense of the democratic theory. The study's findings accentuate the thesis that the actual African philosophy of local electoral democracy is not rooted in the ethos of Western liberal democracy, and thus democracy is largely lacking in African local government areas.**

Keywords: **Philosophy; local electoral democracy; liberal democracy; epistemological norm; Africa**

I. INTRODUCTION

Borrowing Chemhuru's (2019, p, 71) thoughts on what constitutes an African "epistemological theory of normativity" that shapes her philosophy of local elections toward entrenching local autonomy? And what does this indicate about the ontology of electoral democracy in the mind of the average African political elite for the sake of optimizing effective local participation in governance? Not to be detained by details, pre-colonial Africa *ab initio* succeeded in evolving a philosophy of choosing local political leaders. Although, these processes varied in system and structure among African nationalities. Such as that in many, the eldest son succeeds; in others it could be gerontocracy, while in many others election into position of authority revolves between families, clans, villages, etc. The point we stress here is that across pre-colonial Africa, the epistemic normative reasoning around election of or electing representatives were democratic in so far as democracy implies acceptable choice of majority of the people to be governed.

It is given that very good number of African scholars concede to see Africa's colonialism as a kind of "modernizing reform" especially in the electoral cum political aspect (Nyong'o, 2017; Ajayi, 1982; Mbaku & Ihonvbere, 2003). Then one can easily understand why questions continue to be raised over the disparagement that befell pre-colonial philosophy of electoral democracy of the time. In fact, the eminent Nigerian historian, Professor Ade Ajayi, sums up what Africans expected from their Independence to include "…sees an end to unpredictability and irrationality of the white man's world…freedom from unjust and incomprehensible laws (sic elective system)…" (Ntalaja, 2017, pp. 241-42). Colonial Africa facilitated the supplanting of the indigenous epistemic and acceptable norms of democratic representation in the sphere of politics.

The ideology of electoral democracy in colonial Africa was defined under a set of new epistemic rules of a continent that had come under the banner of a "state (sic continent) by conquest" (Wamba-Dia-Wamba, 1994, p, 250). Colonial Africa hence became one in which the colonizers (records have it that European countries such as Germany, Britain, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy and France had established colonial state systems in Africa as at 1900 (cf. Wikipedia) ''modernized'' by fiat contrary to the mark of endorsement of the indigenous ontological understandings and norms of local democracy.

For instance, in the British colonized territories of Africa, introduction of the Indirect Rule system meant an overthrow of autonomy of the indigenous people's cultural institutions to direct their governance through the traditional authority. That is, the colonial African enterprise by its operations imposed a new kind of politico-elective ideology which was conditioned by the self-interest and way of life of the colonialists. This came about, obviously, after the failings of the pre-colonial intelligentsia to be able to withstand colonial penetrations. Then after, the indirect rule system in Africa ignited increasing demands for greater participation of Africans in the making of choices of their would-be leaders as funneled via several nationalists' struggles.

Also, in the British colonies in Africa, the Westminster model of parliamentary government became the new norm of electoral democracy. After this new norm gained dominion over Africa's worldview on local electoral democracy, this new model of government was defined by the culture of the

colonizers. Without mincing words, the conquest of Africans which brought about her colonialism resulted in the abrupt abdication of the ideology and way of life of aboriginal Africa, particularly in the political cum election arena. One outcome of the various new forms of political institutionalization of the norms of electoral democracy in the colonial state in Africa was the introduction of Western liberal democracy system in the continent. This came about at different periods *a la* European colonizers and the conquered African territories. By subterfuge and other forms of coercive and non-coercive measures, the ideology of liberal democracy with all its nuances from Western philosophy was enforced on the continent.

In disentangling Africa's actual philosophy of local electoral democracy, we first and foremost hold the view that the trajectory of representative liberal democracy as it has come to be understood today followed similar pattern of penetration across the diverse countries in the continent. By implication, to talk of a philosophy of local election in Africa is to assume that the development of its normative epistemology and grounding as a system of practice and process is one and followed similar pattern in all African nation-sates. However, it will be helpful to our enterprise to adopt a conception of philosophy *a la* it's usage that transverses these epochs of Africa: pre-colonial, colonial, early post-colonial (1950-1973), and Huntington's (1991, p, 15) epoch of a third wave democratization in Africa (1974- till date).

