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THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN PERSON-BASED POLITICS

Matevž Tomšič

School of Advanced Social Studies, Slovenia

E-mail: matevz.tomsic@fuds.si

Abstract: *Political life in both established and new democracies is increasingly characterised by its personalisation, i.e. rise of importance of personal traits of individual actors. There were personalities of different political leaders that in last couple of decades decisively contributed to the emergence of new political parties, especially those of regionalist or autonomist orientation and also that on extreme right, as well as to the renewal of some traditional parties. Personalisation of politics is usually perceived in relation to the rise of so called 'niche parties' that type reject traditional class-based orientation of politics and transcend socio-economic cleavage. The article deals with the ideological background of this type of political parties. Although the person-based politics is often proclaimed as non-ideological (or even non-political) one, the author shows that it often has evident (though camouflaged) ideological grounding that determine its political conduct.*

Key words: *personalities, politics, ideology, democracy*

1. Introduction

Political space in contemporary democracies is undergoing profound change in last couple of decades. This applies also to its institutional agents, particularly to political parties as organisations, directed toward political goals, striving to preserve or change actual social, economic and political situation (Panbianco 1988), which thus play crucial role in the processes of articulation and representation of interests, steering of decision-making, and political socialisation. We are speaking about developments in terms of organisational structure of political parties and their mode of functioning. There is change in modes of mobilisation of political support and establishing a link between parties and their constituencies.

There are several features that provide fertile conditions for a personalisation of political life. We can speak about diminishing importance of social cleavages that crystallised during the process of modernisation of Western societies constituted the basis of formation of modern political party

system (Inglehart 1990). This is related to individualisation in terms of weakening of classical political identities (class, nation, religion, ideology) (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Genov 2010). The consequence is weakened position of political parties as organisational vehicles of collective action and social choice (Kitschelt 2001) and channelling agencies that represent and link between society and government institutions (Sartori 1976) which are, due to this, “vital agencies for proper functioning of democracies (Dalton et al. 2011). The shift toward personalised politics took place in the last decades. The personalities of different politicians contributed to the emergence of new political parties based on strong leader as well as to the renewal of some traditional parties (Tomšič and Prijon 2013).

The main aim of the article is thematisation and examination of the ideological background of leader-based political parties. Person-based based politics is often proclaimed as non-ideological or even non-political one (supposedly transcending the left-right divide). However, on the basis of selected set of cases from both ‘old’ and ‘new’ European Union member countries, the author tries to show that it often has evident – although not necessarily consistent – ideological grounding that determine its political conduct. The ideology is usually camouflaged with moralist, anti-elitist, anti-establishment or managerialist discourse of such type of political entrepreneurs.

2. Personalisation of politics in modern democracies

The role of individuals and their personal characteristics in political life of community is a topic which has been occupying political analysts and thinkers for long time. One should only refer to the famous Max Weber’s classification of three types of authority, one of them being the charismatic one, based on belief in extraordinary personal qualities of particular political and social leader. However, as stated by Jean Blondel (1987), issues of leadership and personalities as explaining factors of political process was often neglected in scientific research. The central position has been given to socio-economic relationships in a form of social cleavages, i.e. class; religious and regional divisions that crystallised during the process of modernisation of Western societies that constituted the basis of formation of modern political party system (see Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

However, the importance of these cleavages, which tied citizen to political parties, diminished over time and had “no longer the same hold over European population as it had been the case previously” (Blondel and Thiebault 2010, 1). One of the main factors that contributed to this was the

value change observed by some researchers (see Inglehart 1990) to take place in developed societies decades after the World War II, resulted in a decrease of attachment of the people to classical identities (class, religion, ideology etc.). This was coupled with a decrease of confidence in traditional political institutions almost everywhere in the established democracies (Putnam et al. 2000; Diamond and Gunther 2001).

These developments contributed to an increased awareness of issues like personal relations and personal appeal of individual's leaders as determinants of political dynamics. Political leading is closely related to power and domination (Tucker 1995, 26). It can be perceived as phenomenon of power that is exercised "when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilise, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological or other resources so as to arouse, engage or satisfy the motives of followers" (Burns 1978, 11). It is thus about the ability of individual political players to motivate certain segments of the citizenry to express support for their cause.

Personal power is related to the control of the leader over political process in the party. It refers to: party program and policies, appointment of party executive personnel and selection of party candidates for electoral positions, and strategic decisions of the party (for example, with whom to form a coalition, whether to join government or remain in opposition etc.) (Blondel and Thiebault 2010, 69). In this way, leader exerts prevailing influence over all key elements of the party's conduct. However, personalised leadership does not appear in 'empty space', since it is the party system itself, of a particular country that represents the framework within which it "emerges with significant support in the population in the context of a liberal democratic system" (ibid. 261).

The strengthening role of the party leader applies also to the development of political parties as such. There are evident changes in terms of the structure and mode of functioning. One of the most important ones is decline of party membership that has been taking place in the last decades. As stated by van Biezen and Poguntke (2014, 205), "parties are struggling to hold on to their membership organizations and are failing to recruit significant numbers of new members". This is related to the above-mentioned diminishing importance of collective identities and corresponding weakening political loyalties. Due to this, citizens less and less see political parties as framework of their social engagement. On the other hand, functioning of political parties less and less rely on its members. Through utilisation of mass and social media, party leaders can directly address the electorate with their messages. Many activities are now 'outsourced', i.e. delegated to professional

organisations and teams with specialised expertise (public relations agencies, think-tanks, pollsters etc.). Contemporary politics became “more and more about the competition between professionalized party elites and less about the mobilization and integration of socially distinct groups” (ibid. 2006). As result, links between party elites and 'ordinary' members progressively weakened. There are even parties that do not need party members for taking part in political process (see Mazzoleni and Voerman 2016). In this regard, one has to mention the discussion about the new types of political parties – ‘cartel party’ (Katz and Mair 1995) and ‘business firm party’ (Hopkin and Paolucci 1999; Krouwel 2006). In both cases, as one of the important characteristics the weakening bonds to the party base has to be mentioned and also the strengthening of outsourcing of services for the electoral campaigns but also program and policies formulation.

Personalisation of politics is usually perceived in relation to the rise of so called ‘niche parties’ (sometimes labelled as ‘single issue parties’). Parties of this type reject traditional class-based orientation of politics, transcend socio-economic cleavage and are – unlike traditional ‘catch-all parties – focused to a narrow set of non-economic issues (Meguid 2005; Adams et al. 2006; Wagner 2012). They usually follow extremist or at least non-centrist ideologies. To this group belong parties of ecologist, regionalist or ethno-nationalist orientation. In the last years, we witness appearance of a new type of ‘niche parties’ without a coherent ideology and political program which are not focused on particular policy-issues but are generally oriented against existing political establishment, i.e. against the ‘old’ political elites. The most evident and the most politically successful example in established democracies is *Five Stars Movement* in Italy. ‘Niche parties’ are even more present in the new democracies form Central and Eastern Europe. They more often than their Western counterparts lack clear program and policy orientations. Instead, they build their public appear on general criticism of established political parties and the ‘character’ of their leaders. Irony is that such party can easily transform themselves into a mainstream one (examples are *Direction* in Slovakia, *GERB* in Bulgaria, *ANO 2011* in the Czech Republic, or *Positive Slovenia* in Slovenia).

There were personalities of different political leaders that in last couple of decades decisively contributed to the emergence of new political ‘competitors’. This refers particularly to parties of regionalist or autonomist orientation and also to those on extreme right (politicians like Bossi, Le Pen, Haider etc.), but also to some parties that become a part of political mainstream in their countries (as it is the case of Silvio Berlusconi and his party). However, some leaders strongly contributed to the renewal of some

traditional parties (the example is the role of Tony Blair in the rise of the New Labour). This personalised leadership which was primarily about the mobilisation of psychological resources established a bond between particular political force and its followers and thus generated their political mobilisation (Blondel and Thiebault 2010, 32).

Personalised politics brings in front different style of political communication. Its main accent is on the presentation of personal characteristics of the particular political leader, i.e. his strength, energy, vision, organisational skills etc. The marketing strategy is focused on his charisma much more than on political vision, values and party program. The electoral campaign is based on establishing leader's close contacts both with electorate (ordinary people) and media. The whole promotion is concentrated on events where the leader is playing the main (or even the exclusive) role. Other persons in the party play a secondary role, serving mostly for his support. The leader is the point through which all important political messages are transmitted to the public and especially to his party's electorate.

Personalised type of political approach rests both, on strong 'face-to-face' contacts of the leader with his supporters, as well as on an intensive use of media communication. These politicians are very keen to present themselves as 'men of the people' who have deep understanding for needs and wishes of ordinary citizen.

Speaking about person-based politics, one should not equate this phenomenon with the impact of strong political personalities in general. The role of leaders is indispensable even in democratic political life that – in normative terms – rests on the principles of participation and equality. Traditional political party with widespread organisational structure, numerous membership and clear ideological profile can be led by strong and charismatic personality. Such party does not belong to the category of leader-based parties. For the later, it is characteristic that the leader exerts full control over all key elements of the party's conduct (Tomšič and Prijon 2013).

3. Berlusconiisation of political life

The term 'berlusconiisation' was coined from the surname of Italian businessman and politician Silvio Berlusconi and denotes the type 'person-based' and 'non-party' politics with 'managerism' as the way of political conduct. It is a political style that is based on a belief that political community has to be governed in the same way as a company. Policy-making process should thus take place in a managerial way. Political leader is hence perceived

as a person who can 'do things', i.e. execute his/her ideas and solution in an efficient way.

The rise of 'berlusconisation' is related to some international tendencies like an increased role of media in political process (the so called 'mediatisation of politics') (see Ginsborg 2005). It appears in a situation of political crisis. It is a result-of a poor performance of established parties, i.e. governments controlled by them, and their misconduct in a form of corruption, clientelism, nepotism and other malign practices. Such practices strongly contribute to low confidence and bad image of political institutions, especially political parties, regardless their ideological orientation, in the eyes of the public. This opened a space for different, more personalised and sometimes even 'non-political' approach in political contest.

One can discern certain personal traits that are common to the most of these 'non-partisan' politicians. They are, by rule, strongly extroverted persons who are prone to practice direct contact with the voters. They express strong charisma, in terms of making the followers believe they can personally 'make things better'. Their discourse addresses people (i.e. inhabitants of a particular town or city) as a whole rather than particular social group or a constituency based on particular ideological platform. It is often characterised by strong populism, making direct appeal to ordinary people and claiming to share their wishes, hopes and fears (Heywood 2007, 291). Non-party politicians of 'berlusconian' type present themselves as political 'outsiders' who are not 'contaminated' by established political structures and thus express the 'genuine' will of the common man. Although, usually members of the social elite, they nurture image of 'self-made-men' who, regardless their wealth, feel with and for ordinary people. The style of communication of such party leaders is plain and energetic. They avoid using complicated political messages. Instead, they use simple, straight-forward and often provocative language. They are prone to turning their public appearances into 'show', with them being the main characters.

4. Factors of the rise of person-based politics

The rise of political approach called by some as Berlusconisation¹ (Mancini 2011) is related to several international developments in contemporary

¹ The phenomenon of leadership style known as 'Berlusconisation' is based on the person of the Italian media magnate, politician and former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi who represents a new model of politics that can be identified in some contemporary democracies.

societies. One of them is an increased role for the media in political process called the 'mediatisation of politics' (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Ginsborg 2005). It applied particularly to the prevalence of 'media logic' in covering political issues what becomes most evident during election campaigns (Swanson and Mancini 1996). Modern mass media, especially electronic ones, increasingly build their stories on 'spectacle' where images play more important role than ideas and programs (Campus 2015). In such circumstances, it is more important for political candidate how to 'present' himself in front of the audience (supporters, voters) than how relevant and/or feasible are his political proposals and solution the resolve political, economic and social problems.

This development came about in a situation, characterised by the poor performance of the established political parties and their governments. The low administrative efficiency of these governments was accompanied by lack their responsibility (Tomšič and Prijon 2013). They strongly contributed to the weakening of confidence in politics and politicians. The bad image of political institutions, especially political parties, regardless of their ideological orientation, became predominant in the assessments of the population (see, for example, Bull and Newell 2005; Newell 2010). The trend of decreasing trust in political institution is evident in many Western democracies but is more profound in the new democracies like the Czech Republic and Slovenia. Among them, political parties have being among most distrusted ones (Makarovič and Tomšič 2015; Vráblíková 2009). There are many elements, related to behaviour of established political actors, such as ideologisation, incompetence, clientelism, corruption and other dysfunctional practices that contribute to such negative sentiments. In such climate, 'new faces' are able to gain popularity, especially those who build their campaigns on personalised and sometimes 'non-political' platforms. In the last couple of years, some of political parties that used to be key political players become weakened or even practically disappeared from political scene. This was caused by frequent political scandals and general lack of responsiveness toward the needs of the citizenry. They were supplemented by political newcomers who have been building their campaigns either through 'managerisation of politics', based on the notion of 'politics as business' according to which the country should be run as a business firm, or through 'moralisation of politics', i.e. proclaiming moral renewal of politics and bringing higher standards of political culture. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Both have in common rejection of 'old' political establishment and its allegedly malign deeds. However, the irony is that some of these new-comers who loudly denounced their established competitors as

corrupt and otherwise problematic, themselves carry 'heavy baggage' in terms of involvement in different suspicious practices.

There are some personal traits common to most of the 'non-partisan' politicians. They are, as a rule, strongly extrovert personalities who are prone to practice direct contact with the voters. Simultaneously, they are very skilful in media communication, i.e. able to establish an appealing image in public through the use of visual impressions. They have strong charisma by making the followers believe that they can 'make things better'. Their discourse addresses people of certain country, region or city as a whole rather than particular social group or a constituency based on a particular ideological platform. This approach is often characterised by strong populism appealing to the ordinary people and claiming to share their thoughts and sentiments. Non-party politicians tend to present themselves as political 'outsiders' who do not have anything in common with the established political structures and who express the genuine will of 'ordinary people' who are supposed to be mistreated by the hands of the old elites. Although they are usually members of the social elite, they nurture the image of a 'self-made man' who, regardless of their accumulated wealth, thinks and acts as people in the street do. The communication style of such party leaders is plain and energetic. They avoid using complicated political messages. Instead, they use simple, straightforward and often provocative slogans... They are prone to turning their public appearances into show by playing the main characters (see Semino and Masci 1994).

