

**POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA: A
CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF
COLONIALISM AND MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS IN
NIGERIA**

By

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Submitted to

Central European University

School of Public Policy

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Policy

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Budapest, Hungary

2020

Author's Declaration:

I, the undersigned Lillian Chioma Nwosu, hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where proper acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of colonialism and military regimes on the development of political philosophy and government in postcolonial African countries, using Nigeria as a case study. Particularly, it interrogates the nature of the social contract in precolonial times, colonial times, and precolonial times. Using the Women's War of 1929, it draws a contrast between the nature of the social contract in precolonial and colonial times.

This thesis finds that while colonialism eroded the political systems and philosophies of the peoples of precolonial Nigeria, both colonialism and military rule heavily contributed to a strong culture of state authoritarianism, and the social contract was severely weakened by both events.

It is argued that in order to truly serve the interests of their citizens and that of a transformed Africa, contemporary African states must put the welfare of their citizens at the heart of governance. Therefore, they must be open to reexamination of their structural and philosophical foundations. They must, in union with the people, construct a *raison d'être* that creates a relationship of mutuality between the state and citizens. As the African Union is the sum of its parts, it cannot achieve its stated objectives if its member states suffer critical internal problems that impede their capacity to provide peaceful and democratic governance to citizens.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Daniel Large, for his invaluable guidance and kindness during this thesis writing process.

I would also like to thank all my CEU and SPP professors, as well as all CEU staff, alumni, and volunteers. They made this academic year worthwhile and enjoyable, despite the numerous challenges that came up along the way.

Next, I would like to thank George Soros and the Open Society Foundations for making my study at CEU possible through generous financial aid.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family – parents, siblings, and other relatives – for all their love and support which gave me strength and comfort throughout this academic year.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Africa and all people of African heritage all over the world. May you rise and shine in freedom, prosperity, and humanity. *Ya gazie.*

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List of Abbreviations

AfCFTA – African Continental Free Trade Agreement

AU – African Union

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

UN – The United Nations Organisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

A lack of understanding why it exists, or of its larger purpose in the scheme of things, is how society quietly perishes. (Okri 2019, 31)

The quality of governance in a society is influenced by its political state of affairs, which, in turn, is influenced by the nature of political philosophy in that society. Thus, there is a link between the quality of governance and the political philosophy. Government – as opposed to anarchy – is primarily created for the purpose of directing social affairs in an orderly and efficient manner, and, ideally, for the overall benefit of the governed. The success of a government is measured by how well it can achieve this critical purpose. Good governments, therefore, are guided by their primary purpose. As Strauss noted, “all political action is guided by some thought of better or worse” (Strauss 1957, 1).

An appraisal of governance and government in postcolonial African countries reveals concerning problems. When compared to other regions of the world, African countries lag in key governance metrics such as rule of law, political stability, accountability, government effectiveness, and corruption control (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2019). This state of affairs not only affects the political in Africa but also the economic and social. The effect in society is a low quality of life. This complicated situation has led to waves of emigration of African youth to other parts of the world through both legal and illegal means of immigration, with many braving death and severe hardship by crossing seas in shaky boats, trekking across deserts, and facing the uncertainty of life in a new country and the hostility of anti-immigration foreign governments.

In considering these issues, discourse about Africa often focuses on remaking it to truly serve Africans and usher in a new period of prosperity and wellbeing, free from the pains and losses

occasioned by its socio-political history in the past few centuries. But in order to properly remake Africa, we must first rethink it.

In deconstructing the issues that affect politics, government, and governance in contemporary African countries, it is important to go back to the fundamentals, which is the formation of these countries. Nearly all contemporary African countries were created not by the citizens but by external actors in the form of European colonial powers, mainly Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, and Italy.

Therefore, in examining the political in Africa, a good place to start from would be Western colonisation of Africa from the 19th century to the 20th century. It is the single most important factor that radically reshaped the political landscape of modern Africa – and it occurred within a relatively short span of time. Not only did it drastically change the structure of African nations, it also changed the social and cultural paradigm.

This thesis explores how the history of colonialism and the rise of military rule affected political philosophy in Africa. In grappling with state-building in modern-day Africa, I consider political philosophy to be fundamental, especially with regard to establishing the relationship between a state and its citizens and mutuality of obligations between the parties.

This thesis argues that problems encountered in government and politics in postcolonial African countries is largely attributable to developmental issues in their political philosophy - which stems from the complex history of colonialism and military rule. I theorise that central to the problem of governance is the question of “self and why” as they relate to the state and government. In summary, a poorly developed conception of the role and duty of government to the governed is the most important factor in the failure of governance in these countries. I argue, therefore, that political philosophy in African countries requires not only decolonization

but also critical reconceptualization to create better, more effective governments that answer to the needs of Africans today.

In this chapter (Chapter 1), I set out my research question, methodology, case selection, and literature review. In Chapter 2, I set out the political history of Nigeria focusing on three key periods: precolonial times, colonial times, and postcolonial times (during military rule). I analyse politics and government in the various, noting the influence of colonialism and military dictatorships. Because I deem the social contract existent in a society to be fundamental to understanding its political philosophy, I also examine the nature of the social contract in these periods. To draw a contrast between the state of the social contract in precolonial Nigeria and during colonial rule, I analyse a remarkable event during colonial times known variously as the Women's War, the Women's Rebellion, or the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. From this, I make important deductions about social contract in the two periods.

Chapter 3 then explores the state of political philosophy in present day Nigeria, inquiring into what social contract or governmental legitimacy exists. The chapter scrutinizes the conduct of the Nigerian government and sets out key information about the AU and Agenda 2063.

Lastly, Chapter 4 concludes by summarizing the key findings of this research and sets out some recommendations for African governments towards improving their government and positioning Africa as a free and prosperous continent, in line with the objectives of the AU and its Agenda 2063.

1.1 Research Question

My main research question is:

What impact did colonialism and military regimes have on political philosophy in Nigeria, and how is this of general importance to postcolonial African countries?

In analysing political philosophy, I am particularly interested in questions of government legitimacy and the social contract. For this reason, I shall also consider the following subordinate research question:

How do the events of the Women's War of 1929 reveal the state of the social contract in precolonial times and the social contract in colonial times?