In this regard, we conceptualize philosophy within the context of the paper's focus, borrowing Thomas Kuhn's notion of "paradigm" as is applicable to the societal sciences. Kuhn (cited in Himmelstrand, Kinyanjui & Mburugu 1994, p, 1) says a paradigm "consists of all theoretical and methodological assumptions and operations which prevail in a period (sic epoch) during which (sic mentalities)" generally agree to a formula as the acceptable norm of doing things. Therefore, when we refer to philosophy in the paper, we are referencing the prevailing norm of a process such as election of political leaders derived from epistemological objects of knowledge within an epoch. The implication of our conceptual grounding is that there exists a philosophy of doing things such as the election of leaders in the pre-colonial epoch, through the colonial and into the post-colonial era and till date.

It is to be noted that our conception of philosophy necessarily implies the possibility of partial, if not total, discarding of an earlier philosophy. That is, the philosophy of local electoral democracy in the post-colonial era of Africa may show limited or full abdication of the idea of how election serves its course for the preceding epoch or succeeding ones. In short, a philosophy of choosing or electing holders or wielders of political authority emphasizes a dominant model or worldview or principle that suggests the "proper" behaviour of garnering legitimacy to govern. It is this sense of philosophy that underpins our attempt to pinpoint whether Africa's present epistemic norms of local electoral governance, management and administration coincides with the dominant ethos of Western liberal democracy of nowadays that she claims to emulate.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The political culture theory as espoused is the study's applied theoretical framework. This theory is poignant to describe how acts or actions of a collectivity of group or persons overtime constitute a culture, norm or agreed upon way (i.e. philosophy or morality) to describe right or wrong in a political system or society (Welch, 2013). Spinrad (1976), Almond (1993), amongst others are proponents of this theory. The political culture theory explains how manifestly pervasive and distinctive attitudinal acts, behavioural penchants, group or individual orientations in politics and governance end up becoming a culture, norm and standard of understanding what is acceptable way of deducing cum decoding right or wrong, or if such action is morally permissible or not (Sprinrad, 1976). According to Almond (1993), the political culture theory helps to explain how group or individual-patterns of behaviour in politics and ways of doing things in political engagements and governance, as well as, expressions in political affairs constitute an ideology or culture with time *state qua state*. By implication, political culture theory holds that every society evolves peculiar cultural and normative values in political matters that can be ascribed to each socio-political system.

In the construct of this study, there exist a political culture of centralism in Africa whereby the higher tiers often deploy in relating with the local government administrations. That is, there persists certain attitudinal characteristics, behavioural tendencies, and typical bearings with empirical manifestations from the higher tiers' intergovernmental relations with local administrations that reflects the broad posture of ideology, culture and epistemic norm of hegemony over local governments' political and democratic autonomy (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004). This implies that the predominant pattern in Africa for intergovernmental relations to enable local electoral democracy is a behavioural tendency towards dictating the posture of local political cum democratic autonomy from above.

Ekeh (1989, p, 1) has noted that the political culture theory "attempts to capture the enduring political elements of society – including its values, norms and institutions – as they emerge from one generation to another". Meaning that, in our context, there are habits, actions, decisions, and attitudes inclined to flow from a centralized power arrangement that constitutes today's culture of enabling or disenabling local electoral democracy across African nations. Thus, this theory expressly aids our supposition that the prevalent philosophy of democracy within African local areas is not farfetched from the domineering predispositions of political elites in the higher tiers (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004).

Chilton (1988, p. 421) underlines that the understanding of the political culture theory about group or individual behaviours are a function of socialization and the political system and vice versa. To accede to the aforesaid assertion hence, the

purported empirical reality that local governments' political cum democratic autonomy from the higher tiers does not exist in many African countries is to acknowledge that the dominant political culture of centralism reign over decentralism in local affairs, particularly in the local democracy domain. The disposition of our applied theoretical framework is that current political elites in Africa were socialized cum indoctrinated into a culture of believing that centralism in their intergovernmental relations with regards to local electoral democracy is morally permissible as right way of action. And, going by the political culture-normative politics vice versa nexus, succeeding political elites adopt such mindset as a moral norm and philosophically right act of governance in the intergovernmental relations with local government administration.