5. End of ideologies in political life?

Individual perceptions of social processes and their agents are always influenced by cultural context. Individuals interpret reality through pre-existing mental categories. These categories are related to ideologies which can be basically defined as more or less coherent sets of ideas that provide the basis for political action, "whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power" (Heywood 2007, 11). Different social, economic and political phenomena that affect life of people all over the world are apprehended and interpreted from different ideological perspectives. It is thus not possible to discern perception of them in particular society without knowing its 'cultural configuration', i.e. its prevailing values,

ideas and attitudes as well as relationships between different ideological orientations and their agents.²

Activities of individual and collective political agents can be perceived in a considerable extent as ideologically driven. Politics is not only about interests, it is also – if not predominantly – about ideals and visions of desired development of society. In this context, ideologies can be perceived as cultural entities that 1.) provide interpretation of social reality, 2.) offer vision of future development and 3.) explain mode and meaning of societal change. Modern history show us that ideologies often had very strong identification and mobilisational potential, driving people to sacrifice even their own lives for 'higher causes' (some of them functioned as some kind of civil religion).

Many analysts state, as is the case with Daniel Bell in his *The End of Ideology* (1960), that ideologies have being lost their relevance since politics becoming performed in non-ideological way. What is claimed to be crucial is ability to resolve concrete problems in different realms of society. With the rise of 'catch-all parties', addressing voters from all social strata, political division became reduced since mainstream leftist and rightist parties evolved toward the political centre. Political parties increasingly built their appeal on programmatic eclecticism (combining elements that traditionally belong to different ideological orientations) and pragmatic approach toward problem-solving.

Nevertheless ideological labels like 'left' and 'right' have been remaining the most common denominators of the placement of particular political parties. Moreover, some of the political theorists claim the distinction is keeping its importance (Bobbio 1996; Giddens 2000). It is connected to the competition as the basic principle of democratic political life. And the left/right cleavage represents the basis of this dynamics. Of course, the content of what is 'left' and what is 'right' has been changing through the time. This holds for the ideological positions of particular political parties as well. However, something cannot be 'left' and 'right' at the same time. Ideological divisions are thus still relevant. They depend to the historical development of particular society and that result in specific institutional system, socio-economic setting and prevailing cultural patterns.

² For example, see perceptions of the communist symbols in new democracies on the case of "Tito street" (Kleindienst 2017).

6. (Non)Ideological character of person-based politics

As stated above, the rise of person-based politics is related to the parties that transcend/deny traditional ideological divisions. It is often criticised for its 'hollowness' in terms of lacking programmatic and policy orientations what is supplemented by excessive populism and playing on the card of personal appeal of political leaders. However, leader-based political parties can hardly be perceived *en bloc* as non-ideological. Strong personalised character on one hand and clear ideological profile on the other are not mutually exclusive.

Considering leader-based political parties in the member countries of the European Union, one can find majority of them in the new democracies form Central and Eastern Europe. If we take into account only parties of sufficient relevance, i.e. those who are members of national parliaments, we can find them in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia and Slovenia. Among 'old' members of the Union, the most outspoken example is Italy (the homeland of 'berlusconisation' phenomenon). This phenomenon took place in another core EU country, France, with Emanuel Macron and his party *La République En Marche!* which won 2017 parliamentary elections mostly due to popularity of its founder who was couple of months before elected as French president. We find personalised parties also in Netherlands and Austria (see Table 1). There is a number of smaller parties of such type all over the Europe which, however, do not exert any meaningful influence on policy-making process (accept perhaps at the local level).

Table 1: *Leader-based parties in the EU member countries (only parliamentary parties)*

Country	Party
Austria	Peter Pilz List (Pilz)
Bulgaria	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), Bulgaria Without Censorship, Attack (Ataka)
Czech Republic	Action of Unsatisfied Citizen – ANO 2011, Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)
Estonia	Estonian Centre Party
France	<i>La République En Marche!</i> (LaREM)
Italy	Forza Italia, Five Stars Movement
Lithuania	Labour Party
Netherlands	Party of Freedom
Poland	Kukiz15
Slovakia	Direction (Smer), Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia, We Are Family

Slovenia	Party of Modern Centre (SMC)
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Source: own

But even the parliamentary leader-based political parties differ among themselves with regard to their structural position, i.e. position in the structure of the power-relations in particular country. Some of them are leading parties in the government (*LaREM*, *Direction*, *GERB*, and *SMC*) or members of government coalitions (*Action of Unsatisfied Citizen – ANO 2011*, *Labour Party*). Most of them are currently in opposition, with diverging chances for success in the next elections. Some of them are ranking high, like *Geert Wilders' Party of Freedom* led for long time in opinion polls, or *Five Stars Movement* that is very close to the leading *Democratic Party*; while other struggle to remain in the parliament.

We witness rather strong ideological diversity within the group of leader-based parties in Europe. Most parties belong to the right side of political space, either of centre-rightist (examples: *Forza Italia* in Italy, *GERB* in Bulgaria) or radical rightist orientation (*Freedom Party* in the Netherlands, *Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia*). There are also centre-leftist (*Direction* in Slovakia, *Party of Modern Centre* in Slovenia, *Peter Pilz List* in Austria) and centrist oriented parties (*La République En Marche!* in France, *ANO 2011* in the Czech Republic). In the case of particular parties, it is very hard to discern their ideological orientation since they combine both leftist and rightist elements (most evident example is Italy's *Five Stars Movement*). Some parties take different positions regarding key societal issues (for example, leftist positions toward economic regulations and rightist position towards cultural matters). *Summa summarum*, leader-based parties do not constitute ideologically homogeneous political category.

Many of the newly formed parties of this kind claim themselves as non-ideological, i.e. the ones that do not belong neither to left nor to right, that do not follow ideologies of liberalism, conservatism, socialism etc. Some of them present themselves even as non-political, as outsiders who do not have anything with the established political elites and whose mere aim is to resolve problems people are dealing with in their everyday lives.³ Some of them even call themselves more as movements than as parties (*M5S*, *ANO 2011*).

Among parties that stress their anti-ideological character and avoid political positioning we should expose three: *Five Stars Movement* (*M5S*) in Italy, founded by well-known comedian and media personality, *ANO 2011* in

³ For example, *ANO 2011* coined the slogan "We are not as politicians, we are working hard" (*Nejsme jako politici, makáme*) (Havlík et al. 2014, 61).

the Czech Republic, founded by oligarch and media mogul Andrej Babiš; and *Party of Modern Centre* (SMC) (formerly named after its leader *Party of Miro Cerar*), founded by academic lawyer Miro Cerar. They are particularly relevant because they belong to the group of major political players in their countries. SMC decisively won national parliamentary elections in 2014 became major partner in Slovenian government (with its leader Cerar as Prime Minister). ANO 2011 attained second place in national parliamentary election in 2013 (only slightly behind *Czech Social Democratic Party*) and became member of Czech governing coalition (with its leader Babiš as Minister of Finance). M5S attained third place in national parliamentary election, not far behind leading centre-leftist and centre-rightist coalitions, but won more votes than any other singly party (as mentioned above, it is currently very close to the top in opinion polls).

Those three parties avoid to be positioned at the left-right axis. Beppe Grillo wrote on his blog: “The 5 Stars Movement is no on the left (nor is it on the right). It is a movement of Italian people” (Corbetta and Vignati 2013, 53). Miro Cerar also strictly avoided ideological self-positioning. Similar was the case with Andrej Babiš, although was somehow less elusive since in one of his interviews, he declared that ANO 2011 is “a right-wing party with social empathy (Parlamentni listy 2013). Both Babiš and Cerar have been consistently emphasising the centrist character of their parties.

All three parties are characterised by vagueness and in incomprehensiveness of their programs. However, despite this and despite their ‘neither left nor right’ self-proclaimed image, these parties do not lack ideological elements. For example, centrism is nevertheless ideological position. Both ANO 2011 and SMC joined *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe* (ALDE), an alliance of liberal oriented political parties. In some cases, this led to the change of party’s positions toward certain issues. For example, SMC was at the beginning very reserved in terms of support for legalisation of gay marriage and adoption, but it became supportive to them under the pressure of ALDE. We can detect some differences between the two ‘centrist’ parties in their ideological leaning. ANO 2011 can be considered more centre-right (for example, negative attitude toward migrations from non-Western world) and SMC as centre-left party (connection with influential networks from former communist regime and positive attitude of certain high-ranking party politicians toward it). Much harder task is to place M5S on the left-right scale. Namely, the party combine leftist (environmentalism, direct participation) and rightist elements (anti-immigration, low taxes). In European Parliament, the party is member of *Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy*, Eurosceptic and populist political group, without unified

ideological orientation. The very Euroscepticism is one of the main themes of this party and is part of its anti-elitist and anti-establishment orientation. In softer form, it shared also by ANO 2011. Even SMC's leader Miro Cerar was expressing some (although rather moderate) Euroscepticism before the 2014 elections.⁴ However, he abandoned it when became Prime Minister.

The most evident common trait of these three – and majority of other – leader-based parties is their anti-establishment attitude. They perceive established political elites as unified category, characterised by selfishness, irresponsibility and wide set of related malpractices. These elites are often accused as the ones that 'betrayed the people' and thus have to be punished. It is no surprise that one of the main themes of these anti-establishment parties is combat against corruption – this holds particularly for those from Central and Eastern Europe (see Bageholm 2013). Programs of M5S, ANO 2011 and SMC strongly emphasise corruption and one of the main political 'diseases' that block development of society – and, of course, blame established elites for its spread. Their common approach is 'moralisation of politics', i.e. proclaiming moral renewal of politics and bringing higher standards of political culture (Cabada and Tomšič 2016). In the case of ANO 2011 and its leader Babiš, this is complemented by 'managerist approach', based on the notion of 'politics as business' according to which the country should be run as a business firm. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive since they have in common rejection of 'old' political establishment and its allegedly malign deeds.

7. Conclusion

Growing distrust in political parties that is characteristic for both 'old' and 'new' European democracies opens the door for political newcomers to enter into party space. They build their appeal on denouncing of established political elite and on promotion of personal traits of their leaders.

With the rise of anti-establishment politics, classical left-right dichotomy in politics loses much of its relevance. "Anti-establishment parties profit from the assumption that the ideological and even pragmatic differences between

⁴ In the interview he gave to national television's website, he claimed that Slovenia need more self-confidence in relations with Brussels. "In the last years, I saw mostly servility of Slovenian representatives. We nodded to Brussels in every matter..." (<http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/cerar-v-kljucnih-zadevah-se-moramo-sporazumeti-sicer-nam-ni-resitve/338452>).

the mainstream parties have diminished in many important policy areas such as the economy, the environment and the family, and also in European and foreign affairs.” (Hartleb 2015, 43) Traditional parties of both centre-right and centre-left are thus portrayed by the newcomers as unified group, i.e. as ‘political class’ with common *esprit de corps*, detached from the interests of common people and focused mainly on preservation of its privileges. Parties that rest on anti-ideological platform promote policy issues like combating corruption and government effectiveness that transcend classical ideological divisions.

Person-based politics is far from necessarily being non-ideological. Some of them can be easily position on the left-right spectrum. Even with respect to the parties that proclaim themselves as non-ideological or even non-political can one detect ideological elements – if not in their programs then in their day-to day conduct. However, their ideological profile of often unclear since it is composed of diverse or even contradictory features. This usually results in incoherent policy-orientations and – in the case of parties in power – inconsistent political conduct.

The irony is that some of these new-comers who loudly denounced their established competitors as corrupt and otherwise problematic, themselves carry ‘heavy baggage’ in terms of involvement in different suspicious practices (as is evidently the case with Andrej Babiš) culture (Cabada and Tomšič 2016). In the case when they come to positions of power, the moralistic discourse can easily return to them as a ‘boomerang’.

We can state that due to their ideological vagueness and thus policy-oriented inconsistencies of many person-based political parties, they can hardly be perceived as some meaningful enrichment of political space in terms of offering innovative alternatives. However, their appearance represents useful stimulus for established parties to improve their image, program and conduct.

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SECURITY POLICY: THE NATURE OF CONFLICT DETERMINES THE NATURE OF STRATEGY

Frank Aragbonfoh Abumere

University of Tromsø, Norway

E-mail: frank.a.abumere@uit.no

Abstract: *Some conflicts might simply be caused by 'material' factor alone or 'ideational' factor alone. But generally, many conflicts embody both material and ideational factors; this makes such conflicts very complex. However, when attempting to resolve such conflicts, many times we fall into the danger of two extremities; exclusively relying on material resources or exclusively relying on ideational resources. This paper contends that the nature of a conflict should determine the nature of the strategy that will be formulated and implemented to resolve the conflict. Therefore, complex strategies which combine material and ideational resources are required to deal with complex conflicts. Consequently, the paper proposes the equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy as an effective security policy or framework for complex conflicts.*

Keywords: *Adaptation, Africa, Conflict, Equilibrium, Security Policy, Strategy.*

1. Introduction

In most conflicts, complexity is the norm rather than the exception. There might be particular and simple conflicts in which explanatorily material or ideational factor¹ alone might be at once a necessary and sufficient condition for the causation of the conflicts. Nevertheless, generally conflicts are usually complex; in complex conflicts, none of material and ideational factors is at once a necessary and sufficient condition for the causation. In other words, while simple conflicts are caused by either material factor alone or ideational factor alone, complex conflicts are caused by both material and ideational factors. The subject matter of this paper is: In view of the complexity of

¹ By 'material': on the one hand, I mean coercive, military and militant factors; on the other hand, I mean economic factor. While by 'ideational': on the one hand, I mean ideas such as democracy, the rule of law, freedom, human rights, capitalism, socialism, communism, nationalism, etc.; on the other hand, I mean negative religious ideas, ethnicism, tribalism, etc. Here, material factor is similar to 'hard power' while ideational factor is similar to 'soft power'.

conflicts and the causal roles played by material and ideational factors, is there any one factor that is at once necessary and sufficient for not only explaining the cause of conflicts, but more importantly, for resolving or managing conflicts? In responding to the above question I shall be working with the following hypotheses. First, there is no one factor that is at once necessary and sufficient for resolving or managing conflicts. While each factor is necessary, none is sufficient. Second, in simple conflicts, one of the factors might be sufficient, but in complex cases no single factor is sufficient. Third, consequently we should neither jettison any one factor nor totally accept any one factor. Fourth, then we should adopt a twin-strategy, *equilibrium and adaptation*, which will allow us to deal with the complexity and 'multifacetedness' of conflicts. To concretize, contextualize and operationalize my hypotheses and position, I shall generally focus on intra-state conflicts in Africa and particularly focus on proffering security policy to deal with the conflicts.