1.2 Methodology

The methodology used in this thesis is a qualitative case study analysis of Nigeria as it applies to the research question. Most of the sources used are secondary sources, except for a few instances where references are made to statutes like the Nigerian Constitution.

Nigeria chosen as the case study is chosen for two main reasons:

First, it fits the criteria necessary for answering the research question. It was occupied and colonized by the British from the late 19th Century until the mid-20th century (1960). In colonizing the country, British powers brought together numerous hitherto separate nations of people who had been governing themselves autonomously and in accordance with different political and social philosophies. This event is of central importance to understanding political philosophy in Nigeria. Next, the Women's War of 1929, which is used in this research to examine the social contract in precolonial and colonial periods, occurred in Nigeria. Also, Nigeria has a long history of military rule by military officers who seized power only a few years after the country gained independence. Military officers went on to rule the country for a combined period of nearly 30 years. This long period of military rule is also deemed important for understanding political philosophy in Nigeria.

Second, Nigeria is of strategic importance within Africa and wields considerable influence in African politics. If Nigeria resolves its core political problems, the ripple effect on the rest of

Africa will be considerable. To illustrate its strategic importance, I share some facts about Nigerian here. According to data from the World Bank, it is the largest African economy by Gross Domestic Product (Current US\$) (World Bank 2018; Cook 2019). It is also the most populous country in the continent and has substantial reserves of crude oil and natural gas. It is considered powerful and influential in the continent, playing leadership roles within the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It also contributes significantly (financially and in terms of personnel) to peacekeeping missions, especially within Africa such as in Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire, Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Sierra Leone (Providing For Peacekeeping 2015).

1.2.1 **Definition of Terms**

The key term for definition in this research is *political philosophy*. Political philosophy has been defined by a host of scholars. For Meier (2002):

Political philosophy has as its object the political things: the foundations of the political community, the duties and rights of its members, the ends and means of their action, war and peace in the interior and in relation to other political communities. (Meier 2002, 390)

For his part, Smith (2012) considers it the oldest form of political science. He states:

Political philosophy is political science in its oldest or classic sense. Its purpose is to lay bare the fundamental problems, the fundamental concepts and categories, which frame the study of politics. In this sense it is less a branch of political science than the very foundation and root of the discipline. (Smith 2012, 1) ... Political philosophy is the study of the deepest, most intractable, and most enduring problems of political life (Smith 2012, 3).

Roberts and Sutch (2012) use 'political philosophy' synonymously with 'political thought' and 'political theory'. For them, it refers to:

...That part of the discipline of political studies that concerns itself with the values, ideas, norms, and concepts (theories) that inform politics taken generally. ...Political thought refers to the normative aspect of political and social life.... (Roberts and Sutch 2012)

From these definitions, it becomes clear that political philosophy is concerned with foundational ideas, beliefs, and norms on the basis of which a state is founded, its government is defined, and its politics is assessed.

1.3 Literature Review

The idea has long been held that politics and government should be guided by some philosophical compass. The Ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, famously proposed that a ruler should be a “philosopher king” who governs his subjects with wisdom and love (Plato and Jowett 1991). Similarly, Plato’s contemporary, Aristotle, while disagreeing that a ruler had to be a philosopher, argued that a good ruler ought to listen to the advice of philosophers and the voice of the governed (Chroust 1968).

In Europe, following a long history of despotic monarchs and bloody revolutions, the *raison d’être* of government underwent a drastic change during the Enlightenment Era, with thinkers like Hobbes, Rousseau, and Locke theorising a new basis for the relationship between governors and the governed, essentially coming up with core expectations from government (Baker 2012).

The general discipline of philosophy is sometimes characterised as an elitist pursuit that ranks lowly among the concerns of African governments (Etuk 1987, 59). Etuk observes that African governments prioritise the tangible: the provision of necessities like food and clothing, and the training of technicians, doctors, lawyers, and engineers. He notes that reservations about the academic field of philosophy – a heritage of British colonial education – were borne of its West-centrism that had little room for reflection on Africa, African ethnophilosophy, and

relevance to contemporary African issues. Nevertheless, Etuk stresses the importance of philosophy, citing Hook: “Thinking exists for the purpose of action” (quoted in Etuk 1987, 66).

Scholarship on the nature of political philosophy conceptualise it as being concerned with essentially normative questions of how to govern, whom to govern, and whether to govern at all (Roberts and Sutch 2012). Roberts and Sutch take a historical approach in analysing political philosophy from the classical period to the present. While important, towards examining political philosophy, this work is Eurocentric.

In the African context, seminal work in the field of African political thought has been done by Martin (Martin 2012) who provides a history of this thought from antiquity to the present. He defines African political thought as “original ideas, values and blueprints...that inform African political systems and institutions” as well as “political theories and ideologies of African scholars and statesmen” (Martin 2012, 1). According to him, political thought is important because it informs political action, and argues that African political thought provides practical solutions to the socio-political and economic issues affecting Africa in the modern world. Martin’s work revealed that indigenous political systems in Africa were based on the rule of law in terms of “respect for (and adherence to) customary ways of resolving disputes and upholding the traditions governing political behavior” (Martin 2012, 12).

Joseph Osei (Osei 2017, 289) focuses on the discipline of political philosophy and argues for the contextualization of political philosophy in Africa, citing the contributions of African intellectuals, nationalists, and statesmen from colonial times to the present.

Alongside Osei, numerous scholars have examined the themes explored by African thinkers and nationalists of the early to mid-20th century. During the period of colonialism, Apartheid in South Africa, and racial segregation of African Diaspora in the United States, African and African American political philosophy focused on themes of African nationalism, Pan-

Africanism, Negritude, communalism, political liberation, racism, Apartheid, and racial segregation. Notable thought leaders from this era include Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure, Kenneth Kaunda, Jomo Kenyatta, Amílcar Cabral, and Aimé Césaire. Much of their work resisted colonialism and European domination, and propounded Pan-African ideas of political organisation such as Nkrumah's *consciencism* and Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa*. (Mnguni 1987; Obichere 1976; Inamete 1990; Mohiddin 1968; Fouéré 2014; Mawere and Mubaya 2016; Žák 2016). The loss of social and political identity that accompanied the entry of European powers into Africa has been addressed through African literature, the most famous and pioneering of which was Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 1958).