The application of the political culture theory in the study enables acknowledgement of how the centralism ideology affects local electoral democracy as defined within the realm of intergovernmental relations. With this theory, it is easy to decode why individual or group actions of the political elites outside the local jurisdictions, as well as, how the juridical-constitutional frameworks as put in place by the influence of national/provincial political actors subordinate the patterns of local democracy to the wimps and caprices of the governing elites atop local government. Given the realities on ground regarding local democracy and local democratic cum political autonomy throughout Africa, this theory suggests that the prevalent political culture that ultimately disallows local electoral democracy to flourish in the African continent is due to the preferred implementation of a centralization mindset by politicians in the top realms of governance.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 Electoral Democracy

Let us begin by noting that electoral democracy, democracy, Western liberal democracy and liberal democracy, as well as local electoral democracy are synonymous terms that are interchangeably used in the study. Generally, electoral democracy is concerned with process of election, credible representation, legitimacy to rule, and of late protection of human rights, press freedom and the rule by law, but not of men commonly referred to as constitutionalism (Enemuo, 1999). According to Shumpeter (1947, p, 269 as cited in Teshome, 2008, p, 2) democracy refers to "arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote". In the view of Nohlen (1996), a theory of the legitimacy of electoral democracy is essentially the proclamation that an electoral process is the basic democratic way to select representative who thereby acquire the authority to rule.

The philosophical underpinnings of liberal democracy, which without doubt, evolved in the main from a dialectical indigenous science of Western cultures has now attained global reverberation. In every corner of the world, democracy has become the buzzword for the acceptable means of political leadership legitimacy. In all political systems, democratic credentials of a governmental authority are the major barometer between being popular or authoritarian; loved or hated; and generally preferred, desired or rejected by the masses. One can almost assert that democracy is the most popular concept or term in governance discourses and political analysis from the twentieth into the twenty first century. Given this trans-global character of democracy, a universal conception of the term suits our context. However, it is also to be noted that democratic tendencies have assumed commonalities across tiers of government, such that to speak of local electoral democracy is not a coincidence of speaking to the notion of liberal democracy (Okudolo, 2018, pp. 1-7).

In espousing the theory of democracy in practice, theorists have come to agree that certain propositions need to exist to sustain the notion of local electoral democracy. For instance, Powell (1982) proposes five parameters for a political state to be said to be democratic:

1- Legitimacy of democracy rest on competitive election at regular intervals in accordance to law.
2- Legitimacy of democracy is acquired by virtue of every eligible voter to cast votes to choose the government of the day.
3- Legitimacy rests on governmental authority deriving from majority votes of the electorates.
4- Legitimacy of a democracy lay in secret ballot and presence of free-will of choice to elect the representatives.
5- Legitimacy theory of democracy rests on the notion those voted as representatives should rule by law and protect, as well as, guarantee basic fundamental rights such as freedom of association, speech and also pursue to entrench social justice.

From an African perspective, Obasanjo (1989) underscores these parameters as indicative of the practice of Western liberal democracy:

> *Periodic election of political leadership through the secret ballot; popular participation of all adults in the election process; choice of programmes and personalities in the election; an orderly succession; openness of society; an independent judiciary; freedom of the press to include freedom of ownership; institutional pluralism; a democratic culture and democratic spirit; and fundamental human rights. (p. 34)*

These parameters suggest both a situational, structural and practical character for a social system to claim to abide by the philosophy of electoral democracy in its exercise. In practice, however, various constructions of the theory of Western liberal democracy exists *state qua state*. For example, Linz and Alfred (1996) discusses consolidated democracy in a society. Consolidated democracy is one in which the dominant epistemic norm and belief of governing is that there is no alternative to ascendancy to political authority to rule. Also, that political parties are necessary in a local electoral democracy only to the extent of submitting candidates for elective offices but not to make public policies on behalf of

the society. Schmitter and Terry (1991) talks about liberalization and democratization as transitions each society must undergo to entrench liberal democracy eventually. They argued that every society transit from authoritarianism to liberal rule and ends in a democratized society.

3.2 Prospects of Electoral Democracy

Vanhanen (1997) argues that there are societies that can be said to be semi-democracies and many others non-democracies. Following Vanhanen's (1990) study of non-democracies, Diamond (1997) and Huntington (1993) proffer the concept of pseudo-democracies. According to Teshome (2008, pp, 5-6), a pseudo-democratic state has formal democratic institutions in place but incumbent ruling parties and elected representatives deploy hegemony against opposition forces to rule and mask their authoritarian rule by pursuing self-interest in their constitutionalism and operation of the rule of law. Pseudo-democracies exhibit what Karl (1995, pp, 72-75) refers to as the "fallacy of electoralism" whereby the mere organization of regular polls does not translate to the democratization of society. Evidence of variants of the practice of Western liberal democracy forces Braton, Mattes and Boadi (2005) to suggest these typologies of democracy in practice:

a) A democracy that is simply an unreformed autocracy.
b) A democracy that is a liberalized autocracy.
c) A democracy that is ambiguous.
d) A democracy that is merely an electoral democracy but not in substance.
e) A democracy that is liberalized in substance.