This paper consists of five two parts. In the first part, I shall present a general descriptive analysis of conflicts in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa. Conflicts are man-made phenomena; they are caused by the activities of humans. The descriptive analysis will help us identify the different human activities which cause intra-state conflicts in Africa. The analysis will tackle the complexity of intra-state conflicts in Africa and the multifaceted nature of the activities that cause such conflicts. In view of the complexity of intra-state conflicts in Africa and the multifaceted nature of the activities that cause conflicts in Africa, I will argue in the second part of the paper that it is imperative for the security policies of African states to have a mixture of adequate material and ideational resources at the policy level, and to be flexible enough to be adapted to different contexts at the implementation level. In the end, I will propose a twin-strategy that meets the above two requirements.

2. Complex Intra-State Conflicts in Africa

States in Africa are not only plagued by ordinary conflicts. At one point or the other, many African were devastated by civil wars. Currently, some of them are being plagued by civil wars and terrorism. Whether it was civil war in Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Liberia, Libya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, etc. or Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroun, or Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya, the continent had reasons and still has reasons to be worried (Abumere 2015, 2). It is no news that the African continent is

littered with conflicts. “We can go on and on mentioning case after case and country after country; the final analysis is that the situation of the sub-continent is a misnomer. So, rather than mentioning case after case and country after country, I shall concentrate on some of the worst cases and countries namely Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo” (Ibid.).

2.1. Nigeria

Alongside South Africa, Nigeria is one of the most (politically and economically) powerful countries in Africa. The largest economy, most populous country and the leading entertainment country in Africa, Nigeria is a paradox; despite the positive qualities mentioned above, Nigeria still epitomizes the nature of intra-state conflicts in Africa. Since political independence, Nigeria has had twenty-eight years of woefully disappointing civilian rule and thirty years of brutal military dictatorship. Alongside the civil war, the numerous religious and ethnic conflicts, there have been assassinations of heads of state; Tafawa Balewa in January, 1966 and Aguiyi Ironsi in July, 1966. There have been several coups: Awolowo-planned coup, 1963; Five-Majors Coup in January, 1966; Northern Military Officers Coup in July, 1966; July 1975 coup; Dimka Coup in February, 1976; Buhari Coup in December, 1983; Babangida Coup in August, 1985; Vatsa Coup in December, 1985; Orkar Coup in April, 1990; Abacha Coup in November, 1993; Obasanjo and Others Coup in 1995; and Diya and Others Coup in 1997.²

In my opinion the civil war is the greatest catastrophe that has befallen Nigeria since the October 1, 1960 independence. But Nigeria was able to navigate its way through the civil war and still remains ‘one Nigeria’, although with unnecessary loss of numerous precious lives and properties. Nevertheless, since the civil war (1967 – 1970), nothing in recent history has plagued, and is still plaguing, Nigeria like Boko Haram. More importantly and imminently, is the resolution or management of the Boko Haram insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria especially, and other parts of Northern Nigeria. The containment of the Boko Haram insecurity is the least that can be done to safeguard lives and properties in Northern Nigeria in general and North-Eastern Nigeria in particular. Boko Haram has cancerously invaded the Nigerian body or system that getting rid of it, resolving it or ‘managing’ it seems more difficult than the Herculean task of cleaning the Augean stables. It seems more like Pandora’s Box. Nigeria has opened the box and can no longer control the content that has been let out.

² The coups are named after the leaders or alleged leaders of the coups, or those who took over power after the coups.

In any conceivable form of measuring security, and whatever methodological way security is measured, Nigeria fails woefully. In the Failed States index - an annual special report by the Foreign Policy Magazine and the Fund for Peace - in 2010, 2011 and 2012 Nigeria was ranked 14th while in 2013 it was ranked 16th alongside countries like Somalia, Iraq, etc. (Foreign Policy 2013). The index has five categories ranging from the worst cases to the best cases: Critical; In Danger; Borderline; Stable; and Most Stable. In all the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 rankings, Nigeria is placed in the worst cases, that is, Nigeria is termed a critical case. With the Boko Haram terrorist group ravaging Nigeria, there is no surprise that Nigeria appeared on the failed States index and is ranked as a critical state and one of the most insecure places in the world. Furthermore, the African Insurance Organisation, in October 2012, ranked Nigeria - which accounts for twenty-five percent of all the kidnapping cases in the world - as the 'Kidnap-for-Ransom Capital of the World.' According to the ranking, "Somalia, which had been in the business of sea piracy and kidnappings long before Nigeria joined the 'league', has long been overtaken by Nigeria" (Thisday 2012). While kidnapping is a different form of insecurity and is not a typical case of conflict, many kidnappings are by-products of the economic conflicts in the Niger Delta. The insecurity in Nigeria takes different forms; it takes the form of typical conflicts and also it takes the form of serious criminality. No wonder Nigeria was ranked "the sixth most dangerous African country to live in" by the Global Peace Index in June 2012 (Ibid.).

Although Nigerian conflicts are mostly ethnic and religious, there have been some that were glaringly due to the crude oil in the Niger Delta. Petroleum was already a factor in Nigerian conflicts as far back as the Nigerian Civil War. Oil played a strategic role in the prosecution of the war. In oil-related conflicts in the Niger Delta, an estimated one thousand die every year. In this vein, Annegret Mähler argues that violence has increased in the Niger Delta because of "the involvement of security forces, politicians and businessmen in illegal oil theft" (2010, 3). When meeting with some Niger Delta youths on 16th April, 2004 President Olusegun Obasanjo admitted that due to insincerity on the parts of all stakeholders - governments, corporations, individuals, etc. - underdevelopment, abject poverty, insecurity and conflicts have engulfed the Niger Delta. Then he concluded that it is only when stakeholders become sincere in dealing with poor villagers of the Niger Delta that violence will be abated (Onyeukwu 2007, 24). Also, President Goodluck Jonathan conceded that the Niger Delta conflicts are as a result of underdevelopment and decades of social and economic neglect which the

people have been subjected to by various governments, oil companies and other agents (Gentile 2012).

In the Niger Delta, over fifty thousand civilians have been killed by government security apparatus. In 1990, there were killings in Umuechem. In the 1990s, Ogoni women were raped and Ogoni people were massacred by soldiers led by Major General Paul Okutinmo. Similarly in 1999, Odi women were raped and Odi people were massacred by soldiers led by Colonel Agbiaka. The government of Obasanjo said the Odi killings in Bayelsa State were aimed at stopping militancy in Odi. But President Goodluck Jonathan, who was the deputy governor of Bayelsa State during the killings, said, "After that invasion, myself...and the governor entered Odi...Most of the people that died in Odi were mostly old men, women and children; none of the militants was killed.... If bombarding Odi was to solve the problem... the attack on Odi never solved the militancy problem and we had more challenges after that attack on Odi" (Vanguard 2012). Due to the gruesome nature of the Odi massacre, some human rights activists in Nigeria unsuccessfully campaigned for Obasanjo to be charged to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

Also there were massacres in Odioma in 2005, and Agge in 2008. Some of the people who have suffered more than others due to the actions and omissions of the oil companies and various governments are the Ogoni people. Thus, they formed the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). The former MOSOP leaders, human right activists, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel and John Kpuine were hanged by the Abacha government in November, 1995. On 9 June, 2009 The Guardian newspaper of the United Kingdom reported that "the oil giant Shell has agreed to pay \$15.5m (£9.6m) in settlement of a legal action in which it was accused of having collaborated in the execution of the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other leaders of the Ogoni tribe of southern Nigeria" (Pilkington 2009). The same newspaper opined that the settlement "falls short of full justice" (Vidal 2009). One of the witnesses who testified against Ken Saro-Wiwa and others revealed that he was bribed by Shell to testify falsely. At one point, Shell was in charge of fifty percent of the oil production in the Niger Delta and the profit it made from the Niger Delta was reported to be forty percent of its global profit. So, collaborating with Sani Abacha to execute the human rights activists protects Shell's business interests.

After over twenty-five years of non-violent resistance, the injustice in the Niger Delta gave birth to militant groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People's Volunteer

Force (NDPVF), Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF), Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV), People's Liberation Force (PLF), Central MEND, Outlaws, Avengers, etc. Although most conflicts in Nigeria are due to other factors such as ethnicism, religion, etc., the conflicts in the Niger Delta as described in this paper are all exclusively due to the abundance of oil and gas there. Of course there are non-oil-related conflicts in the Niger Delta, but very few. The extent of the devastation conflicts have caused in the Niger Delta might not be easy to gauge or measure. But I think the devastating effects are clear enough if we realize that these are conflicts that have led to: the loss of lives of people who are mostly the bread-winners of their families; the loss of properties of people who can barely replace those properties; the destruction of the means of livelihood of people who barely have alternatives; the displacement of people which has made them destitute and internal refugees; and the scaring away of potential investors and the abandonment of actual investments by investors. As the apex bank in Africa, Africa Development Bank (AfDB) says in its Africa Economic Outlook 2011 report, widespread insecurity remains a key challenge for Nigeria and "containing political, civil and ethnic unrest, especially in the Niger Delta region, remains a challenge" (AfDB 2011, 214).

In summary, conflicts in Nigeria are as complex as they are multifaceted. While some conflicts are due to economic reasons, some are due to sheer coercive, military or militant reasons, some are merely political, some are based on ethnicism, religion, etc. and others are a combination of two or more factors. For instance, the Itsekiri and Urhobo crisis was mainly ethnic, just as the Jukun and Tiv was mainly ethnic. The Kafanchan conflict between Christians and Muslims was religious, just as the Maitatsine crisis was religious. The current Fulani Herdsmen menace is based on trespassing on agricultural land. But the Boko Haram terrorism is mainly based on religion and politics. Nevertheless, economic deprivation and lack of education play crucial part in aiding it. The civil war was largely based on ethnic and geopolitical differences. But oil had a part to play in the strategic execution of the war. These are just a few of the many conflicts that have bedevilled Nigeria. In view of the foregoing discussion, we can deduce that conflicts in Nigeria can be due to material factor alone just as they can be due to ideational factor alone; but they are largely due to a combination of both factors. While one factor may play a prominent role in a conflict, the presence of the other factor helps aggravate such conflict. So, in dealing with such conflicts, it is important to consider both factors

2.2. Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), like Nigeria, is abundantly endowed with natural resources. But like Nigeria, it is also resource-cursed. Its abysmal economic and political performance in spite of plentiful natural resources is, like that of Nigeria, another typical paradox of plenty. Like the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the DRC's Katanga region is so rich in natural resources that colonial geologists described it as a "veritable geological scandal" (Jones 2008, 8). For they had never seen one region so endowed with abundant natural resources of different kinds. Ironically, the region is now rife with different kinds of conflicts, social, economic and political problems because of its natural resources. Resource conflicts in the DRC can be traced back to one hundred and forty-seven years ago, 1871. In that year, Sir Henry Stanley, an explorer of the British Empire, travelled on the River Congo route, explored the Congo and discovered that the Congo was abundantly endowed with natural resources (Carpenter 2012, 3). On hearing Sir Stanley's discovery, the King of Belgium - King Leopold II - set up the *Association Internationale Africaine* in order to colonize the Congo (Ibid.), and of course, ultimately exploit its resources. King Leopold II owned the Congo as a private property rather than as a colony of Belgium. Even during the scramble for Africa and the resultant partitioning of Africa, the European imperialists and colonialists at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 respected King Leopold II's 'property right.' It was only in 1908 that he made Congo a Belgian colony (Carpenter 2012, 3 - 4). Among other serious harms and damages, King Leopold II's brutal oppression and exploitation resulted in the death of around ten million people which was half or fifty percent of the population then (Carpenter 2012, 4; Hochschild 1998).

After independence in 1960 when Patrice Lumumba was democratically elected to head the new government, he strongly believed, and asserted in his inaugural speech, that political independence without economic independence would still leave the country in imperial chains. Not pleased with Lumumba's resolve to make the country economically independent of imperial powers which did not want to relinquish their control of abundant natural resources in the country, the United States of America and Belgium - as confirmed by the then CIA chief in Congo - plotted the assassination of Lumumba. The United States of America and Belgium "sent aid to anti-Lumumba factions, and in 1961, Lumumba was assassinated" (Carpenter 2012, 4). Lumumba was eventually succeeded by Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko whose *coup d'état* was "endorsed by the USA in 1965" (Carpenter 2012, 4). Despite his very long run oppression of his people and plunder of his country, not least the stashing away of US\$4 billion in Swiss banks, Mobutu Sese Seko

was referred to as “one of our most valued friends” by President George Bush, Sr. (Carpenter 2012, 5). Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled for over three decades, effectively ruled the DRC as if he were running his own private business. He plundered and squandered the resources of the country even as Congolese were dying in conflicts and dying of poverty. After the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko, his successor, Laurent Kabila, merely followed his footsteps. The latter governed the DRC as if he came to power to accomplish, ironically, the mission which was begun by the man he overthrew.

Alongside other conflicts, the DRC has experienced two protracted and wasteful civil wars. Nearly six million people have lost their lives due to these conflicts. Out of the 5.4 million people who lost their lives between 1996 and 2010 because of violent conflicts, 45% are children. Although the war has officially ended, 45,000 people still die monthly in the seemingly never-ending war that is “the deadliest war since World War II” (Carpenter 2012, 11). Regrettably, in the DRC “more than a thousand people die every day in the chaos caused by militias fighting over the minerals used to make chips for cell phones and laptops” (Wenar 2008, 6). With this destructive war still raging, it is not any surprise that the DRC remains one of the poorest countries in the world. On every - and any imaginable - economic and political indicator or metric, the DRC performs dismally. The lives of its 60 million people, like the lives of those who have been sent to early graves, are wastefully, in Hobbesian terms, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

The conflicts in the DRC make the resources of the country a free-for-all affair which in turn fuels the already existing conflicts. Columbite-Tantalite, popularly known as coltan, particularly attracts plunderers to DRC which has 64% to 80% of the world’s deposit of coltan. It is “the most profitable natural resource the Congo possesses, more so than gold or diamonds, and one of the most cherished minerals in the world....It is fundamental in sustaining and developing our civilization as it is used in almost all modern technological devices” (Carpenter 2012, 6). At the ‘formal’ end of the second civil war, which started in 1998 and ended in 2002/2003, no less than “seven foreign governments, sometimes in collusion with mining companies,” were involved in plundering the country’s resources (Gilpin and Downie 2009, 2). No wonder the second civil war was referred to as ‘world war.’ The DRC is home to around one-third of the world’s cobalt and about two-thirds of the world’s coltan. It “is also extravagantly endowed with copper, cassiterite (tin ore), diamonds, and gold. Yet this abundance of riches has led to war and poverty instead of peace and prosperity” (Ibid.). The DRC, which is as huge as the whole of Western Europe, is home to minerals including uranium, diamonds, gold, tin, cobalt, coltan, etc. worth US\$ 24 trillion which “equals the combined

GDP of Europe and the United States” (Carpenter 2012, 5; Noury 2010, 35). In plundering and in trade, both legal and illegal, natural resources worth around US\$6 million are shipped, flown, driven or taken out of the DRC every day (Carpenter 2012, 5).