At the end of colonialism, many African countries enjoyed only a brief period of peace and political stability before internal problems presented themselves. Many were thrown into strife, civil war, and a long period of coups d'états and dictatorial government led by military officers. Political thought and activism during this period was championed by intellectuals, writers, and artists whose work opposed dictatorship and suppression of dissent. Notable among these where Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died* which criticised the Nigerian government's action in the civil war that befell the country, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and *the Trouble With Nigeria*, Fela's prolific music, and the works of poets like Odia Ofeimun and Niyi Osundare (Okunoyè 2011; Hayden 1975; Collings 1973).

Detailed accounts and analysis of Nigeria's history from ancient times to the present have been carried out by scholars like Falola, Okpeh, Fayemi, and Doron (Udogu 2009; Vaughan 2011; Falola and Heaton 2008).

The Women's War of 1929, which is examined in this research, has been studied in different contexts. It has been reviewed from a feminist perspective by scholars like Judith van Allen

(van Allen 1972) whose research explores the lost political institutions of African women and the power that precolonial Igbo women possessed. The feminist perspective has also been adopted in studying resistance cultures and cultural resistance among African women (Kuumba 2006), and cross-cultural approaches to feminism in Africa (P. J. O. Smith 1989). Scholars like Koko Ete Ina (Ina 1992) focus on discrediting the official British terminology of the event as a “riot”, arguing that it is more accurately described by “rebellion” or “war”.

Van Allen’s approach which specifically addresses lost political institutions is of specific interest to me, as my research analyses precolonial political institutions with a view to understanding the nature of what could be called the ‘social contract’ at that time. This niche area – analysis of the Women’s War and the contrast between the social contract in precolonial times and the social contract in British Nigeria – is my contribution to this field of scholarship.

Important work on postcolonial African states have been carried out by scholars like Achille Mbembe in his *On the Postcolony*, (Mbembe 2001b). Achille Mbembe advances a new way of understanding postcolonial Africa through a collection of essays that explore power, violence, and the colonial subject. In the first essay, *Of Commandment* (Mbembe 2001), he argues that state power has been marked by subjection, and that postcolonial governments have not invented “government from scratch”, but have instead defaulted to an entangled form of knowledge that sits between “custom” and “modernity”. Mbembe identifies that colonial sovereignty in Africa had a distinct feature which he called *commandement*. According to him, *commandement* comprises three forms of violence: a founding violence that instituted itself abrogated supremacy, a legitimating violence that gave meaning to colonial order, and a preservative violence that maintained and gave permanence to the order. He notes an arbitrariness in the methods used by colonial powers, who used force to achieve citing a “lack of distinction between ruling and civilizing”. Mbembe identifies that the relations of subjection

between the state and citizens continued after colonialism ended. The postcolonial state reappropriated both the state form and the colonial rationality of the former colonial power. Mbembe identifies that although postcolonial states went through different forms of indigenization, the state emerged as a dominating force that operated in an “authoritarian manner that denied individuals any rights as citizens” (Mbembe 2001, 42). Mbembe’s provides key insights on the nature of colonial power and postcolonial regimes in Africa, which I will draw from in my review of the impact of colonialism on political philosophy.

My research contributes to this field of knowledge by highlighting the impact of colonial and dictatorial tools like authoritarianism and Mbembe’s *commandement* on political philosophy in Nigeria. As previously mentioned above, my research also explores, for the first time, the Women’s War in terms of the social contract.

Chapter 2: The Political History of Nigeria

In order to assess political philosophy in Nigeria, it is crucial to revisit and examine its political history, as history is the strongest motivator of political philosophy and public policy. In reviewing its history, I focus on three main eras which are of importance to this research: precolonial times, colonial times, and postcolonial times (during rule).

2.1 Before Colonialism

The territory now known as Nigeria did not exist before 1914 – barely 100 years ago. Previously, two British colonial protectorates, the Northern Nigeria protectorate and the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (originally two separate entities until 1906 – the Lagos and the Southern Nigeria Protectorate) were administered independently until the amalgamation of both protectorates in 1914 - for the financial and administrative convenience of the British Empire. The Northern Nigeria protectorate was founded in 1900, the Southern Protectorate was founded in 1900, while the Lagos Colony was forcefully annexed in 1861 from the King of Lagos, Oba Dosunmu.

Thus, before 1861, the entire territory now known as Nigeria was made up of different peoples and nations (including the Bini, Efik, Fulani, Hausa, Ibibio, Idoma, Ijaw, Igala, Igbo, Nupe, Tiv, Yoruba, etc.), who governed themselves in accordance with their own customs and beliefs. The nature of these governments widely varied. In the words of Ibenekwu, “Pre-colonial Nigeria was characterized by fragmented ethnic nationalities each with its own unique system of government or institutions of governance. Such systems were traditional in nature and structured to suit the peculiarities of the ethnic group involved” (Ibenekwu 2010).

The dominant Yoruba empire before the arrival of colonial powers was the Oyo Empire, which had surpassed the hitherto existing state of Ife. The Oyo empire was highly sophisticated, with

differentiated roles for key leaders in various positions and a strong system of checks and balances. The empire was ruled by an Alaafin to whom sub rulers paid obeisance. It also had a privy council (Oyo Mesi) and a secret cult (Ogboni). The Alaafin appointed government officials (Ilari), who were often eunuchs, and who comprised both males and females. There was also a well-developed military led by a supreme commander, the Aare Ona Kakanfo. None of these institutions had absolute power as they checked one another.

In Northern Nigeria occupied by numerous ethnic groups but predominated by Hausa and Fulani peoples, the most notable power was the Sokoto Caliphate – an Islamic caliphate founded by Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804. The Sokoto Caliphate was a loose confederation of smaller emirates under the general overlord, the Sultan of Sokoto. The Caliphate was ruled in accordance with Islamic traditions – which had earlier permeated into the region from as far back as the eleventh century up to the Jihad in 1804.