What these typologies highlight is the fact that mere elections and existence of an electoral rules does not necessary condition a society to be aligned to the philosophy of Western liberal democracy. As well that electoral democracy as it has assumed today encores many more principles beyond simply voting at elections. By insinuation, these schemata provide us the power of acquaintance to realize from the outset that despite the overabundance of local elections being held across Africa, they may not necessarily imply that African local polls are tantamount to the ideals of Western liberal democracy.

IV. PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL LEGACIES

To us, it amounts to a waste of time to begin to debate if changes in the epistemic norms of local electoral democracy in pre-colonial Africa into the colonial epoch are a good or bad experience for the continent. Although, such a discussion persists amongst African scholars with a bias for the return to the science of indigenous knowledge in modern governing (Vilakazi, 2002; Sekgoma, 1998; et al). Unfortunately, we admit to the fact of the absence of cogent comparative data of the transition of electoral democracy between the epochs and that ultimately makes any such debate more argumentative than scientific. What then becomes a more reasonable approach to such a debate should be the acknowledgment of a prevailing philosophy of democracy in each era firstly. And

subsequently how the transition from the pre-colonial philosophy to the colonial one conditions the dialectics and trajectory of Western liberal democracy ethos in the continent.

As earlier noted, pre-colonial Africa had in place a broadly acceptable structure and system and process of leadership selection and succession. However, a noteworthy thing across pre-colonial African public administration is that traditional despotism of the ruler or king or monarchal ways usually supersedes popular view. And is so because the ruler's position was always perceived as emanating from the being of society's democratic tenet (Ayittey, 2010). Meaning that, the thinking about electoral democracy of the time reigns not only to the extent of laid down norms of choosing the ruler but far beyond. In historical terms therefore, the philosophy of Western liberal democracy which suggests democratic decision-making derives from majority votes did not apply in that sense in pre-colonial Africa. Instead what applied was a centralized decision-making embodied in the traditional ruler. And this form of decision process was conceived as democratic to the indigenous masses of the time.

During the pre-colonial period, Africans' idea of liberal democracy was centered on their traditional institutions. Decisions were perceived as democratic if it emanated from the traditional ruler's office. We argue that the philosophy of majority votes as originating from Western liberal democracy in the pre-colonial African scenery was that of public legitimacy that was encapsulated in the despotic traditionalism of the monarch. And this pre-colonial philosophy was democratic as far as Africans were concerned, and this mentality continues to have reverberations till today in modern African politics (Sekgoma, 1998; Ayittey, 2010; Broich, Szirmai & Thomsson, 2015).We acknowledge the dominant position in the Eurocentric literature on Africa's indigenous system of governance has been labelled as rudimentary and "uncivilized". But we take solace in Fatton's (1990, p, 457 as cited in Mbaku and Ihonvbere, 2003, p, 1) supposition that European encrustations on pre-colonial African way of life, and her local electoral democracy, brought about "structures of exploitation, despotism and degradation".

This understanding of traditional despotism in democratic decision-making of the pre-colonial Africa era was bound not to be shared in the colonial times. This was against the backdrop of the shift in the actual exercise of political power (Mbaku & Ihonvbere, 2003). But it needs to be stressed that the colonial enterprise was fundamentally built also on a despotism centralization of power structure that did not actually share the idea of majority votes that the theory of Western liberal democracy advocates. Instead, European colonialism of Africa could be said to be based on pseudo-democratic principles that sustained a despotic centralization philosophy. And, in a way, this is curious upon the fact that it was the European colonizers that were the progenitor of the epistemic norms of electoral democracy in Africa at this period. By so doing, colonial Africa's epistemology of electoral democracy was fully inconsonance with a

centralization ideology, but not of the kind ideal that liberal democracy preaches. The applied practice was not democratic in any sense of the idea of the Western culture's notion and trajectory of modern democracy. This introduced variant was simple utilized to purposively serve a centralized power arrangement that will not be in favour of Africans as put in place by the colonial lords. The variant was also meant to undermine decentralism in due course.

The ideological variant of Western liberal democracy established in colonial Africa did not derive from the aboriginal philosophy of politics of the Africans. The new dispensation did not derive from tradition; it did not represent a bottom-up mindset; and was not in any way transparent as par emergence of political authority holders and of leadership succession (Mbaku, 1997). Representatives rarely were chosen from the free will of the people via election. And even when elections were held, the winners that surfaced were directly or indirectly teleological to the power centralization dogma of the European colonialists. For example, in colonial Eastern region of Nigeria, the indigenous Warrant Chiefs who served as local administrators for the British overlords under the District Officer were handpicked and forcefully enthroned on the people (Okonjo, 1974). In short, whatever monumental alignment, realignment, renovation, reconstruction or innovation that the colonial estate resulted to in Africa regarding the application of electoral democracy, its exercise undermined majority rule and sustained centralized power practices.