In summary, in the DRC, if there is anything that has any practical meaning, surely it is not the United Nations Declaration (1962) which says that “the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the state concerned.” Surely, if natural resources have not been blessings to Africa, then they have not been blessings to the DRC. If natural resources have been curses to Africa, then they have been curses to the DRC. If oil is the Devil’s excrement in Nigeria, coltan is the Devil’s excrement in the DRC. Coltan and other resources have not been gifts to Congolese. Coltan and other resources are Trojan Horses to Congolese. In the case of the DRC as described above, I focused on how natural resources have caused conflicts in the DRC. But the conflicts are not as simple as the above description seems to portray them. The conflicts are some of the most complicated or complex conflicts on the sub-continent. While the economic factor is very prominent, the military or sheer coercive and militant factors are also prominent. So also the ethnic factor is prominent. For instance the Hutu and Tutsi conflict in Rwanda spilled over to the DRC. Even the battle between capitalism and socialism was prominent shortly after independence. The DRC was one of the places where the so-called Cold War was not cold but hot. One wonders if Lumumba were not socialist inclined and was not tending towards the Soviet Union, if he were rather capitalist inclined and tending towards the United States, whether he was not going to live longer than thirty-five years and govern for more than a few months. Currently, President Joseph Kabila’s refusal to step down from power or hold elections even though his tenure has expired has thrown the country into yet another round of conflict. The DRC, unfortunately, is an ideal place to look at if we want to see how material and ideational factors interplay in complex conflicts.

2.3. Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo are not exceptions

Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo are not exceptions. The complexity of conflicts described in Nigeria and DRC is not peculiar to the two countries; other African countries are not immune to these sorts of conflicts. For instance, in Southern Africa, Angola is another poster child of such complex conflicts. Behind Nigeria, Angola is the second largest oil producer and exporter in Africa. It is also the fourth largest source of diamonds in the

world. Angola's oil and diamond revenues were used by both the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to finance the twenty-five-year civil war. Describing how the Angolan civil war was fought and won, Tony Hodges says revenues from oil and diamond were essential means to winning the war, and are the spoils the victor gets for winning the war (2004). On one side, Jose Eduardo dos Santos' MPLA which controlled the extraction of oil was supported by Cuba and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR). On the other side, Jonas Savimbi's UNITA which controlled the extraction of diamonds was supported by South Africa and the United States of America (USA). As we saw in the case of DRC, Angola is another case where the so-called Cold War was not cold but hot. So while the militant, economic and ethnic factors were prominent, we cannot rule out the capitalist/socialist factor as a reinforcing factor in the conflict.

It was the use of blood diamonds by UNITA to finance its rebellion that led to the creation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. With Jonas Savimbi on one side and Jose Eduardo dos Santos on the other side, Angola fought a civil war from 1977 to 2002 that finally ended with the death of Savimbi. Add this civil war to the thirteen years liberation war Angola fought against the Portuguese who would not let Angola be free because chiefly, among other factors, Angola was already booming with oil and diamond. Then we have thirty-eight years of wars. Like the Niger Delta of Nigeria, Cabinda is the oil hub of Angola, and the Cabinda province is to Angola what the Katanga region is to DRC. Just as the Niger Deltans and the people of the Katanga region are plagued by poverty so also the Cabindans are plagued by poverty. And just as the Niger Delta and Katanga regions are rife with conflicts, so also Cabinda is rife with conflicts. In short, conflicts are a common denominator of the Niger Delta, Katanga and Cabinda. So, just like Nigeria and DRC, Angola is another poster child of resource conflicts where corruption, conflicts, bad governance, underdevelopment and abject poverty are the order of the day. Poverty, conflicts, authoritarianism, lack of respect for the rule of law, corruption, so on and so forth, are rife in Angola. These phenomena have contributed to fuelling conflicts in Angola. Angola, in a nutshell, is a "successful failed state" (de Oliveira 2007, 617). In the end, it is apt to say that oil and diamonds are not gifts to Angolans. They are Trojan Horses! The fact that Angola, having already fought a thirteen-year liberation war, fought a twenty-five year civil war from 1977 to 2002 tells us a lot about the complexity of the Angolan case.

In West Africa, Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) is just re-emerging from the rubbles of a civil war. Mali has just barely survived a civil war. Chad has just

returned from the brink of a civil war. Sierra Leone fought a civil war that brought the country to its knees. Sierra Leone is now infamous for its 'blood diamonds.' Liberia with monstrous Charles Taylor is another story altogether. Chad, Mali and Niger are hubs of Al Qaeda. While Nigeria is the home of Boko Haram which has spread to parts of Cameroun, Chad and Niger. As for East and Central Africa, with Joseph Kone and his Lord's Resistance Army shuttling between East and Central Africa, moving around Uganda, DRC and Rwanda, peace is still far from the people of that axis. In East Africa, the dictator Yoweri Museveni and the rebel Joseph Kone have turned Uganda into a theatre of conflicts. Sudan was split into two countries by its civil war. Somalia is still a failed state and is still ravaged by Al-Shabaab. Rwanda is infamous for genocide, and Burundi plunged into another conflict not too long ago.

As already mentioned, ethnic factor, religious factor, political factor, etc. have combined to make conflicts complex in Africa. Among the prominent factors responsible for conflicts in Africa, the economic factor is very paradoxical when it has to do with natural resources that should have brought development to the continent. Ironically the abundance of natural resources in Africa has helped fuelled conflicts. No wonder there is nowhere in the world that resource curse is more prominent than Africa. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler empirically showed that resource-rich countries, compared to non-resource-rich countries, are more prone to civil conflicts. According to them, non-resource-rich countries only have a 0.5% probability of civil conflicts. But resource rich countries with 26% of resources to GDP have a 23% probability of civil conflicts (1998).

3. Balanced and Flexible Security Policy

In order for African states to resolve or manage complex conflicts, the continent needs security policies that are at once balanced and flexible. On the one hand, by balanced security policy, I mean security policy that neither gives precedence to the material factor nor to the ideational factor, rather it contains adequate material and ideational resources to deal with complex conflicts. The three merits of a balanced security policy are: it has material resources to deal with conflicts that require material resources; it has ideational resources to deal with conflicts that require ideational resources; and it can combine both material and ideational resources to deal with conflicts that require both material and ideational resources. On the other hand, by flexible security policy I mean security policy that is not only suitable for material factor or ideational factor, but can be adapted to suit material

factor, ideational factor, and a combination of both material and ideational factors (Abumere 2015, 7).

As Joseph Nye (2011, 212) says, “too rigid an approach to strategy can be counterproductive”. In order to have a balanced and flexible security policy, we need to adopt a twin-strategy, namely equilibrium and adaptation, which equilibrates material and ideational resources on one level, and adapts the resources to suit particular conflicts on another level (Abumere 2015, 7). A strategy ought to be flexible enough to be adaptable to various contexts. Any security strategy should serve as the nexus between means and ends. For this reason, the focus is how to use available resources (means) to achieve desired goals (ends). “A strategy relates means to ends, and that requires clarity about goals (preferred outcomes), resources, and tactics for their use” (Nye 2011, 208).

The equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy is a two-level strategy. Equilibrium is the first level, upper level, general level, theoretical level or policy level. While adaptation is the second level, lower level, special level, practical level or implementation level. Here the concept of equilibrium is borrowed from microeconomics. In microeconomics, market equilibrium helps balance the forces of supply and demand. The two main advantages of market equilibrium are that it helps eliminate surpluses and shortages, or at least it helps to reduce the level, duration and frequency of surpluses and shortages in a competitive market. In this adoption of (market) equilibrium, African states will deal with the coercive, economic and ideational factors as if they were supply and demand and then employ equilibrium to balance them so that there will neither be surplus of material factor and shortage of ideational factor nor surplus of ideational factor and shortage of material factor (Abumere 2015, 7). This will not be an end in itself; rather it will be a means – strategy – to deal with complex and multifaceted conflicts especially as they concern conducting security policies in Africa.

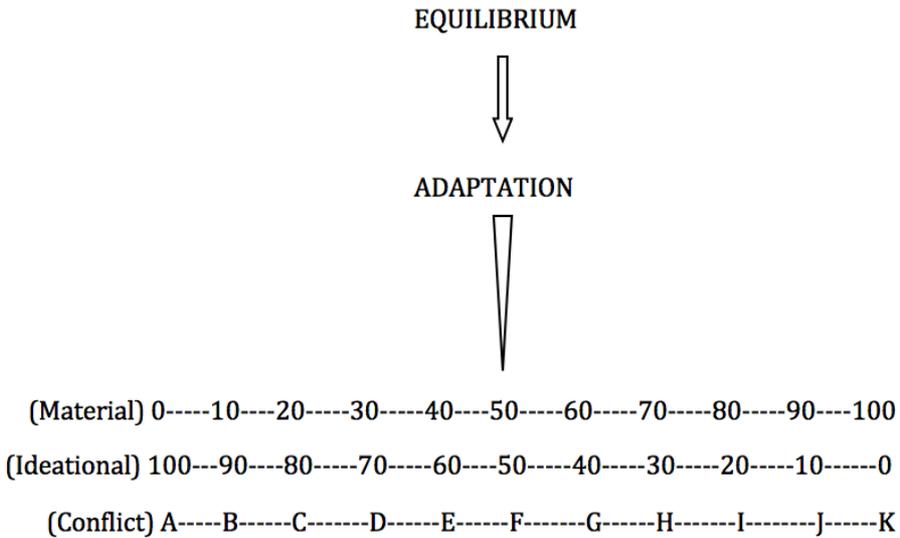
On the first or policy level, equilibrium demands that both material and ideational factors are given equal consideration. But on the second or implementation level, adaptation demands that the conflict determines ‘the adaptation of equilibrium’ to be material, ideational, equal material and ideational, more material and less ideational or less material and more ideational. In other words, equilibrium, on the one hand, says we must have adequate material and ideational resources or means to pursue foreign and security policies. On the other hand, adaptation says the particular resources or means we use, and the amount of it we use, depends on what the conflict requires. For “contextual intelligence, the ability to understand an evolving environment and capitalize on trends, will become a crucial skill in enabling

leaders to convert power resources into successful strategies” (Nye 2011, xvii).

This equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy is based on the model Joseph Nye used in his notion of smart power which is the combination of hard power (military and economic) and soft power (persuasion and attraction) (2011, xiii). In my case, I see smart strategy as the combination of the material factor with the ideational factor. After all, “a smart...strategy must be able to handle very different distributions of power in different domains and understand the trade-offs among them” (Nye 2011, 213). While equilibrium is important because it is the base of a smart strategy in the sense that it allows room for adequate material and ideational resources without shortages or surpluses of one or the other, adaptation is important because it allows room for the effective utilization of available resources in various contexts. So, the fundamental question adaptation asks is; “in a given situation, are you more likely to succeed at reasonable time and cost with the command behaviour of hard power or with the co-optive behaviour of agenda-setting, persuasion, and attraction or a combination of the two” (Nye 2011, 209). In other words, the guiding question is: will material resource be more successful than ideational resource; or will ideational resource be more successful than material resource; or will a combination of the two resources be more successful?

Employing the equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy, in order to use available resources or means to achieve desired ends or preferred goals, we follow the following steps or ask the following questions: (i) “*what goals or outcomes are preferred?*”; (ii) “*what resources are available and in which contexts?*”; (iii) “*what are the positions and preferences of the targets of influence attempts?*”; (iv) “*which forms of power behaviour are most likely to succeed?*”; (v) “*what is the probability of success?*” (Nye 2011, 208–209). Depending on the answers to the five questions, then we will know whether we should rely on material factor alone, ideational factor alone, material factor and ideational factor of equal amount, more material factor and less ideational factor or less material factor and more ideational factor. The diagram below illustrates the equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy with various possible combinations of material and ideational factors in different conflicts.

Figure 1: The Equilibrium and Adaptation Twin-Strategy



Source: Own

‘Conflict A’ which is purely an ideational problem requires 0 percent material resource and 100 percent ideational resource. So also conflict K which is purely a material problem requires 0 percent ideational resource and 100 percent material resource. But conflict F which is both material and ideational problem of equal measure requires fifty percent ideational resource and fifty percent material resource. Conflicts B, C, D and E which are more of ideational problems and less of material problems require more ideational resources and less material resources. So also conflicts G, H, I and J which are more of material problems and less of ideational problems require more material resources and less ideational resources.

Nevertheless, in adopting the above twin-strategy, we need to bear in mind that the processes involved in, and the results of, or the means and ends of, security policy, strategy and conflict management are neither mathematical certainties nor laws of physics. What Sven Steinmo says about the study of politics is true for security policy, strategy and conflict management. He says, “the study of politics is not, and cannot be, like physics, because what we study and what we are interested in explaining are not inanimate objects to which absolute, invariant and fixed laws apply” (Steinmo 2008, 134). In view of the above caveat, the equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy is like an ideal type. According to Max Weber, “an ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great

many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct” (1949, 90) [emphasis is original]. In essence, ideal type is wholly and only a depiction of a model-phenomenon that is not only imaginable but also adequately representative of the realities it depicts. It is to it that the realities it represents or real cases are to be approximated. But it neither stands for ‘perfection’ nor is it the ‘average’ of what it represents (Weber 1949, 90 – 92). As a Weberian ideal type, ‘the equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy’ neither stands for perfection nor is it the average of the security policies or strategies of African states. But it is to it that the realities of the security policies and strategies of African states should be approximated.

In order for security policies to approximate the equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy, there are three levels of analysis: theoretical (policy) level; practical (implementation) level; and theoretical-cum-practical (policy-cum-implementation) level. On the theoretical or policy level, the security policy of a state is analysed to see how it embodies the material/ideational dilemma, and then proffer ‘equilibrium’ as the right strategy. On the practical or implementation level, the actual conduct of security policy by a state is analysed to determine whether such conduct is actually ‘material’, ‘ideational’, or material and ideational, and then proffer ‘adaptation’ as the right strategy. While on the policy level we analyse *sui generis* the security policy of a state and on the practical level we analyse *sui generis* the actual conduct of security policy by a state, on the policy-cum-implementation level we analyse the extent to which the provisions of the security policy of a state influence actual conduct of security policy by the state, and the extent to which actual conduct of security policy by a state reflects the guidelines of security policy of the state. Then we proffer equilibrium-cum-adaptation as a twin-strategy.