For their part, the Igbo had various systems of government. Some were monarchical, a few were theocratic, some were non-monarchical, and there was even a powerful conf. The monarchical states were precolonial western Igbo states like Aboh, Oguta, and Onitsha, which had monarchs called Obi or Eze. The Nri Kingdom was a semi-theocratic Kingdom led by a spiritual leader, Eze Nri, and the Ikenga (a committee of priests and noble men) and governed in accordance with Nri beliefs and customs. The Aro Confederacy was a powerful confederacy led by warriors and traders who wielded significant power during the 18th and 19th centuries; the confederacy participated in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, the most notable Igbo form of political organisation is non-monarchical, described as “democratic” and “republican” (Anuka 2020; Ibenekwu 2010; Okoye and Okoye 2016). Villages were organized and governed themselves through a combination of institutions: town assembly, council of elders and titled people, the family, and age grade associations (Anuka 2020; Ibenekwu 2010). Here, individual

members of society had a place in the political structure with a corresponding vote and voice, and usually belonged to an influential subgroup such as age grade associations or titled positions. This form of government placed emphasis on rule by the community. According to Okoye and Okoye, “The traditional Igbo had a deep sense of community. Individual existence and freedom are appreciated, but they are delicately balanced with the underlying philosophy of life-in-community” (Okoye and Okoye 2016).

Another notable city state was the Benin Empire, described as “the hub of one of the most powerful political systems in precolonial Africa” (Osadolor 2001). It was ruled by a monarch, the Oba of Benin, who was believed to be divine, and who wielded extensive power and authority, as a result.

There were many more kingdoms and states in precolonial Nigeria than the few mentioned above, which only serve to illustrate the diversity and complexity of the precolonial peoples whose descendants now make up present day Nigeria. Thus, the pre-existing forms of government among these peoples were highly diverse and divergent. In the same vein, their underlying social and political ideologies varied.

2.1.1 Political Philosophy in Precolonial Nigeria

From the foregoing, it can be gleaned that there was numerous political philosophies in Nigeria, as much as there were peoples and governments. The political philosophies were representative of the people and served their interests. They were also well-developed and contained indigenous versions of principles like respect for the rule of law and checks and balances (Martin 2012).

2.2 Colonial Nigeria

Following the advent of Western imperial powers into Africa from the period of the Atlantic slave trade until the end of colonialism in the mid to late 20th century, African societies underwent a radical change in their physical structure, the nature of their political organization, and the nature of their sociocultural norms. Civilisations in decline collapsed altogether, and those who were still powerful were made to submit to colonial domination. Surviving kingdoms went through extensive evolution and essentially became figure heads with no real authority over the people nor a mandate to rule them.

This was also the case for Nigeria, where richly diverse and separate nations were brought together as one political territory by the British. Old kingdoms and nations were conquered, annexed, and brought them together as one. With little knowledge or regard for the existing political systems, the colonial powers merged or divided nations to suit their administrative convenience. For instance, the Borgu Kingdom - made up of one homogenous ethnic group - was divided between the British and the French into two different political territories now in modern day Nigeria and Benin Republic. These arbitrary mergers and divisions dealt a devastating blow to the peoples affected, as they lost a significant part of their sociopolitical identity and had to find themselves in the new political setting foisted upon them.

It goes without saying that the relationship between British colonial powers and the people who newly found themselves as Nigerians was not that of happy citizens and a welcome government. Imperial powers ruled by superior might and without mandate from the people. Thus, the people were owed little. No clear social contract existed between the governors and the governed. Colonial territories existed primarily to serve the interest of the governors, not the governed. All that was required from the people was obedience to authority. As Mbembe

92001) noted, reciprocity was not a feature of the relationship between the colonial sovereign and its subjects. The sovereign owed no obligations to colonial subjects.

In Nigeria, the British ruled through two systems - direct rule in the centralized Northern region which took advantage of the ingrained centralized and autocratic nature of the former Sokoto Caliphate, and indirect rule in the Southern region and some parts of the North through handpicked indigenous leaders called warrant chiefs (Ibenekwu 2010). This system made government more manageable for the colonial powers who had found cumbersome the diversity and complexity of the various peoples under their rule.

Under the colonial state of Nigeria, the various nations and peoples had to forge a new identity in the new and extremely foreign system. Former nations, kingdoms, empires, and emirates became ethnic groups of people. Buoyed by the common experience of colonialism and the yoke of foreign rule, they began to form common interests and stronger ties. The motivation for this was a desire for independence.

Rebellions began to form against the colonial government. Notable among these were the Women's War of 1929 to protest unfair taxation, the Bussa Rebellion of 1915, and the Iva Valley Miner's strike of 1949. These rebellions were an active signifier of anti-colonial consciousness. They were contemporaneous with, and precursors to, some of the nationalist movements of the early to mid-20th century.

2.3 Impact of Colonialism on Political Philosophy in Nigeria

A new political consciousness began to grow among imperial subjects within Africa and in the African Diaspora in the United States of America and the Caribbean. These intellectuals formed a Pan-Africanist and nationalist political ideology that centred on emancipation and African solidarity. Thus, came African intellectuals, activists, and scholars like Herbert Macaulay,

Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Jomo Kenyatta, and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Supporting from the diaspora were Black activists like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and James Baldwin.

These struggles gradually gained ground, culminating in the demand for an end to colonialism. However, a major nail in the coffin of colonialism was the impoverishment of Europe after the Second World War, which made colonialism increasingly unpopular, unwieldy and impractical for Western powers. During the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, most African countries gained political independence from colonialists. Nigeria became an independent country on October 1, 1960.

2.4 The 'Social Contract' in Precolonial Times: The Women's Rebellion of 1929

The term 'social contract' is used loosely, as classical European conceptions of the social contract did not exist in precolonial Africa. Nevertheless, the various peoples of Africa, in their native forms of government, had well-defined and understood relationships between leaders and members of the community, and between the community and the individual. In line with this, indigenous methods of checks and balances existed. I have already given an example above of the sophisticated Yoruba political system present in the Oyo Empire with separation of powers and a well-developed system of checks and balances. Within the Oyo Empire, where the Aare Ona Kakanfo lost a war, he would have to go into exile. Thus, he understood his role and duty to the people and was bound to fulfil it or be exiled. This is a clear example of a form of social contract.