In whatever way one wants to look at it, without doubt, pre-colonial and colonial practices in electoral democracy have similar trail and traits of continuity with conventional philosophy of centralization of power (Apter, 1961). Given that a centralization philosophy indicates the existence of a central authority to which other authorities bow to and that such authority structure is typically allied to fascist and totalitarian rule; despotic authoritarianism and personalized rule, as well as, a repression of popular will.

In the literature on centralization philosophy, scholars argue that decentralization ideology represents a sort of emancipatory shift into pro-people rule, greater participatory governance and democratization generally, hence the term democratic decentralization (Olson, 1993; Pie, 1998; et al). Many theorists in political sociology of Africa have the belief that centralization of power is an inherent quality of the nature of man as codified within the generally accepted epistemic norms and codes that prevail (Lauer, 2007; Ayittey, 2010). But we posit that there is no denying that the centralized power philosophy in the pre-colonial and colonial practice of electoral democracy did exhibit some usefulness to the eras. The legacies of the centralized power approach in these eras include that it enabled stable governance and promoted quick public policymaking. Another advantage is that it facilitated bureaucratic centralization of policy implementation and execution as subnational governments were deemed to be extensions of the national bureaucracy answerable to the central government. The centralized power in the pre-colonial

and colonial epochs can be said to account for the absence of inter-government squabbles, arguments and litigations typical in federal systems where multiple layers of government with exclusive powers over their domains exist.

V. EARLY POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

To many scholars, the despotic centralization of power and authority flowing from the pre-colonial and into the colonial is the central benchmark for assessing post-colonial Africa's epistemological custom of electoral democracy (Mazrui, 1990; Ake, 1995; World Bank, 1996). In many respect, one can posit that despotic centralism constituted the philosophical *ancien regime* of democracy in Africa that was never displaced (Ihonvbere, 2003). Mbaku (2003) captures the recurring tenacity of this politico-philosophy of democracy in Africa as an inherited epistemic norm in this quote:

> *Colonialism was a cruel, exploitative, repressive, and despotic system used by the Europeans to extract resources from the African territories for their benefit and that of the metropolitan economies. As a consequence, colonial institutional arrangement [sic local electoral democracy] were not designed to maximize African values and interests or enhance the ability of the indigenous peoples of the colonies to govern themselves effectively. Instead, they were imposed on Africans and used primarily to maximize the objectives of the resident European population and those of the metropolitan economy. (p. 103)*

We consider the above quote as expressing a dialectical-centric view of the practice of liberal democratic in early post-colonial Africa. The centralization philosophy *ab initio* derives from disposition of the colonial enterprise itself, and this greatly influenced the style of liberal democracy practices already inbred in Africans. In short, what seemed like an exercise in liberal democracy in the early part of the post-colonial African period was teleological to the mentality behind colonialism. It can thus be asserted that the idea of liberal democracy that the African nationalists inherited was most likely not going to be at variance with and was very likely going to be teleological to the centralization and pseudo-democratic mentality of the colonial state of the continent.

In the context of a trajectory process like the legitimation of selecting political representatives that is dialectical and ever in a transition, the outlook of electoral democracy in the early post-colonial period was very likely to eschew decentralization but uphold the centralization philosophy. We consider Africa's recourse to the decentralization philosophy in her attempt to reverse its inherited perverted version of Western liberal democracy in local government administration as part and parcel of a nationalist struggle against the legacies of colonialism. Haven been dislocated from the "local" in the real sense, Africa's strategy to get it right in her local polls and as par local autonomy was her attempt not only to ingrain decentralization thesis in her

governance model, but also to get it right as par the application of Western liberal democracy philosophy.

The elation behind introduction of the electoral democratic philosophy in Africa seem to have given rise to the realistic depreciation of how the centralized state ideology undermines Africa's democratization. Given this, African leaders in the post-colonial epoch are now turning to decentralization philosophy as a way of reinstating the acceptable epistemic norm of local democracy that endured during the pre-colonial understanding. Reddy (1999, p. 13) is of the view that local government democracy completely typifies the notion of decentralized political decision-making and management that preceded the colonial African scene. The decentralization thesis focuses on addressing local autonomy questions and essentially local citizens' optimal participation in their governance such as the sole power to choose local representatives (Reddy, 1999).