4. Conclusion

In view of the material and ideational complexity in conflicts, one might say that material factor should be given precedence at the expense of ideational factor or vice versa. In other words, one factor should be given absolute consideration while the other factor should be totally discounted (Abumere 2015, 8). Accepting the material factor and rejecting the ideational factor or accepting the ideational factor and rejecting the material factor is a simple way of dealing with the problem (Ibid.). But this simple way is not helpful because the problem we are dealing with is complex. For complex

problems need complex solutions. We need to recognize that although there are simple cases of conflicts that are caused by material factor or ideational factor, there are complex cases that are caused by both material and ideational factors. So also although there are simple cases that can be dealt with by using only material resource or ideational resource, there are complex cases that need both material and ideational resources (Ibid.). For the above reason, I propose the equilibrium and adaptation twin-strategy.

On the first level, *equilibrium*, the proper way to deal with the problem is to create a balance: between the absolute consideration of material factor and totally discounting ideational factor; and between totally discounting material factor and absolute consideration of ideational factor. In other words, countries affected by conflicts should adopt a strategy which will create equilibrium: between the absolute consideration of material factor and totally discounting ideational factor; and between totally discounting material factor and absolute consideration of ideational factor (Ibid.). In the context of our subject matter, the absolute consideration of material factor and the total discounting of ideational factor on the one side, and the total discounting of material factor and the absolute consideration of ideational factor on the other side can be dealt with properly on two levels (Ibid.). On the first level, they can be dealt with as if they were supply and demand and then employ equilibrium to balance them. Therefore, situations of 'surpluses' and 'shortages', or in our context the situations of the material-ideational complexity in conflicts, will be eliminated or at least reduced. On the second level, the proposed strategy is flexible enough to be adaptable to any conflict (Ibid.).

In conclusion, as Joseph Nye says, "power always depends on context" (Nye 2011, xiv). Consequently, on the one hand, using material power in a context that requires ideational power will be counterproductive or at least will lead to failure. So also, on the other hand, using ideational power in a context that requires material power will be counterproductive or at least will lead to failure (Abumere 2015, 8). Material power is useless in a context that requires ideational power, so also ideational power is useless in a context that requires material power. In a context that requires both material and ideational power, using only material power or ideational power will not yield us the success we need (Ibid.). "It will be tantamount to using one drug to cure an illness that needs a combination of drugs. While we may have a temporary respite or relief, we will not have the cure we need. For the treatment is an incomplete one. So also the cure will be an incomplete one" (Ibid.). Therefore, "in the relationship between security policy and conflicts, the nature of the conflict

should determine the nature of the strategy that is formulated and implemented to deal with the conflict” (Abumere 2015, 8 – 9).

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DE-LINKING EPISTEMOLOGY: UNLEARNING TO RE-LEARN

Sayan Dey

Visiting Faculty, Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University, Noida

E-mail: sayandey89@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The Indian (post)colonial scenario flourishes in a highly dilemmatic state with spiritual-mythological interpretations (through caste, creed and communities) on one side and colonial mimicry on the other. The physical colonial empires have receded long time back to create metaphysical empires, underpinned with colonial grammatology. So, in order to engage with different aspects of decoloniality (especially in the Indian point of view), it is important to interrogate the persisting paradigm of (post)colonial knowledge production. This paper focuses on the problems of coloniality or metaphysical coloniality and explores the possibilities of pluriversal thinking and pluritopic hermeneutics that persist outside the colonially structured perceptions of center-periphery analysis.*

Keywords: *spiritual-mythological, mimicry, decoloniality, (post)colonial, metaphysical, pluriversal*

1. Introduction

Since the emergence of postcolonial era in the latter half of 20th century, the global constructs of knowledge production have always displayed an unquestionable affinity towards Westcentric theories and philosophies. Every discipline, which have attained a global repute, are usually sanctioned and institutionalized by the West before they are globally channelized and accepted. On the one hand, this process of Westcentrism has established epistemic hegemonies across the globe and on the other hand, they have systematized and authenticated their authority within definite philosophical compartments. In spite of experiential differences, the Westcentered philosophies continue to function as the backdrop of knowledge production in the contemporary era. This allows the continuation of colonial legacies masqueraded within the notion of postcoloniality. Therefore, the paradigm of global (post)colonial knowledge production, through different socio-cultural, geo-political and spatio-temporal episodes, has engineered a confused

epistemological space which exposes the collision between 'liberty as a colonially emancipated, existential space' and 'self-realizing and self-asserting liberty as a usual phenomenon of existence.'

With the passage of time, the physical colonial structures temporarily withered away to return back in a more powerful, systematic, convincing and de-structured forms. So, the (post)colonial production of knowledges survives under the illusion of indigenous originality, but in reality they continue to function within the colonially constructed frameworks. These frameworks are authenticated by a specific group of colonial spokespersons, who masquerade themselves as natives within their respective geographical and socio-cultural spaces. With respect to the contemporary (post)colonial scenario, India lives through a similar situation. In the name of 'being modern' the diverse institutes of existence (family, society, workplace, academia, etc.) usually function in an ambiguous and often in a contradictory fashion.

The 'theoretical boom' that took place during the World Wars and in the post World War era not only interrogated the prevailing existential attitudes, but also pushed the individuals to a promised land of happiness. It is this 'promised land' which motivated them to challenge the existent beliefs and dream of overcoming the nightmarish impacts of colonialism and warfare. But, very soon it was realized that the evolution of theoretical nomenclatures (Secularism, Existentialism, Marxism, Feminism, etc.) was a project logicalized by the Westcentric elites with a specific spatio-temporal significance. This is why, these theories might have generated optimistic social, cultural, economic and political transformations in the 'privileged West' but it became a grievous imposition for the 'non-West.' It can be understood through the postcolonial literary achievements in India which have usually attained (and still attains) its 'highest form' only after it has been recognized, accepted and recommended by the Western audience. The entire process of acceptance and recognition involves a systematic process of socio-cultural negotiations and ideological assimilations. Due to this, the already fragmented indigenous socio-political situation of colonial India got further disrupted in the postcolonial era. Keeping this argument at the backdrop, this paper looks forward to address the following questions:

- Why 'decolonial epistemologies' are important as a counterargument of colonially structured Westcentric postcolonial systems of knowledge production in the non-West?
- How the process of recovering the indigenous socio-cultural elements in contemporary India will enable the establishment

of a polyphonic, decolonial and dehierarchized 'epistemic grey line' of pluriversal thinking and doing?

Underpinned with these questions, the arguments ensure that in order to manufacture new philosophical perceptions it is important to transform our attitude towards understanding theories. The process of understanding theories within the Western epistemic frameworks usually involves two approaches – 'textual incorporation' and 'contextual implantation.' A (post)colonial phenomenon, 'textual incorporation' syringes the Western philosophical sensibilities as a 'must read' element within the individual psychologies irrespective of socio-cultural and geo-political differences. It is this process of indoctrination that leads to 'contextual implantation' in which the individuals forcefully position their real life experiences within the pre-constructed Westcentric epistemological frameworks. With respect to the Indian indigenous socio-cultural perspectives, this paper not only deviates from the globally established philosophical dimensions, but also makes a logical effort to conjure an alternate experientially structured decolonial, indigenous and polyphonic platform for epistemic interaction and interaction with each other.

The post-independent ideologies in India, framed and constituted by the different socio-cultural and political institutions, have always been highly debatable. It has provoked the individuals to interrogate the very idea of 'post.' The application of the so-called liberating socio-political perspectives in post-independent India, like secularism and democracy, produced ceaseless controversies. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi in one of his public address strongly debated that the ideology of secularism (the separation of the religion and the state) was never a part of Indian ways of thinking and doing (Bilgrami 2016a).

The following sections of the paper have been broadly dissected into two perspectives. Macrocosmically, it will genealogically trace the colonially designed epistemological and gnoseological frameworks which have haunted us over the ages. Microcosmically, it will identify the different socio-political and religious loopholes in India that were/are prominent, and which enabled the evolution of colonialism and its continuation in the form of meta-coloniality (metaphysical coloniality). This, altogether, will enable us to unlearn the colonial grammar and generate possibilities of shaping a multi-versal, poly-perspective, Indian epistemological platform.

2. Epistemology: Re-interrogating the Premise

The contemporary mode of knowledge production in this era of hyper-technocracy persists as a confused, assimilated structure that generates totalitarian and hegemonic dictates across the globe. This deductive approach (an analytical move from general to particular) that carries its lineage from the Euro-centric (and later West-centric) colonial discourse not only disrupted the togetherness of knowledge production but also generated a mode of “abyssal thinking¹” which divided the world into “this side” (the side governed by institutional laws and ethics) and “that side” (the side occupied by the barbaric beings governed through expropriation and violence) (Santos 2007, 45-50). This hierarchy continues to invade the modern world, may be in different shapes and forms, or in utter shapelessness, still bearing, preaching and practicing “some of that old discipline” (Zwick 2006) which once the colonial masters imposed upon their native servants.

It is very difficult to locate the epicenter of the colonially sponsored knowledge production, as the gargantuan colonial attire has fragmented and camouflaged itself into multiple stages of “meta-coloniality” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 487). The shift from the physically visible colonial empire to the metaphysically invisible empire continuously contributes towards the “objectification/thingification/commodification” (ibid., 490) of human civilization. This colonial invisibility has pushed the individuals from the “zone of being” (the geographical and socio-political spaces dominated, identified and privileged by the West) to the “zone of non-being” (the global spaces identified as degraded, dehumanized and underdeveloped by the West) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 92). They do not have a place in a “racially hierarchized, Euro-American-centric, Christian-centric, patriarchal ... [and] hetero-normative modern power structure” (Grosfoguel 2007, 210). The zones of being and the zones of non-being, which will be discussed through different circumstances in this paper, can be generally analyzed from the following perspectives:

- Misanthropic Skepticism: According to Nelson-Maldonado Torres (2007, 241), “Misanthropic Skepticism is a characteristic questioning attitude of modernity/coloniality, whereby the humanity of large part of humanity is questioned”. This phenomenon will enable us to understand how the metaphysical colonial catastrophe contributes towards the production of these two zones. Within the zone of

¹ The perception of abyssal thinking could be regarded as one of the colonially sponsored enunciating zone of exploiting the Global South.

being, the individuals and/or the institutions confirm “one’s status as a full human being with a broad range of potentials and possibilities even in precarious conditions of poverty” (Maldonado-Torres 2016, 13). While in the “zone of sub-humanity” (ibid.) the individuals does not have access to the basic means of existence and it is a usual aspect for everyone to question the humanity of the self and the others.

- Existential Ontology: The catastrophe of the zones of being and the zones of non-being could also be analyzed with respect to existential ontology. As Maldonado-Torres philosophizes, “If, following Jean-Paul Sartre, one defines ‘being’ as fullness and ‘non-being’ as transcendence from being or the indetermination of freedom, then metaphysical catastrophe creates a *zone below* the zones of being and non-being” (ibid.). In the zone of being, human existence is caught within the dilemma, of identity of the self on one hand and consciousness and freedom on the other. Sartre believed that human beings are “condemned to be free,” (Sartre 2007, 29) and in this manner they cannot escape the responsibility of freedom. Therefore, the perceptions, others have for one’s own self, are often accepted as ultimate confirmations to one’s self identity.

In nutshell, the individuals within the privileged zones of being, becomes the norm of a social order that has been systematically composed and globally authenticated over several centuries of colonization, and it’s continuity through coloniality.

The process of colonization has undergone geo-political, spatio-temporal and ideological shifts that consistently produced new epistemic frameworks of exploitation and it continues its journey even in the present era. It keeps on extending its tentacles “operating like an octopus in its domination of the world” (Nkrumah 1965, 9) and it is very much visible in American interventions in nations like Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan under the project of global human welfare. It is these western-centric (or more American-centric) civilizational projects which systematically normalizes the most inhuman, unethical actions within the framework of global scientific thinking and rationality.

The production of western-dominated thoughts and actions have not only created a confused present which gets institutionally constituted across the

globe through “studium generale²” (Gumbrecht 2016, 2) but also disrupted the other possibilities of several academic and non-academic modes of knowledge.

3. Tracing the Genealogy

We have not, perhaps, sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country...by a kind of perverted logic; it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. (Fanon 2001, 210) Turning to the “past of the oppressed people,” not only disrupted and disfigured the indigenous system of knowledge production but also re-created a present, which has been dismembered from its native past. This is why, a major segment of the current geographical and historical discourses ignores the historically diverse “orien(t)-tales and occiden(t)-tales” [hyphenation and (t) is my addition] (Mignolo 2000, 6) which is characterized by their own versions of myths and histories and also analyzes the world in their own individual ways.

In his article “On (De)coloniality, Border Thinking and Epistemic Disobedience”, Walter Mignolo (2011) outlined the polycentric and non-capitalist world before colonialism during which multiple civilizations co-existed. For instance, the Ming Dynasty of China (1368-1644), the Umayyids (in 7th and 8th centuries), the Benin Kingdom of Africa (1440-1897), the Incas (in Tawantinsuyu) and Aztecs (in Anahuac) of Americas, etc. Based on this brief historical analysis, the most significant question that arises is how did the global epistemology shifted over the centuries, which led to its present construction? Carl Schmitt (2006, 87) in *The Nomos of the Earth* analyzes the shift in the demographic-ideological axis of the globe. He says that the first attempt of the international law was to divide the entire earth according to the new global concept of geography which began immediately after 1492. These were also the first adaptations to a new planetary image of the world. Though it was nothing more than crude seizures of lands, yet the struggle among European powers for land appropriations made necessary certain divisions and distributions. This is referred to as global linear thinking (ibid.).

² ‘Studium generale’ is a French phrase to denote an all-comprehensive mode of global knowledge production that enunciates from the very grass root level of the respective education systems.

The cosmological space which was an integral part of the indigenous, existential customs of the Global South, prior to the geographical-epistemological colonial invasions were systematically expropriated and replaced by the Euro-North American-centric astronomical and scientific interventions. As the world moved on, the multifarious, natural, spontaneous spaces of human knowledge system were cloistered and occupied with the Eurocentric ideologies. It is this physical occupation of the human-natural land and spaces which Enrique Dussel (1995) determines as *ego conquiro* (I conquer, therefore I am) and it functions as the tropology of the Cartesian *ego cogito, ergo sum* (I Think, therefore I am) (Descartes 1998).