I will now consider a particular event that illustrates this social contract. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, there is a custom called "inodu odu", or sitting on a person. What this simply means is a form of protest (usually employed by women) where members of the community would surround and barricade the house of an offending person (often a man) for a while, chant

derisive songs and slurs at him, and generally caused enough nuisance to force the offender to capitulate to the demands of the public (van Allen 1972, 170). The wrath of the community could extend to seizing or destroying the offender's property and even physically roughing the offender up.

The events of the Women's War of 1929 have been recounted and referenced in various literature (van Allen 1972; Ina 1992; American Historical Association n.d.; Kentake 2015; P. J. O. Smith 1989; Kuumba 2006; Naanen 2006). For the sake of illustrating the point being made in this study, I shall restate the story in summary. In 1929, a rumour spread that British administrators were planning to impose a tax on women, after taxing the men. This followed a previous taxation in 1928 which was fuelled by census being carried out by some warrant officers to assess taxable property. A warrant chief known as Okugo was particularly zealous in carrying out this assessment and either he or a messenger of his got into a physical altercation with one of the women, Nwanyeruwa, while attempting to count her goats and sheep. Enraged, women from all over the Owerri Province organised themselves and "sat on" Okugo, seizing his cap of office, damaging his house, and charging him with assault against Nwanyeruwa. Not only did they force him to capitulate, they had him arrested, tried, and imprisoned for 2 years by colonial administrators for assault and spreading news that was likely to cause harm. Despite assurances to the contrary, the women did not believe that British administrators would not tax them. They besieged District Offices, and burnt several Native Courts set up by the British. The Rebellion spread beyond Igbo land into Ibibio lands, involving tens of thousands of women. In the end, colonial administrators used deadly force to quell the rebellion, shooting and killing of 50 women and the wounding of another 50 from gunfire (van Allen 1972, 174).

In analysing this account, two deductions can be made with regard to the nature of the 'social contract' or, more accurately, the communal bond in precolonial Igbo land and the social

contract in British Nigeria. First, in precolonial Igbo land, members of the community had recognised rights and voice, just as they had customarily recognised obligations and responsibilities. Because politics and governance were a communal affair that actively involved most members of a community, each person could be held accountable for misdeeds. If a person acted contrary to the communal bond, he or she would be swiftly sanctioned. Thusly was the social contract upheld and maintained. In the case of Okugo the warrant chief whose role was not traditionally recognised but created by colonial administrators, the offended women defaulted to a traditional means of social sanction which Okugo was well aware of, being a member of the community. What can be deduced from this is that there was a clear, albeit unwritten form of what can be called the ‘social contract’ in precolonial Igbo land and indeed among many other African peoples in precolonial Africa.

Secondly, with regard to the social contract in British Nigeria, a clear absence is revealed. The Women’s War highlighted the fact that British rule was still seen as alien and illegitimate in fundamental respects. The women believed that the British did not have a right to tax them, that taxation was unjust, and that they themselves were in the right to destroy the tools of an uninvited ruler. The lengths the women went to register their indignation— destroying colonial property and facing off armed officers for weeks in different towns and villages – vividly portrays this fact. Thus, the second deduction from the Women’s War of 1929 is revealed: the social contract is all but non-existent in the relationship between British colonial administrators and the people of colonial Nigeria.

As Mbembe (2001) wrote,

For a long time, the preferred means of achieving that integration were, not freedom of contract, but coercion and corruption; social policies tried by successive administrations were heavily determined by normative and disciplinary concerns, and were, in fact, designed to alter the moral behavior of the colonized. (Mbembe 2001, 31)

2.5 Postcolonial Nigeria: Military Dictatorships

The attainment of Independence led to a shift in political philosophy in Nigeria. Suddenly, African countries had to grapple with the diversity and complexity of their makeup, no longer fighting off a common aggressor. By what common principles should they govern themselves? Who gets to occupy positions of power? These led to deep social crisis and ethnic conflicts that swept through several African countries.

Civilian governments were perceived to be corrupt and nepotistic. Hence, the military took matters into their own hands and began to topple governments. In Nigeria, civilian rule existed only from the day of independence on October 1, 1960 until January 15, 1966 – barely 5 years. The military took over and began a long and bloody rule that saw military heads of state exercise absolute power and rule the people with an iron fist. These military regimes were unstable, however, as they were subject to saboteur and overthrow by rival military officers.

Upon the successive waves of coup d'états and military dictatorships in several post-colonial African countries from the 60s to the 80s, the spirit of pan-Africanism that fueled the drive towards good government waned. Military dictators became suspicious of their own people and strove to quell uprisings and strong politically significant ideological movements. These governments used brutal measures including gross abuse of human rights and the assassination of dissidents to contain the people and consolidate their power. Political thought in this period was championed by intellectuals, academics, writers, artists and musicians. These agitations were found in the work of intellectuals and activists like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Fela Kuti, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and Steve Biko.

The music of Fela Kuti was particularly rich, politically charged and critical of military governments in Nigeria, lamenting the shortsightedness of the government and the continued

suffering of African peoples at the hands of oppressive governments, including in apartheid South Africa. For instance, consider the following lyrics of a song by Fela:

Why Black Man Dey Suffer

[Verse 3]

Why black man dey suffer today (x2)
Why black man no get money today (x2)
Why black man no go for moon today (x2)
This is the reason why (tell me now)
This is the reason why (tell me again)
This is the reason why
We dey sit down for our landi jeje
We dey sit down for our landi jeje
We dey mind our business jeje
Some people come from far away land
Dem fight us and take our land
Dem take our people and spoil our towns
Na since den trouble starti oh (huh, huh)
Na since den trouble starti oh (one more time)
Na since den trouble starti oh (hmm)
Our riches dem take away to their land
In return dem give us their colony
Dem take our culture away from us
Dem give us dem culture we no understand
Black people, we no know ourselves
We no know our ancestral heritage
We dey fight each other everyday
We're never together, we're never together at all
We're never together, we're never together at all

[Verse 4]

Dat is why black man dey suffer today
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
Tell me again
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
Dey take our culture away
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
Dey take our riches away
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
Dey take our land from us
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
Dey take our people away
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
We have to think of time to come
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
We have to think of our children to come
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
We have to be together and unite
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today) (x3)
Dat is why black man no go for moon today
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)
Dat is why black man no get money today
(Dat is why black man dey suffer today)

Dat is why black man dey suffer (Genius 2020)

In this 1971 single, Fela points out the loss of a strong sense of culture and heritage due to colonialism. He notes that this led to infighting which is why black people continue to suffer even after achieving political independence. Even though Fela heavily criticizes colonialism, he also bemoaned the lack of introspection and vision among African politicians and governments.