Thus, we argue that modern time application of decentralized governance in African local elections is a kind of normative epistemic "post-ideological politics, or new counter-ideology" (Schwarzmantel 2008, p.167) against the old order ideological practice of liberal democracy. This post-ideological politics and the new counter-ideology approach sought to reestablish the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) of local electoral democracy before colonialism and to overthrow the dominant centralized philosophy of authority that has been sustained overtime. Increasingly, decentralization is found to be an intrinsic necessity for democratization, and important to liberal democratic theory's successful implementation (Diamond, Linz &Lipset 1995 p. 45). Based on the premise of this argument, the existence of democratically elected local councils that are accountable to the electorate is critical to every successful democratization transition consequently (Ebinger, Grohs, Reiter & Kuhlmann 2011; Wilson & Chris, 2006; Wekwete, 2007).

VI. NEO-COLONIAL DEMOCRATIZATION EXPERIENCE ACROSS AFRICA

It is Ihonvbere's (2003, pp. 137-46) tactical assessment that the European colonialists whitewashed the practice of liberal democracy to suit its imperialistic desires in Africa. Unfortunately, it was this debased practice of local electoral democracy that the later part of the post-colonial Independent African states inherited, promulgated and promoted. Its practices were mostly suited to parochial centralizing interests that were not in any way suited to a pro-African democratization process. The point we stress here is that Africa's exercise in liberal democracy from 1974 to date is based on decentralization philosophy but it did not encapsulate these elements as anticipated by Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1995):

> Theorist in the pluralist or liberal tradition identify several values and beliefs as crucial for stable and effective democracy: belief in the legitimacy of democracy; tolerance for opposing parties, beliefs, and preferences: a willingness to compromise with political

> opponents and, underlying this, pragmatism and flexibility; trust in the political environment, and cooperation, particularly among political competitors; moderation in political positions and partisan identifications; civility of political discourse; and political efficacy and participation, based on the principle of equality but tempered by the presence of a subject role (which gives allegiance to political authority) and a parochial role (which involves the individual in traditional, nonpolitical pursuits). Dahl in particular emphasizes the importance of such a democratic culture among the political elite, especially early on. (p. 19)

Whereas, larger empirical evidence points to the contrary of these values in concrete local electoral democratic exercises in post and neo-colonial Africa particularly from 1974.Proof of these contrary values of liberal democracy that sustained domination of local governments of the continent abounds. And, with a sense that it is a truism, we hypothesize that it is not deceptive to infer that the immanent contradictions of Africa's local electoral democracy spring from a continuous political culture of centralism. Such an outcome will be sustained especially when there is "absence of any limits or restrictions on the amendment of a constitution" (Fombad, 2017, p, 62). Or when there is presence of contradicting provisos in the constitution, or when the language and letters of the constitution for local autonomy supports subordination of local authorities; and when the prevailing political culture although unwritten permits the exercise of power to subordinate local autonomy (Wekwete, 2007).

VII. RESEARCH METHOD

7.1 Research Design

The study's methodological orientation is in line with the descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design. Descriptive phenomenological researches focus on explaining how lived experiences or predominant behavioural tendencies result into what can be ascribed as a phenomenon (Sundler, Lindberg, Nilsson & Palmer, 2019). It is a common methodological approach in qualitative research whereby outcomes of human interactions are qualitatively examined and explained to make sense, or evolve meaning, values, or phenomenon from the lived experiences (Sundler, et al, 2019). The objective of our adopted research design is to explore recurring lived experiences and outcomes of behavioural propensities of national and state/provincial political elites towards entrenching local electoral democracy. Consequently, this methodology aids the study's attempt to deduce, decode and understand meaning of how centralism ideology undermines local electoral democracy. By utilizing these qualitative research tools: document analysis and observation, the objective of the descriptive phenomenology research in the study is to make sense of how centralism approach is perceived to be a norm or standard of doing things, and becomes a value that is perceived as morally okay, philosophically acceptable as well as normal or permissible in

the higher tiers-local government intergovernmental relations in the local electoral democracy domain.

7.2 Data Collection

Data for this study was generated from document analysis and observation. These data sources are commonly utilized in qualitatively inclined studies of which descriptive phenomenology research design belong (Cypress, 2018). The study's data sources enabled explication of the recurring outcome and lived experience from intergovernmental relations with local governments in the local electoral democracy sphere traversing Africa as deduced from observation and documents/literature analysis.

7.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative content analysis approach was utilized in the study to analyse the collected data. Qualitative content analysis technique is common in researches analysing qualitative data gathered from observation or documentary analysis (Vaismoradi1, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). The utilized data analysis technique facilitated making sense of what is the predominant political culture in Africa as regards the determinism of local electoral democracy from centralism or otherwise. In applying this technique of analysis, the researcher first engaged in purposive sampling of related documents in line with the singular thematic code which is centralism induced local electoral democracy. The researcher then engaged in micro-level analysis of the observed outcomes of intergovernmental relations with local government in line with the aforesaid thematic code. Outcome of the macro-level analysis using the qualitative content analysis is reported in the section 8.0 below.