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007, 237) in his essay “On the Coloniality of Being” realizes that the process of asserting ‘I’ ness within the concept of ‘I Think’ or ‘I am’ is nothing more than a western-centric perspective of generalizing and hegemonizing every individual self, within the assimilated global definition of human existence. The ‘I’ negates every other versions of the individual self which has its own characteristics and establishes the ideal western man. It is this ideal western self that pursues its journey within the “disruptive, decivilizing, dehumanizing, exploitative, racist, violent, brutal, covetous and thingifying system” (Cesaire 2000, 32) which has been infecting non-European and European societies over the ages.

The problems of “ghettos, legal discrimination, pogroms, persecutions” (Bauman 1989, 2) were not culturally-ethnically limited within the contours of the Jewish Holocaust but have undergone pathological-colonial transgressions in the form of genocides (killing of the common mass), “epistemicides and linguicides”³ (Thiong’o 2009, 2) of Native cultures. India also underwent a very similar experience. If we reflect upon the existential problems of the out-casted or lower-caste communities in India, we find that they are very much subjected to ghettoization and legal discriminations supported by state institutions under the deceptive connotations of peace, discipline and stability. After the physical colonial legacy ended, colonialism atomized and fragmented itself into minute forms, seeping down through cracks and fissures, using both seduction and coercion as its weapon to

³ ‘Epistemicides’ refer to the massive evacuation of the native system of knowledge production and ‘linguicides’ refer to the destruction of the native language and communication system altogether. Besides mass excavations and discriminations these two modes of native destruction played a pivotal role towards juridical-political modes of colonialism and metaphysical picture of coloniality.

exploit the indigenous people of India. Despite the end of colonialism, its legacies keep haunting the Indian society.

It is very much visible through the various socio-religious, gender, racial and ideological hierarchies that function in contemporary India. The system of knowledge production, from the individual private platforms to the collective public forums, has been perennially infected with different religious, caste and gendered hierarchies since the pre-colonial times. But it was legally and logically constituted within the regular pan-Indian existential framework only after the arrival of the colonizers. They not only recognized the multiple loopholes within the Indian society, but also capitalized them to re-shape their trade and commercial intentions into a gigantic colonial empire. The pre-existing caste, religious, academic and political divisions gained extreme severity when the colonizers started favoring specific individuals and/or communities over the others, especially the educated, patriarchal and racist higher caste (mostly Brahmins and Kshatriyas and sometimes the Vaishyas) elites. As faithful representatives of the colonizers, the racial (in terms of skin color, community origin and geographical belongingness) and gendered discriminations (physical and psychological exploitation of women, especially of lower castes, and other genders) unleashed upon the Indians by these higher castes within every aspects of existence (access to education, jobs, trade, commerce, agriculture, land ownership etc.), continues even today. They were vastly favored and were recruited in the crucial government positions to control the indigenous natives. They functioned according to the norms and conditions of the colonial empire and, in lieu of insignificant advantages (conferred with highly embellished titles, allowed accessibilities to the colonially restricted socio-cultural and political arenas, etc.) they assisted the colonial masters to smoothly exploit the nation. Contemporary India, experiences more aggravated forms of exploitations, underpinned with the epistemic structures of colonial legacies, in more systematic and convincing forms. It is very much evident through the curricular designs of schools and higher academic organizations, the selection and the working strategies of job institutions, and the functioning policies of different socio-political institutions (both at the local and the national level).

In most of the schools and higher educational institutes, the curriculum is more inclined to western texts and more exposed to western ideas, and widely ignore the Indian vernacular ones. They are also enforced with definite patterns of learning, practicing and producing knowledge that blankly mimics the West. Anything proposed beyond this structure is immediately rejected as 'improper' and 'sub-standard.' The selection and the working strategies of the

various job institutions in India (especially in the private sectors), usually makes an effort to eradicate ‘the individual self(s)’ and carve out ‘an identical Self.’ It only advocates the gendered (usually males are more favorable for high official positions than females), racist (fair skinned individuals are more preferred than others) and hetero-normative (subjugating the voices of the trans-genders, transvestites, gays and lesbians) epistemologies of the West under the connotations of politeness and presentability. The different socio-political organizations (like the government and legal bodies), which are controlled by the self-centered individuals (usually the higher castes) affiliated to the ideologies of coloniality, collaborate together to erase the uncorrupted voice of Indian history (often manipulating the oral and textual histories in favor of certain castes, classes and socio-religious communities, and misinterpreting religious texts to maintain the persisting hierarchies and generate new ones). It is this historical rhetoric with which we daily engage to naturalize modernity as a universal global process and hide the continuous “reproduction of coloniality” (Mignolo 2007, 3).

4. Meta-colonial Fractions: Exploring the Indian Scene

On one hand, India is a nation which takes pride in having one of the world’s most promising economies with “more billionaires than any other country outside the U.S. and China” (Patel 2015). On the other, it rationally systematizes communal violence in the form of killing Dalits⁴ for inter-caste interactions and mob lynching of Muslims over consumption of beef. My analysis tries to generate an alternative indigenous epistemic structure which possesses the capability to expose and overcome the huge wedge that persists between proposals and practices in India. The British withdrew from India only when they were assured that, even in their physical absence; the colonial legacies will continue to function in shaping India’s (post)colonial future. The very constitutional proposition of being a “sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, republic” (Preamble 1950) reflects upon the ideological transition of the nation India from a colonial nation into an object of colonial puppetry. As we explore the meta-colonial elements through this section it is important to remember that the exploitative, hierarchical Indian socio-cultural structure traces its genealogy from pre-colonial historical moments. Before we challenge the ‘outsider others’ it is important to be reflective of the

⁴ Dalits are out-casted people who exist outside the Indian socio-cultural framework. They still continue to live animalistic life and their central source of earning continues to be on the disposal of the dead carcasses.

‘insider self’, identifying the multiple socio-cultural loopholes that awarded a large platform to the colonizers.

4.1. A glimpse of Pre-colonial Indian Social Structure

The societies of ancient India were composed on the axis of the ‘varna’ system. The term ‘varna’ originated from the root word ‘vri’ which means ‘choices according to inherent traits’ (in Sanskrit). It was based on skin color upon which the society was divided and this ultimately culminated into occupational divisions as well. This racial and occupational origin of Indian society shows that exploitative socio-cultural hierarchies occupied the very roots of our indigenous societies. Though certain duties were strictly meant for each varnas (Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras), yet they could be interchanged and commonly practiced by all. In pre-colonial ancient India a Vaishya could become the king (e.g. – Chandragupta Maurya of Maurya Dynasty), a Sudra could become the seer (e.g. – Saint Tukaram), a Brahman could emerge as the celebrated warrior (e.g. – Hemu the Hindu Brahmin general and Chief Minister of Adil Shah Suri of Suri Dynasty) and a Kshatriya could become the trader (no specific names are available in Indian historical sources but it is mentioned generally) (Smith 1994). Indeed, each varna was suppose to practice certain vocations but Rig Vedic history reveals that there were no restrictions upon individuals regarding occupations. Individuals belonging to a varna can accept and practice any profession of their choice. There were also no restrictions upon food, drinking, diet, inter-varna interactions and family settlements. This liberal attitude of the Indian society was disrupted by the hegemonically defined and politically designed caste system which is believed to have arrived in India from Central Asia with the Aryan insurgency. The Aryans introduced the caste system to systematically divide the society and assign definite role to the different castes. These constricted ideologies narrowed the pre-existing epistemic diversity and affected the free-flowing nature (as reflected above) of the Indian society. The caste system created an immobile existential structure devoid of the natural essential elements of human existence and it continues to divide and define every layers and sub-layers of contemporary Indian society. The Britishers closely analyzed these dynamics of the Indian society in their process of “recovering authentic India” (Mamdani 2012, 6) which enabled them to define and rule the native inhabitants. The above instances of varna and caste systems function as a trope towards locating the indigenous ambiguities that

lead to “lumping and splitting”⁵ (Wilk 2001, 2) of the Indian society and created new epistemic compartments.

4.2. The Beginning of (Post)colonial Transition

Usually it is found that the variegated religious and mythological stories have hardly any resemblance with our political life or regular experiences but in case of India it is not the same. The different religious practices in India are “neither merely private, for instance, nor purely irrational” (Butler, et al. 2011, 1), and as a result it is impossible to assimilate or bracket religion within the established post-modern connotations. The pseudo-secular strategies of modern Indian governance were in accordance with the colonial legacy of ‘good sense’ which is the “most evenly distributed commodity in the world” (Descartes 2015, 1). In other words, the colonially mimicked patterns of thinking and doing continuously produce and re-produce the universally defined logical and moral notions of a ‘perfect, happy existence’ (by systematically undermining the individual liberties of expressions and actions), and it occupies the center of the contemporary Indian epistemic system. This becomes drastically clear with the contemporary anti-sedition laws which were brought in by the colonial governance in 1870 with their scope broadened in 1898 in order to deal with the freedom movement that was getting stronger. The successive governmental strategies in post-colonial India have done little to amend the law. To this day, these colonial distractions and ideological distortions continue to function.

The notion of secularism in India has always created needs for debate due to conceptual assimilations and functional failures. It has failed to gauge the discrepancies which lie between secularism in India and Indian secularism or between secularism and secularization as a whole. Indian intellectuals have been continuously debating and discussing the relevance of an Indian form of secularism often condemning the western-centric secularist ideologues. But is it possible to map a concept of decolonial epistemic perception of Indian secularism against the still ongoing colonial legacy? Secularism does not have any oriental originality, but was rather forcefully appropriated and incorporated within the traditional socio-cultural framework of the east. It characterized and re-identified the native populations across the globe as “people without history” in the nineteenth century to “people without development” in the twentieth century and “people without democracy” in

⁵ The western-centric epistemological structure systematized the native Indian society (which continues in a more treacherous, abstract form in the present times) by re-dividing and re-grouping them according to their political-economic needs.

the twenty-first century (Grosfoguel 2011, 7). The nineteenth century rights of 'man' were replaced by the notion of global human rights in twentieth century. The Indian traditional socio-cultural structure is not comparable to the west. The question is how secularism can be introduced as an underlying post-colonial functional logic of Indian epistemology in a nation where the two contradictory realms – theology and rationality – persist in symbiosis with each other. Moreover, how far does secularism or secularization stick to its governing principalities of separating the functions of religion and politics? I wish to address these questions within a broader interrogative paradigm which is the central focus of this paper – What are the possibilities of generating multiple, indigenous ways of thinking and doing in India?

To be more elaborative, it is crucial to identify the possibilities of developing 'Indian indigenous epistemic systems' of contemporary knowledge production. These systems will not only disentangle from the persistent meta-colonial influences which is centrally underpinned with the ideologies of secularism and secularization, but also interrogate the pre-colonial orthodoxies and the way they have amalgamated with the contemporary perceptions of coloniality. The pre-colonial orthodoxies continue to weave their cobwebs of authority through every aspect (familial, social, religious, cultural, political, official etc.) of existence. Therefore, it is important to filter the pre-colonially and the colonially constructed, redundant aspects of Indian society that functions unharmed in contemporary India. It is also vital to extract and preserve the positive elements of indigenous India for shaping a multi-versal, multi-perspective, decolonial future.

4.3. The Haunt of the Colonial Scepter

The evolution of science questioned the logicity of the theological propagations. The legitimacy of the ancient state had its roots in the theological constructs of the god given state power. But with the disintegration of the ancient state during the colonial era and the development of the modern state after independence, new forms of legitimacies and rationalities were generated that uprooted the theological-political basis of governance. The scattered states were centralized and homogenized under a meta-political institutional monopoly. This Euro-centric model of the modern nation-state system that emerged in post-independent India with the subjugation of certain groups continues to function unhindered under the wide constitutional canopy. The already developed Indian epistemic-hegemonic structure underwent further ethalization and naturalization through colonial and secularist

interventions. Indian society is fragmented with multiple castes, sub-castes and intra-castes, and there exist several subjugated classes of people who either still hold no place in the wider constitutional structure or are subjected to further exploitation by assigning them 'special' identities like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)⁶. The motives of socio-cultural and political-economic exploitation of the under-privileged class by the privileged were only systematically masqueraded under the umbrella of central legal rights. This allowed the colonial puppets to self-approve their exploitative deeds.

Gandhi identified secularism as the damage caused by the West which is "attuned to the complex histories and geographical scales" and deliberately established "broader networks of power and geography" (Minca and Ong 2016, 71) that makes the institution work. The "geographies of violence" (Springer and Billon 2016, 6) as generated and extended by secularist ideologies invaded the Indian epistemic zone with its constitutional incorporation in 1976. Prior to this, there was no trace of secularism or secularization in India. Though the term 'secularism' was officially constitutionalized in 1976, it can be traced back to colonial times. In the form of "situational secularism" (Bilgrami 2016a) it failed to prevent the partition of British India into India and Pakistan or the formation of East Bengal (currently Bangladesh), prior to it. These fragmented "moments of disillusionment" (Gumbrecht 2006, 172) coagulated mass mobilization; and the mobilization of the minorities receded to the background. The question of dividing India, based on caste, class and religion, never came to the forefront until and unless colonial politics invaded the scene. The Hindus and Muslims harmoniously occupied the same existential space without any tensions before the interception of colonialism which completely disrupted the indigenous co-existential structure. The colonizer-native elite framework collaboratively functioned to re-create the modern Indian ontological and epistemological network that promised to rescue the society, infected with eternal conflicts (socio-religious and political), from a situation of personal experience and push towards a situation of collective social experience. The

⁶ The scheduled castes, other backward castes and scheduled tribes are the backward socio-cultural groups who have awarded a special place in the Indian constitution. They enjoy special privileges in terms of reservations in the various government sectors for the sake of studies or job. But the contemporary socio-political scenario in India reveals a highly alarming contradictory situation in which the special privileged communities are regularly criminalized and victimized without any serious intervention from state or central security. Rather mostly it is found that the leaders, hired goons and the policemen themselves are vehemently involved in the act.

latter encouraged the importance of collective social actions and interactions within the Indian society in two ways – general negotiation and mass negotiation. General negotiation took place between the British authorities and a few selected Indian servants who gleefully agreed to function as colonial puppets. The various technical and administrative decisions that were undertaken during the process converged towards a situation, where individuals could only express themselves within the contours of the hegemonically defined colonial grammar. These initiatives only legitimized and naturalized a homogenous socio-cultural framework. This homogeneous framework also constructed different pseudo-secular parameters by revising its own ideologies.