Describing Fela, Oikelomo states that:

Some say he is one of African's most popular musicians. Others say he is a prophet. To the government that ruled when he was alive, he was a rebel. In all, Fela is remembered as an outspoken musician who employed his music as a weapon to propagate both political and social ideologies. His irresistible rhythms and instrumental compositions accompanied original lyrics that are political and revolutionary in nature. He was able to establish an entirely new genre of resistance. He despised political corruption, and the ruling classes' persecution of the masses. Self-identifying as an artist of the people, he managed to upset the elite of his own society and to cast a spell of reform on those in other societies. Fela was a social engineer concerned with issues of injustice, corruption, and the abuse of power. Some of his songs were written to condemn corrupt governments, fight oppressive regimes, and pass on messages that many dared not voice. (Oikelome 2014, p. 204)

Noting Fela's influence, Oikelomo points out that:

According to Olaniyan, Fela has done what our professors of political science have been unable to do. This is to simplify global political issues and cut them down into bits that can easily be digested by the masses.... Afrobeat lyrics are synonymous with protest and revolution. Fela Anikulapo Kuti's music was unique in the sense that his fearless projection of anger released new creative possibilities. These resulted in his forceful and sometimes aggressive music and his socially and politically explosive lyrics. Fela derived his inspiration from the everyday experience of the masses, and the everyday language of the Nigerian people. (ibid 205)

Military governments, however, were very hostile to these intellectuals and activists. Many were imprisoned, some were executed for treason. For instance, in 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida the then military Head of State, executed a notable poet and activist, Mamman Vatsa, despite within and outside the country. This was also the case in 1995 when Ken Saro-Wiwa – a leading activist against environmental pollution caused by oil companies like Shell BP – was executed after a kangaroo trial by General Sani Abacha(International 2005; Steiner, Zemitis, and Williams 1996). Journalist and government critic, Dele Giwa was killed by a letter bomb in 1986, and the identity of the killer remains unknown, despite widespread suspicion of the government's complicity. Fela himself was jailed several times by various military governments.

Thus, military governments serve to silenced political activism and did not encourage the development of political philosophy, since they were not accountable to the people. However, political thought still flourished in the works of artists and intellectuals whose themes echoed resistance.

Chapter 3: The Social Contract or the Legitimacy of the Nigerian Government

To understand what contract exists between the government and the governed in Nigeria, it is necessary to look to its Constitutions from postcolonial times to the present.

During the nearly 30 years of military rule, no Constitution existed. Military rulers simply suspended the Constitution and declared themselves the supreme authority in the country. Thus, they ruled at their own behest and owed nothing to citizens. They could make laws at will and also abolish them at will. Effectively, they had a similar power to that of King Louis XIV of France when he declared that he was the state. Nigerian military rulers often carried out a reign of terror that saw critics, activists, and journalists kidnapped, tortured and murdered.

Towards the end of military rule in 1999, the then Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, favored a return to civilian rule, and commissioned the 1999 Constitution for that purpose. That Constitution is still in force today with some (non-radical) amendments. Nigeria's current Constitution adopts the same method. The issue of state authoritarianism continues after the end of military rule. Nigeria's Constitution, itself, is a product of the military. This Constitution rigorously guards itself against public scrutiny. The indivisibility of Nigeria is declared in section 2 subsection 1 of the Constitutions as follows: "Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (Lex, n.d.).

This declaration, along with the past history of civil war, has fueled similar declarations from high-ranking government officers and politicians, such as the current President, Muhammadu Buhari, who declare that the unity of Nigeria is "non-negotiable" (BBC n.d.). The President,

himself, is a former General and Military Head of State who seized power from a democratic President, Shehu Shagari, in a bloodless coup d'état.

This idea of non-negotiability of crucial aspects of the state, including the violence inflicted on certain citizens is the hallmark of authoritarianism internalized from its colonial history and the history of military rule.

Further, Nigerian state assigns to itself extensive powers regarding critical resources like land and minerals. All lands are vested in a state governor who assigns it to lessors for a period of 99 years. Similarly, all minerals under the soil belong to the Federal Government of Nigeria. This the state holding of critical resources contribute to land and property insecurity.

The Nigerian state has been unable to conceive of a political philosophy that lets go of authoritarianism and truly respects and includes citizens in the process of governance. As with many other African countries whose leaders simply perpetuate themselves in office,

To further underscore the lack of a binding social contract, Chapter 2 of the Constitution provides for fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy, and fundamental obligations of the state to citizens such as justice, equal and fair treatment, social amenities.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice.

(2) It is hereby, accordingly, declared that:

(a) sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this Constitution derives all its powers and authority;

(b) the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government: and

(c) the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. (Lex, n.d.)

However, the same Constitution states that these obligations are non-binding, and the state cannot be held accountable for them:

(6) The judicial powers vested in accordance with the foregoing provisions of this section -

(c) shall not except as otherwise provided by this Constitution, extend to any issue or question as to whether any act of omission by any authority or person or as to whether any law or any judicial decision is in conformity with the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy set out in Chapter II of this Constitution; (Lex, n.d.)

What this means is that they cannot be enforced in a court of law, nor can the government be sued for failing to carry out these objectives. In view of this, what incentive exists for the government to act in the interest of the people? If there are no consequences for poor government in a society where the state has the monopoly of force and authoritarianism, why should the government put the interest of the governed first?

Indeed, in Nigeria, this manifests in the way that government officials allocate public funds as they please, enrich themselves from the public purse, and ignore the demands of the people.