VIII. DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

The table below shows the findings from document analysis to the question of whether local representatives emerge in consonance with the Western liberal democratic theory in Africa. This is to further our understanding of how the prevailing epistemic normative characteristic from intergovernmental relations impact of the continent's local government democratic credentials.

Continent/Region	Countries	Neo-Colonial Democratic Experience
North African Region	Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Algeria are the usually categorized North African countries from documentary analysis	Generally, it is observed that North African countries have all lived experiences of long-lasting military, centralized and authoritarian regimes. By so, these nations have long experience of highly non-decentralized governance system even under a democracy. This implies a high rate of the centre government's influence on would-be local political leaders. Persistent existence one-party rule and centralized party governance *ab initio* normally undermines credibility of local elections to reflect the local people's choices of these nations. Local politicians usually jostle to be pawns for the central government's interests and thereby degrade local electoral democracy more often. It is often asserted that the absence of the democratic culture as projected by Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1995) was what instigated and equally aggravated the Arab Spring in these nations.
West African Region	Sierra Leone, Togo, Nigeria, Senegal, Mauritania, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Benin, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, and Ivory Coast	In the literature, this region comprises of notably 17 countries bedeviled by incessant coups and counter-coups as well as numerous military rules. West Africa has had a tortuous trajectory in local electoral democracy. The rules of local electoral democracy usually extricate political autonomy of the local areas to the dictate of state or regional or provincial governments. Onuoha's (2004) thesis on teleology of local elections to military mentality holds sway in West Africa. Onuoha argues that it is the nature of the military to enforce political representatives on the people. And that civilian regimes that assumes power after a long period of military rule are very likely to exhibit such propensity to lower tiers even in a democracy. Empirical evidence suffices that most West African governments' practice "procedural democracy" in which constitutional laws for local elections are at the behest of state or central/national governments. Like most West African nations, in Nigeria for example Section 197(1)(b) says that: "There shall be established for each State of the Federation the following bodies: (b.), State Independent Electoral Commission. It goes on in the Third Schedule, Part II (State's Executive Bodies, established by section 197) (B)(4-a) that the State Independent Electoral Commission is empowered "to organize, undertake and supervise elections to local government councils within the state". Whereas, from observation, a local election in which the ruling state party is actively taking part in and yet is empowered to constitute the election umpires violate the ex-ante indeterminacy value of democratic culture. The ex-ante indeterminacy thesis states that the outcome of a credible electoral procedure ought not to be predetermined such that incumbent powers or parties may be defeated in the competitive poll (Powell, 1982). It is usually a common phenomenon in West Africa for local polls to produce overwhelming victory to ruling political parties and this is often akin to the skewed constitutional letters for local autonomy as instituted. Hence, by such constitutional language the existence of non-elected local leaders as local governors in the West Africa region.
Southern African Region	Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Angola and South Africa	These are countries located in the lower southernmost part of the African continent. Hartmann's (2004) study provides us a contemporary authoritative viewpoint of the state of local electoral democracy in this African region to us. Generally, in all member-nation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, local representatives are voted for, but the Mayor or Chairman of council emerge by the British-style Westminster polling system whereby the elected councillors vote their heads. However, appointed local leaders by the national government still prevails in Zimbabwe and Botswana. Southern Africa region seems to score highest on political autonomy of local authorities than other regional areas of Africa, however, pockets of incredibility of the local polls and administrative manipulative measures from atop the central governments still persist.