Secularism continued to function within the neo-imperialistic epistemological configuration by consistently interfering with the religious discourses of the communities. It highlights a form of colonial preaching, leading towards unnecessary socio-cultural compartmentalization, pushing individuals towards a form of “mnemonic decapitation”⁷ (Zerubavel 2003, 93-94) and disparaging the past within the modern epistemological project. This form of “lexicographical ordering”⁸ (Bilgrami 2016b) encourages incidents like the Godhra train burning, Gujarat in February 27, 2002 which was an epilogue of the Babri Mosque demolition in Ayodhya⁹, December 6, 1992,¹⁰ under the hidden conspiracies of political rationality. These incidents expose the highly disputed, skeletal and ambivalent nature of the Indian episteme and nurture a new interrogative space. What should be our propositions and initiatives “after learning from history” (Gumbrecht 2006, 417) which is filled

⁷ ‘Mnemonic Decapitation’ refers to the separation of the memory and the body. The post-colonial Indian existence observed a severe recuperation of the colonial ideologies by pushing certain groups into the ontological and epistemological periphery completely subjugating their voices.

⁸ Akeel Bilgrami defines ‘lexicographical ordering’ as a phenomenon in which freedom is granted to the religious groups to the extent it doesn’t clash with the political rights. Once it happens then the political rights will be favored ahead of religious will.

⁹ Ayodhya is a small city in the western part of the state of Uttar Pradesh, India.

¹⁰ On 6th December 1992 a large group of Hindu volunteers demolished the Babri Mosque claiming that it ethically and mythologically belongs to the Hindu God-King Rama and even Ayodhya is defined as ‘Ramjanmabhoomi’ (the birthplace of King Rama). Just after a decade in 2002, The Sabarmati Express while returning from the disputed site of Ayodhya was razed by a mob of 1000-2000 people, burning around 59 people to death and leaving several injured. Most significantly the victims were the Hindus who were returning from the site.

within innumerable cracks and fissures? The meta-colonial loopholes as identified within the Indian social-political fractions and explored through this section, generate possibilities of an alternative meta-decolonial framework shaping a different Indian scene altogether.

5. Meta-decoloniality: Mapping an alternative Indian scene

Religions and religiosity¹¹ never existed in India as an all-encompassing autonomous institutional entity segregated from the existential-epistemological rationale. The rigorous practicing of caste, communal and gender taboos in relation to Indian religious practices has been concomitant with the indigenous knowledge realm of logic and reason. It only got disrupted with the political insurgencies, which commenced with Christian-centric discourses during colonial times established by missionaries, and continued through the politically supported class, religious and caste fragmentations in post-colonial times. The pseudo-secularist neo-imperial ideologies which were authenticated and legitimized in post-colonial India shifted the individual perception from the religiosity as a knowledge producing platform towards religion as an institution of ideological-epistemological exploitation.

Instead of only looking at the physically distorted historical imageries, which have played a pivotal role in shaping the contemporary socio-political situation, it is equally important to analyze the environment or the 'Stimmungen' (approximately meaning mood) of the happenings all around (Gumbrecht 2012, 61). The perception of 'Stimmung' enables us to unearth the metaphysical elements of coloniality that keeps on drilling through the regular existential aspects in the form of the academic system, curriculum dissemination, behavioral patterns, false modes of oral communication, fashion sensibilities, etc. Human thoughts and 'Stimmung' reciprocate each other. It is a certain form of environment, evoked through multiple ecological and socio-political agents, which shapes a definite thought climate and vice versa. My intention is to shift the epistemic attitude from the Western-centric maxim of "When I choose for myself I choose for all" towards the pluritopic hermeneutical proposition of "When I choose for myself, I set an example for all" (Bilgrami 2003, 67). The mode of thinking generated by mood and environment articulates the individual inner feelings which get shared across

¹¹ The perception of religiosity has been introduced as a form of de-colonial thinking which is very much functional within the Indian socio-cultural premise, a space where it is always difficult to amalgamate rationality with theological, ritualistic discourses.

a broad socio-cultural space. It is this broad space which should be disentangled or de-linked from the universally defined “humanistic concepts of Europe and America” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 492) through “de-polarized pluralities” (Santos 2008, 29), “intercultural translation” (ibid., 31) and “universalizability”¹² (Bilgrami 2003, 14). De-polarized pluralities through the possibilities established by universalizability, conjure a shapeless, non-linear space that exists beyond the selected historical dimensions of time in which the drive for union may be replaced by the drive for separation and difference. The Collective actions, which are ruled by de-polarized pluralities, stir up a new perception of unity in action to the extent that it stops being an expressive machinery of “monolithic will” and becomes a “more or less last meeting point of a plurality of wills” (Santos 2008, 29). The concretization of collective actions as generated through this phenomenon never rejects the individual will through consistent “coalition and articulations” (ibid., 29). Thus, depolarized pluralities do not operate on the ideological axis of theoretical correctness, but “by the extent of concrete transformation of unequal power relations into shared authority relations in the specific in which the collective action take place” (ibid., 31).

Reinventing the relation between theory and practice not only redefines and transgresses the theological-ontological-rational compatibility within the Indian socio-political realm but also brings us towards a pluriversal, intercultural translatable space. It is a methodology to “maximize the consistency and the strength of depolarized pluralities” (ibid., 31). History and tradition reveals that India possesses an intercultural socio-political setup, which was divided in the colonial past and was replaced by pseudo-secularism and the hierarchies of caste, class, gender and religion.

If secularism is a burden of colonialism, then its systematic distortion and granting socio-political privileges to certain communities are the results of coloniality that are widely prevalent in the present society. The Indian society must realize that religion can never be dissected from the regular modes of knowledge production. It is so, because the moral and ethical values of India originated from multiple theological oral and written narratives, which need to be preserved and carried forward in the contemporary times. The religious suppressions in India only lead to the violation of positive existential values. This is why, under the umbrella of (pseudo)religious ideologies, mass killings, community dislocations and religious extremism have become a common affair. If the root values of human civilization like honesty, sincerity, discipline

¹² Universalizability’ denounces all forms of ideological impositions by creating decolonial indigenous space for endless probabilities and possibilities.

and devotion, which forms the very basis of development of India, are segregated from religiosity, then modernity will remain an incomplete concept.

The current epistemological confusions and conflicts could be traced back to the western mimicry of modernity in post-colonial India, by promoting science and technology as logically and rationally advanced and demeaning the religious ideologies as primitive and tabooed. It is indeed crucial to re-define and generate new forms of religious perceptions, which are disentangled from the violent, hierarchical, exploitative beliefs and practices, usually dominated by the structures of Hindu idolatry. Moreover the class, caste and gender differences, which persists within families, academic organizations, job institutions and different other private and public places, need to stop. The 'special privileges' sponsored by the central and state authorities, in the form of official reservations (SC, ST and OBC) need to be discontinued. Existential equality should neither be confused as a total epistemic compromise (in the form of ideological assimilations) nor should it be interpreted as a creator of hierarchical differences (as already discussed above). It is important to generate a de-hierarchical, decolonial Indian socio-political epistemic structure, which will re-define equality, on a horizontal axis and not on a vertical axis, by embracing all forms of diversities. Moreover, the universal markers of scientific and technological developments should also be interrogated and de-structuralized with respect to the geographical, demographic, religious, social, cultural, political, economic and traditional differences in India. The blind imposition of scientific and technological developments only yields to conflicts between the rural communities and the state with respect to their villages, agricultural lands and forests, which are seized for the construction of industries, factories and water dams, as it has been happening in the states like Orissa, Chattisgarh and Tamil Nadu. The forests and agricultural lands are usually associated with the religious, cultural and mythological beliefs of different rural communities, whose violation affects the very roots of their identity. For instance, the Gurjar people of Rajasthan practice neem (*Azadirachta Indica*) planting and worshipping as abode of god Devnarayan, the villagers of Kerala worship the sacred forest of 'kavus' in Western Ghats, the villagers of Meghalaya protect the scared forests of Mawphlang and Mausmai to appease the forest spirit, etc. Therefore, religion has to be interpreted and practiced, not as an all encompassing imperial structure, but as a pluriversal platform that produces and re-produces different ethics and values, enabling every community to re-create their own traditional epistemic structures that will function in an inter-cultural and intra-cultural manner.

In this manner, the process of unlearning the threads of coloniality, recuperating and relearning the indigenous elements will configure a new society that recognizes and respects the features lying 'outside' the persistent epistemological realm and constitutes them "at home" (ibid., 32). This ideological salad-bowl will overcome colonial monism and promote crypto-diversity,¹³ leading towards a multi-perspective epistemic structure. These de-institutionalized, decolonial parameters will hopefully shape an alternate decolonial epistemic space, ushering an Indian nation that lies between the two extremes of anarchic pseudo-secular promises and an inaccessible utopic dream driven by theo-political tensions¹⁴.

6. Conclusion

Therefore, the process of delinking and decolonizing epistemology in India involves two crucial approaches - 'defamiliarizing the familiar' and establishing an 'epistemic grey line.' As discussed above, the familiar socio-religious attitudes of contemporary India need to be defamiliarized and restructured with respect to the practical requirements of daily existence. Diverse forms of religious beliefs and practices in precolonial India have logically produced knowledge through art, architecture, literature, science and technology which was later on dismantled by the colonizers. So, the process of restructuring can take place by unlearning the dichotomies between 'reason' and 'religion' and relearning it as an interactive, interdisciplinary and symbiotic phenomenon. This will enable us to establish an epistemic grey line¹⁵ where individuals can disrupt all forms of hierarchies and 'agree to disagree' with each other. It is important to generate knowledges by disentangling from the already flourishing institutional disciplines and create new de-institutionalized perspectives that exist outside the colonially structured preconceived ethics and norms of existence. Though the notion of decoloniality is extensively discussed and argued within the

¹³ Crpto-diversity is a de-colonial feature which basically identifies the differences that lies within similarities. Certain languages, words and oral expressions are similar yet they have certain differences which need to be respected.

¹⁴ The socio-political tension in India which has extremely aggravated due to the continuous interaction between the theological believes and political rights have created a highly ambivalent, contradictory space. This is what is being referred to as theo-political were religion and politics exist in both collusion and conflict.

¹⁵ The 'epistemic grey line' looks forward to establish a middle path for knowledge production which diminishes the two extremes of 'scientific modernity' and 'orthodox religiosity.'

academic spaces in India, yet in terms of regular praxis it exists in a confused and suppressive state. So, this research will not only open up new gateways for rethinking and redoing decoloniality outside the academia, but also involve a dehierarchized pan-Indian participation of the common mass towards decolonizing the regular mannerisms of life in the near future.

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MICROCREDIT AND THE POLITICS OF POVERTY: HIGHLIGHTING INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Mohammed Anwar Hossain

Department of Sociology, Shahjalal University of Science and
Technology, Bangladesh

Abstract: *This article investigates the role of microcredit in poverty reduction—changes in borrowers’ economic condition or services to neoliberalism. It argues that the role of microcredit in poverty reduction is embedded in international political economy. International development community intentionally deploys microcredit as an instrument to mitigate the crisis of neoliberalism instead of reducing poverty. Microcredit accelerates liberalization and commercialization of financial sector and uses as a shield to counteract responses to structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in developing countries. Yet microcredit generates some instant benefits for a few borrowers, its role in poverty reduction is questionable because of its all-out adherence to neoliberalism.*

Keywords: *microcredit, poverty reduction, economic development; neoliberalism, international development community, and international political economy*

1. Introduction

This article analyzes the role of microcredit in poverty reduction—borrowers’ economic improvement or services to neoliberalism. Microcredit programs offer their borrowers a small loan to address poverty with micro, informal income-generating activities. These commercial enterprises are considered as useful means to reduce individuals’ poverty and change their economic condition. For example, the Grameen Bank engages poor credit borrowers in tiny commercial enterprises to reduce their poverty and enhance socioeconomic status in Bangladesh. Microcredit assists loan recipients to meet pressing needs and decrease poverty gradually (Khandker and Samad 2016; Pitt, Khandker, and Cartwright 2006; Khandker 2005; Pitt and Khandker 1998). Microcredit may produce various temporary benefits (easing borrowers urgent needs and a short-term economic return), but its long-term effects are obscure (Bateman 2012, 2014, 2017; Bateman and

Chang 2009, 2012). They argue that microcredit rather traps borrowers in a cycle of poverty. Some studies also argue that results of microcredit in poverty reduction are open to doubt (Garikipati 2017; Churchill and Nuhu 2016; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Roodman and Morduch 2014; Bateman 2010a, 2011, 2012, 2012b, 2014, 2017; Karim 2011; Karlan and Zinman 2009; Straus 2010; Duflo et al. 2009; Midgley 2008; Feiner and Barker 2007; Develtere and Huybrechts 2005). They explain that the availability of micro credits may not change borrowers' lives unless they are invested effectively in commercial ventures. While an income from the micro enterprise (after paying weekly mandatory instalments) supports many borrowers to ease off their poverty, most of the borrowers face a hard time to repay the loan. Microcredit organizations tend to capitalize on higher repayment rate, grossly ignore borrowers' poverty reduction and socioeconomic improvement (Garikipati 2017; Banerjee and Jackson 2016; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Federici 2014; Aitken 2013; Ali and Hatta 2012). The advocates of microcredit (donors, the World Bank, and the IMF), using Grameen Bank's group lending mechanism, popularize it as a global anti-poverty strategy based on a few success stories of the credit recipients (Churchill and Nuhu 2016; Bateman 2010a, 2011, 2012, 2012b, 2014, 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). They channelize ample private capital in developing countries through microcredit on a sheer profit motive. Many critics, therefore, view microcredit as an instrument to maintaining the flow of capital from developed to developing countries (Banerjee and Jackson 2016; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Bateman 2010a, 2011, 2012, 2012b, 2014, 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Midgley 2008; Kalpana 2005). It can be argued that microcredit as a poverty reduction strategy is rooted in international political economy.