Problems from these kinds of issues stemming from lack of a unifying political philosophy showed early after independence when, due to inter-ethnic conflicts and allegations of oppression, nepotism, and wanton killing of civilians, the Eastern Region announced its secession and declared itself the sovereign state of Biafra on May 30, 1967. This precipitated a costly civil war that led to the death of an estimated 6 million Biafrans and the displacement of a million more. At the end of the war in 1970 when Biafra surrendered and rejoined Nigeria, the Nigerian government had an opportunity to seek real unification but buried it in the slogan “no victor, no vanquished”. Instead of taking advantage of the moment for real soul searching, reconciliation, and reunification, the government essentially punished the Biafrans-turned-Nigerians by setting a policy which forcefully converted all of the property of the former

Biafrans in other parts of Nigeria. This led to further discontent. The Nigeria-Biafra war is not officially acknowledged or recognised by the government, and history of the war is not taught in schools as it is deemed too controversial.

Like all other unaddressed wounds, the memory of Biafra and the loss it involved festers in the minds of former Biafrans and their descendants, who are mostly of the Igbo ethnic group. For these people, total commitment to the Nigerian state is less than in regions of Nigeria. New secessionist groups have been formed in recent times. Two notable ones are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) formed in 1999, and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), formed in 2012. Both groups have often had clashes with the Nigerian government. In 2015, the leader of IPOB, Mr. Nnamdi Kanu, was arrested and charged with treason. Scores of peaceful demonstrators commemorating “Biafra Day” on May 30, 2016 were killed when the Nigerian army sought to stop the demonstration.

Biafra reveals a deep wound in Nigeria which the country continues to ignore. However, such wounds go to the root of what it means to not only be a country but to be a nation. Nigeria declares itself a nation, despite its multiethnic and multireligious nature. Yet, among the people, ethnic consciousness, rivalry, and allegations of nepotism and ethnic prejudice are rife. Elections are characterized by bitter quarrels, violence, and mass voting along ethnic and religious lines.

3.1 The African Union’s Agenda 2063 and Political Philosophy

Agenda 2063 is a strategic plan of the AU for the political, social, and economic transformation of Africa. Created in 2014, it contains formative objectives and goals for freedom, prosperity, peace, and security in Africa, and to raise the global profile and competitiveness of Africa as

an integrated unit. The creation of the foremost African organisation, the African Union (AU) and its predecessor, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) was born of related ideals. In an attempt to set a clear roadmap for achieving this objective, the AU came up with a strategic plan for Africa's transformation called the Agenda 2063. Agenda 2063 is both ambitious and necessary; yet, its realization rests significantly dependent on the health and progress of AU member states. As the AU is an offshoot of its constituent states and governed in accordance with the will of the states, it is dependent on them to achieve its goals. Agenda 2063 has root in the dreams of 20th century African nationalists and Pan-Africanists such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Kenneth Kaunda and Obafemi Awolowo. Agenda 2063 is highly ambitious. It has led to the creation of one of the most important treaties made by the AU – the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)

Chapter 4: Conclusion

In this chapter, we shall review our findings and present the answers to our main research question and the subordinate research question.

The main research question was: *What impact did colonialism and military regimes have on political philosophy in Nigeria, and how is this of general importance to postcolonial African countries?*

To answer this question, analyses of colonialism and military rule reveal that both events led to a political culture of authoritarianism. By imposing themselves upon the peoples of Nigeria through the use of force and suppressive mechanisms, both colonialism and military rule reshaped political philosophy by normalizing state authoritarianism. They minimized the accountability of government which was more prevalent in precolonial political systems. They also reduced the power and role of citizens who became subjects. The state that emerged following colonialism and military rule has little regard for the desires of its constituent members. Importantly, that state has a monopoly of violence and does not fail to use it against its own citizens of need be. On the other hand, both events led to the growth of scholarship, music and artwork in the body of work produced by African intellectuals, activists, and political scientists who focused on liberation and resistance.

The subordinate research question, “*How do the events of the Women’s War of 1929 reveal the state of the social contract in precolonial times and the social contract in colonial times?*” has been answered to show that colonial rule eroded the social contract that existed in precolonial times.

The impact of colonialism and military rule on the social contract can be described as deleterious. That is to say, the lack of a clear and mutual relationship undernoted by reciprocity,

as identified by Mbembe (2001). Colonialism overthrew the traditional contract and understanding present in precolonial political systems. It made no promise to the colonial subject stating that its purpose was to civilize the other.

In the aftermath of colonialism and military rule, Nigeria has not let go of some of the negative lessons learnt. The state, even though ostensibly democratic, defaults to policies and systems of governance that undermine the welfare of its citizens.

Recognizing the impact of these twin events to the development of political philosophy in postcolonial Africa is critical to true state-building, realizing the lofty goals of the African Union identified in its Agenda 2063, and improving the quality of governance in Africa in general.

Using Nigeria as the case study in this research, this thesis explores how these events contributed and continue to contribute to structural and foundational problems in the state. This thesis finds that Nigeria has not managed to develop a political philosophy representative of its people and its complex constitution. Additionally, the social contract is questionable, given that Nigeria's Constitution was not truly made by the people but by military fiat.

Political philosophy in many African countries is nascent and complex. Being creations of Western powers for interests that served the West in the 19th and 20th centuries, the wishes and wellbeing of the peoples of these countries were of secondary concern at the time of creation. As a result, a great deal of violence and loss was occasioned by the merger and separation of peoples in accordance with the wish of colonial powers. It goes without saying that colonial powers ruled by superior might, not by the fiat of their colonial subjects.

Similarly, the decades following the end of colonialism were marred by instability, coups d'états, civil war, dictatorships and military rule in numerous African countries. These

problems originate from the lack of a unifying political identity and will founded upon robust and representative political philosophy. The template of the state inherited from colonial powers was carried forward with little modification by postcolonial African leaders. Authoritarianism and the use of force remained the *modus operandi* of African governments, especially military dictators. while colonialism eroded the political systems and philosophies that existed in precolonial times, it did not directly contribute to the development of a new philosophy to unite the peoples it governed. Rather, it had an indirect effect on political thought by intellectuals and activists, who opposed the

4.1.1 What implications do these have for postcolonial African countries?

Just as a venture without a purpose is rudderless, a state without a well-developed political philosophy, is bound to suffer crises of governance. This is the case for many postcolonial African states, including Nigeria. Problems of governance such as political stability, transparency abound.