East African Region	Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Southern Sudan, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Mauritania, Comoros, and Seychelles	Also known as Eastern Africa and the region has some core countries belonging specifically there. East Africa shares a semblance of highly authoritarian state like North Africa in which the central government exercises massive local control also in the political aspects. Ethnicity has largely been deterministic of the process of local electoral democracy with higher tiers ensuring to implant ethnic surrogates as legitimate local leaders particularly in Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi and Djibouti. The long period of civil wars transmuted from Sudan into the now Southern Sudan has greatly manacled local electoral democracy in the new country. According to Kanyinga, Kiondo& Tidemand (1994), ethnicity and patronage politics have brought about serious complexities to the sanctity of liberal democracy in the local politics of many, if not all the Eastern African nations. By deduction therefore, local elections in the region have been most times a pretentious scheme toward s to engrain Western liberal democratic ethos in that region.
Central African Region	Burundi, Angola, Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinean, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon and Rwanda	This region of the African continent is a constellation of countries that may be in other regions as well. According to Wikipedia, the East African countries are the constellation of Eastern African countries or Middle Countries according to the United Nations geo-scheme for Africa. This has implication in terms of local electoral democracy and its persistence which is that the mere existence of countries having dual regional leanings implies the possible impartation of spatiotemporal and ecological factors in the public administrations systems of border countries within dual continental regional reflection. Political tensions, insurgencies and over-stayed presidents all constitute public administration factors that diminish decentralization and local electoral democracy in many Central African region's nations (see Lauer, 2007). A good example is Cameroon's President Paul Biya over 35 years in power which had evident impact on the twice postponed Legislative and Municipal Elections which ought to have held in 2018. The Boko Haram terrorism affecting Cameroon's Northern part; various dimensions of terrorisms in Chad, and civil strife, militancy, internal insurrections and insurgencies in Angola, Burundi, the Congo countries, Chad, etc tended to negate local political autonomy and democratic credibility of the local states in Central African region (International Crisis Group commentary, June 30, 2010).

IX. DISCUSSION

From the above table, the role that constitutions play in diluting Africa's practice of Western liberal democracy in modern local electoral practices is herein acknowledged. Notably, a constitution is supposed to help checkmate the rapacious infiltration by higher political authorities into the autonomy of the local electorates to sustain the legitimacy of local elites and local democracy (Ihonvbere, 2003, p.139). Increasingly in many African nations, poorly enunciated constitutional provisions to guaranteed local political autonomy have become the critical by-product of the diminishment of electoral democracy to the contradiction of the theory of liberal democracy. The study observed that the political autonomy of local government areas in Africa is subject to the trappings of political culture of centralism. The historical political culture in Africa prevalent in the higher tiers-local government intergovernmental relations process for local democracy in turn reinforces legislations, public policies and political engagements designed on a top-down modelling. Local autonomy suppression, in most of African countries now turn democracies, is still suffering vestiges of long years of military rule, authoritarianism, dictatorships and authoritarian one-man or one-party rule. It is clearly observable that absence of local electoral democracy is endemic in highly power centralized political systems under military, autocratic, authoritarian, unconstitutional and undemocratic rule.

X. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, it is reasonable to theorize that Africa's pervasive political culture of power centralism sustains endemicity for local government areas' democratic cum political autonomy not to exist. There is reasonable ground to conclude that hardly will one find a democratically elected local governmental process in Africa fully autonomous of the dictate of higher tier political authorities generally, and particularly of a philosophical elective system totally established and fashioned by the local citizens in substantial ramifications. Instead, Africa still grapples with the challenge of instituting credible local electoral governance and management policies that truly aims to consolidate genuine practice of Western liberal democracy. The prospects of genuine democratic cultural practices in local polls in Africa that meets the ideal standards of liberal democracy towards instituting resilient and legitimate local democratic cum political autonomy is unfeasible as long as the centralization of power mentality prevails in the elites at the top political spaces.

Hence, we conclude that Africa's current epistemological norm of local electoral democracy is generally at serious variant from the idealistic notion of Western liberal democracy despite the periodic organization of local polls. That is, the philosophy behind local elections in the continent tries more to emphasize the epistemic structural configuration of liberal democracy than its epistemological cultural norms. This largely explains why the existence of local democracy has not resulted in local government areas' democratization in Africa. Notwithstanding our supposition on the emphasis to imbibe the epistemic norms of democratic culture more, we caution against paying lip service to addressing needed structural reforms in the procedure of local election organization, management and governance. We note that a well-structured local electoral democratic process is bound to have concomitant positive effect on consolidating Africa's culture of democracy vis-à-vis her overall democratization.

To counteract centralism-induced local electoral democracy across Africa, the study recommends the institution of election mechanisms and policies in line with global best practices that

disallows the higher tiers from imposing or directing the trajectory of local democracy. Formalization of such policy instruments will produce grand results on local governments' democratic autonomy if political elites at top layers of government ensure to adhere to constitutionalism and rule of law in the intergovernmental relations processes. This will also entail safeguarding the independence of the judiciary (i.e. courts) from being manipulated by the political elites. Equally necessary is to increase actions inclined to political socialization and voter education of local electorates. Sustenance of a very politically aware and conscious local electorates will go a long way to lessen the ability of centralized power structure to dictate the trajectory of local electoral democracy. This implies increased public investment in the electoral commissions to carry out vote education to immensely contribute to democratic socialization of the grassroots in local government territories.

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