One of the founding fathers of Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, is reported to have said that Nigeria is merely a geographical expression (Ekpu, 2017). This sentiment betrays the philosophical emptiness and lack of a unifier that plagues the country. In order to truly become a nation, Nigeria must confront its past and present with a view to creating a just society where all citizens feel that the government is fair and truly representative of all, despite ethnic, religious, or cultural differences.

This is also the case for many postcolonial African countries with a history of internal division, conflict, and civil war. In Cameroun, the Southern Region is currently embroiled in a bitter conflict that has claimed the lives of thousands – at the hands of government-backed military.

Given the history of their arbitrary formation by colonial powers, most postcolonial African countries are highly diverse in terms of ethnicity and culture. There ought to be a serious policy

of unification within each country. If unification is found to be too difficult or impossible, states should genuinely pursue the option of peaceful separation. As enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, the right to self-determination should be recognised by African governments. Admittedly, it is a delicate subject that must be handled carefully and with extensive deliberation and negotiation. It must also be acknowledged that it is neither possible – nor even particularly desirable – to return to the political state before colonialism and the Berlin Conference. Several generations have since passed, and the mergers and divisions of different peoples have led to new groups of people with different interests and priorities. While the Borgu of Nigeria now speak English, their cousins in Benin Republic speak French.

One of the core tenets of the AU is the maintenance of the territorial integrity of its member states. Thus, in the event of conflicts or demands for separation, AU states will rally behind the affected member state. Although this spirit of solidarity is to be commended, critical consideration of agitations for separation should be encouraged. A nation is made for its people, the people are not made for the nation. The insistence on forced and non-negotiable political structures is an unfortunate legacy of the state authoritarianism enforced from colonial times and strengthened by military rule.

The internal harmony in AU member states is of critical importance to the achievement of the AU's goals, as a member state embroiled in internal conflict cannot fully commit to the advancement of external goals.

Looking beyond just the growth of the AU as an entity but also into the growth of effective governments and states would fulfill three of the AU's stated missions:

- (1) An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law; (2) A peaceful and secure Africa, (3) An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children (African Union n.d.)

In order to move Agenda 2063 from the realm of dreams into reality, individual AU states need to have a strong sense of identity and purpose grounded in a well-developed political philosophy focused on the wellbeing of their citizens and Africa in general.

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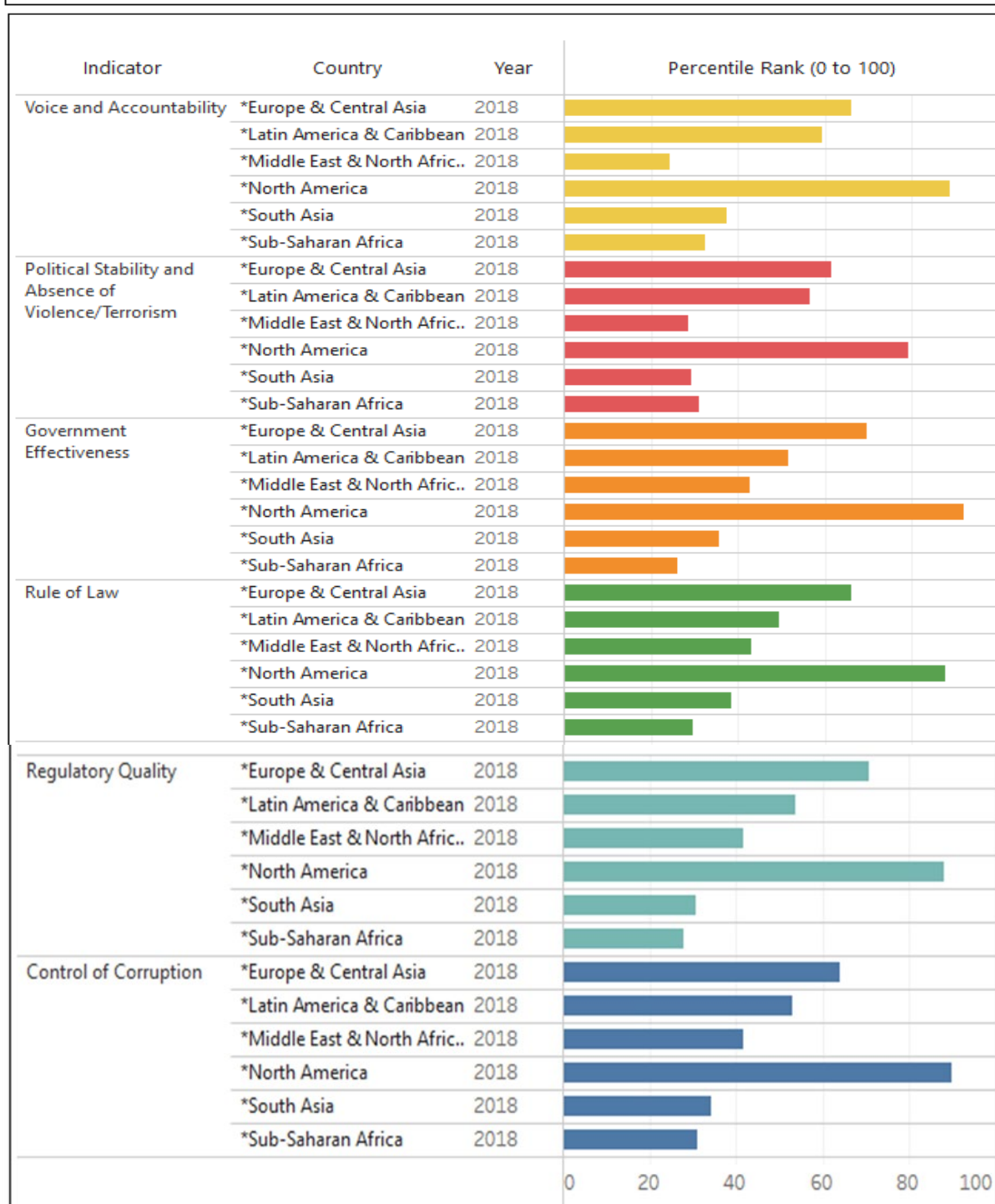
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Appendix

Worldwide Governance Indicators



- World Governance Indicators 2019

Source: The World Bank <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>