Microcredit serves (allegedly) as a means to open global financial market for private entrepreneurs to reorganize neoliberalism—apparently serving to manage the crisis of capitalism in advanced capitalist states (Weber, 2002). It also assumes the responsibility of the state to reduce poverty and ensure individuals' wellbeing. Microcredit then becomes a popular sector for individuals, firms, and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to mobilize substantial financial capital. IFIs namely the World Bank and the IMF are the protagonists to espouse microcredit as a vehicle for mitigating the financial crisis of neoliberalism (Bateman 2017; Muhammad 2015; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). They set up strategic guidelines to restore neoliberal capitalist system from ongoing financial disarray. These institutions have the key role in facilitating investment in the financial sector in developing countries, especially microcredit. Further, the

IMF and the World Bank set up microcredit as a catalyst to establish a regime of free market and reform government policies in developing countries (Muhammad 2015; Aitken 2013; Bateman 2010a, 2012, 2014, 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). Microcredit connects local economies with the global economy through liberalization and commercialization of the financial sector. It uses as a means to globalize the financial sector in developing countries. IFIs also adopt microcredit approaches within policy prescriptions of neoliberalism to achieve their broader interests in international politics (Bateman, Maclean, and Galbraith 2017; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014; Bateman 2010a, 2014, 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Kalpana 2005). As a whole, microcredit has been commissioned to liberalize financial sector to sustain capitalist accumulation instead of emphasizing its role in reducing poverty and empowering credit recipients.

2. Problem Formulation

This paper argues that the role of microcredit in poverty reduction is ingrained in international political economy. It attempts: (a) to describe the connection between microcredit and neoliberalism; (b) to describe the interplay between microcredit, neoliberalism, and the global politics of poverty; and (c) to provide a brief overview of the political economy of microcredit with reference to Bangladesh. My arguments will be justified in regards to international political economy of microcredit that works as a mechanism to manage the crisis of neoliberalism.

3. Problem Solution

3.1 Nexus between Microcredit and Neoliberalism

Neoliberal policies foster a free market economy in which private capital or firms are encouraged to invest in financial sector designed to curtail the involvement of the state in development (Wade 2008; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). In other words, neoliberalism downsizes the role of the state in the economy. The state transfers its responsibility—poverty reduction and people's welfare—to private entrepreneurs. Individuals and firms are allowed to shape the development trajectory in the open market economy. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as a consequence, appear worldwide as leading development enterprises. IFIs and private investors strongly encourage privatization and commercialization of the financial

sector. NGOs, therefore, offer various programs for economic development and social welfare. For instance, international development community promotes microcredit as an effective strategy for poverty reduction. Since the post-Washington consensus period, starting in the late 1990s, microcredit has come to occupy a key position as part of global poverty reduction strategies (Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2014). Development community (WTO, IMF, World Bank, Regional Development Banks, and Bilateral and Multilateral Development Agencies) unequivocally supports microcredit as a poverty reduction approach to facilitating international transactions in the financial sector and preventing social movements against liberalization policies and economic reforms in developing countries (Bateman 2017; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2014). These policies—privatization and commercialization of the financial sector—intentionally promote microcredit to facilitate the flow of financial capital and tackle lasting consequences of economic reforms worldwide (Bateman 2014, 2017; Muhammad 2015; Keating, Rasmussen, and Rishi 2010; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2014). Neoliberal thinkers consider microcredit (self-entrepreneurship) as an effective medium of poverty reduction and economic advancement (Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2014).

The nature of microcredit as a private micro enterprise corresponds to neoliberal principles—self-employed entrepreneurship financed and run by individuals or firms takes the responsibility to gratify individuals' immediate needs and socioeconomic well-being (Price 2017). The unconditional support of the international development community to microcredit may be linked with international politics because microcredit, according to Bateman and Chang (2012), serves the chosen few (individuals or firms). Individuals or organizations deem microcredit as a profitable frontier to marshal their financial capital. Microcredit tends to capitalize on poor borrowers (Churchill and Nuhu 2016; Geleta 2016; Paprocky 2016; Mader 2013, 2015; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Federici 2014; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Keating, Rasmussen, and Rishi 2010). It engages people—affected by structural adjustments policies in developing countries—in small entrepreneurial activities to divert their attention from structural reforms. While IFIs and international donors adopt microcredit as a magical option for poverty reduction and economic development, social and economic depression (the longstanding consequence of SAPs) still exist in developing countries. Microcredit, in the neoliberal regime, has been deployed as a shield to resist challenges against ongoing structural reforms and accumulating resources (Muhammad 2015; Aitken 2013; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Bateman

2010a, 2017; Keating, Rasmussen, and Rishi 2010). Structural adjustment policies (SAPs)—privatization of government enterprises, cut down on social expenditure (government subsidies and support programs for the poorest and vulnerable), and new government rules to encourage private investments for rapid economic growth—arouse political and economic turmoil in developing countries. Furthermore, microcredit, through a profit motive, tends to escape age-old relations of power and wealth structure that sustains unequal access to resources instead of easing borrowers challenges in poverty reduction (Churchill and Nuhu 2016; Geleta 2016; Paprocky 2016; Ali 2014; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Keating, Rasmussen, and Rishi 2010; Rankin 2002; Kabeer 2001). Microcredit, without altering existing social structure, continues to serve neoliberalism as a means to relocate public wellbeing and services from the state to individuals (Bateman, Maclean and Galbraith 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012).

Microcredit can be seen as a strategy to both enhance and legitimize neoliberalism. It is used as a means to foster private entrepreneurship and connect local and global political economies. International financiers and financial institutions invest huge private capital in microcredit that links in some way local and global economies. Private entrepreneurs put forward micro enterprises as a solution to global poverty reduction and individual wellbeing. Microcredit engages the poor borrowers in entrepreneurship—it has positive influence on their socioeconomic condition (income and empowerment) in many developing countries (Chliova, Brinckmann, and Rosenbusch, 2015). They also synthesize that the borrowers through self-employment can make an income from the loan to maintaining their daily lives and reduce poverty. Many critics, in contrast, consider the high interest rate, no entrepreneurial training, and the saturation of micro enterprises in excess of the market capacity as harmful aspects of microcredit (Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012). The proponents remain silent about these issues regarding microcredit. They rather promote microcredit as a mechanism to escape the structural causes of poverty and unrest (SAPs-induced) in the developing countries. Microcredit is ideologically linked with neoliberalism mainly for its foundational similarity with the principles of neoliberalism, and partly because of its negative aspects. The proponents, therefore, deliberately shift the focus from the inadequacies of microcredit to counteracting the consequences of SAPs. Microcredit, as an imposed strategy for poverty reduction, works as a political instrument to mollify the consequences of neoliberalism. Simply stated, it serves the international development community to alleviate the crises of neoliberalism instead of empowering the poor. In the same way, global development designers (the

World Bank and the IMF) support microcredit approaches to creating a common platform for privatization and commercialization of state interventions to smooth the implementation of SAPs in developing countries (Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). The changes in the policy (privatizing government enterprising, liberalizing government policies, and commercializing financial sector) allow international financial capital to be involved in the production processes in developing countries and counter social and political constraints triggered by SAPs. The private capital with public authority resists people's entitlements to public goods and services (Muhammad 2009, 2015; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). Microcredit as a private sphere, however, spends energy to construct room for empowering the poor by providing access to credit and entrepreneurial activities.

Microcredit becomes the hegemonic discourse of poverty reduction after the World Bank's decisions to expand its involvement in poverty eradication in collaboration with NGOs, women's programs and micro enterprises in 1988 (Weber, 2004). In the early 1990s, the World Bank has developed poverty reduction strategies duplicating the Bolivian emergency social fund (ESF) project to withstand social and political resistance to IMF-supported New Economic Programme (NEP) (Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). The pioneer experience of the microcredit movements towards poverty reduction is the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (the Grameen Bank formally started its operation in 1983). The Bank provides credit to the poor in order to reduce poverty and empower them. It deploys neoliberal policies to promote market forces and individual entrepreneurship (Bateman 2017, 2014, 2012; Banerjee and Jackson 2016; Muhammad 2009; 2015; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012). The Bank claims an overwhelming success in poverty reduction and sustainable community development based on its financial sustainability.

3.2 Microcredit and the Politics of Poverty

Even though IFIs adopted microcredit as a poverty reduction strategy in the 1980s, it was not popular until the 1990s. The Microcredit Summit in Washington DC in February, 1997 and the activities of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh contributed to the expansion of microcredit worldwide. In particular, the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize to the Grameen Bank and its founder Dr. Muhammad Yunus had provided further momentum to the publicity and growth of microcredit in the world (Midgley 2008). IFIs, inspired by the success of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, provided both technical and financial support to popularize microcredit in the late 1980s and subsequently established CGAP (consultative Group to Assist the Poor) to

foster microcredit (Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). The United Nations (UN) declared later the year of 2005 as the 'international year of microcredit' (Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012).

Microcredit claims to reduce poverty and develop local communities. While Microcredit approaches assume lack of credit as a reason for poverty, many analysts assert that microcredit model is seriously flawed and its impact assessment practices intentionally show positive results (Bateman 2011, 2012, 2014, 2017; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Ali and Hatta 2012; Garikipati 2008; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). Microcredit programs calculate their success in terms of the rate of loan recovery and financial returns. For instance, the Grameen Bank measures its performance through the proportion of weekly repayments and fiscal growth, not by borrowers' poverty reduction and wellbeing. Although microcredit generates some short-run outcomes (an income from the loan, the instant source of meeting immediate needs or economic improvement) for a few borrowers, its long-run impact on poverty reduction is questionable (Garikipati 2008, 2012, 2017; Churchill and Nuhu 2016; Muhammad 2015, 2009; Roodman and Morduch 2014; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Bateman 2012, 2014, 2017; Ali and Hatta 2012; Keating, Rasmussen, and Rishi 2010). These critics synthesize that microcredit produces no explicit results in poverty reduction and economic development. Microcredit attempts to ensure the recovery of the loan, but ignores the ability of borrowers to earn and repay the loan. It delivers only credit to poor borrowers, no skills training to run income-generating activities. Many borrowers, as a result, fail to carry out income-generating activities with the loan to maintain life and reimburse it. Countless borrowers tend to meet up urgent needs from the loan; the failure to earn to repay the credit traps them in an inescapable cycle of poverty. Borrowers then repay loans from their wage earnings or selling valuables (Muhammad 2009, 2015; Karim 2011). The role of microcredit in poverty reduction is, therefore, doubtful (Garikipati 2017; Bateman 2012, 2014, 2017; Churchill and Nuhu 2016; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Roodman and Morduch 2014; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012). It appears that microcredit fails to reduce poverty and improve borrowers' economic condition. The proponents of microcredit still consider it as the unique model of poverty reduction. Without a doubt, many countries like China, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, India, Malaysia, and even Vietnam have reduced poverty by state coordinated policy interventions, financial institutions, and investment strategies (Bateman 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012).

Microcredit institutions operate their investment activities in informal sector, which has a limited capacity to absorb a large number of poverty-push

micro enterprises. Informal micro enterprises, in developing countries, fail to generate a viable earning because of oversupply of micro firms. As the number of micro enterprises exceeds the demand of a local economy, their average productivity remains below the minimum requirement of income to run an enterprise. In other words, many poor credit recipients struggle to manage an income from the loan to meet up necessary expenses and repay installments. For instance, micro enterprises fail to secure minimum income requirement in informal sector in Bangladesh (Bateman 2017; Muhammad 2015, 2009; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012). In most of the cases, such inefficient small business enterprises are not able to generate the minimum economic return because of the market saturation. The low financial return from the loan is directly attributable to the excessive number of micro enterprises in a small informal market. When micro enterprises fail to pay the loan, repayment is made by borrowing from other persons or institutions or selling family assets. This fallback strategy is mainly responsible for high rates of repayment (Muhammad 2009, 2015; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014; Karim 2011). On the other hand, microcredit organizations emphasize repayments, not poverty alleviation. Many critics find little evidence that the Grameen Bank lifts borrowers out of poverty in Bangladesh (Banerjee and Jackson 2016; Paprocki 2016; Muhammad 2009, 2015; Roodman and Morduch 2014; Ali and Hatta 2012; Karim 2011; Aslanbeigui, Oakes, and Uddin 2010; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012).

Microcredit is alleged to operate its programs within neoliberal principles of market forces and private entrepreneurship. It, as a discourse of poverty reduction, is instrumental to supporting and maintaining the necessities of international political economy. Neoliberal policies equally promote microcredit with a motive to maintaining capitalist accumulation. Microcredit institutions, as non-profit organizations, subsist on profiting from credit recipients. This profit from local micro entrepreneurs then transfers to global entrepreneurs—accumulated profit poor borrowers goes back to international donors, investors, or firms (Paprocki 2016; Banerjee and Jackson 2016; Muhammad 2009, 2015). International financiers (individuals, organizations and financial institutes) mobilize financial capital via microcredit in order to continue the flow of capital from local economies in developing countries to global entrepreneurs in developed countries. In other words, microcredit organizations connect local economies to global economies. They work as an agent to transfer capital from a local market to the center of capitalism (international entrepreneurs). International protagonists (organizations, WB and IMF) popularize microcredit as a potential frontier of capitalist development. National entrepreneurs (e.g. Dr

Muhammad Yunus, the Grameen Bank, government bodies) collaborate with the process of capital circulation.

Microcredit with higher interest rate and strict repayment policy, as a consequence, expands on a massive scale across the globe. It extends globally despite condemnation. For example, international development community touts the Grameen Bank globally as a magical option to poverty reduction in developing countries. Roodman and Morduch (2014) demonstrate that the role of the Grameen Bank in poverty reduction is highly exaggerated. The advocates consider the success of some credit recipients to disseminate microcredit as a popular anti-poverty strategy (Bateman 2012 Churchill and Nuhu 2016)). They completely hide the dark side of microcredit. Microcredit, as a neoliberal approach to poverty reduction, is embedded in the international politics of development (Bateman 2017, 2014, 2012; Muhammad 2015; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012). The World Bank and the IMF are the main planners to popularize microcredit as a poverty reduction strategy to promote free market economy and implement SAPs in developing countries (Muhammad 2015; Bateman and Chang 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). Microcredit has been utilized as an instrument to mitigate responses to economic reforms in developing countries and the crisis of capital accumulation in developed countries. Its works as a double-sided equation—restructuring economy in developing countries and moderating the crisis of capitalism in developed countries. Microcredit involves the poor in private enterprises in developing countries to lessen challenges that would hinder the expansion of neoliberalism or globalization (Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Bateman 2010a, 2012, 2014, 2017).

Development trajectories suggest that microcredit is an ineffective poverty reduction strategy—it has little or no impact on borrowers' poverty reduction and economic wellbeing. Although microcredit institutions survive successfully in terms of loan recovery and financial growth, credit recipients fail to make an income from the loan to reduce poverty and maintain life. Borrowers must repay the loan whether or not they can earn from it. The strict repayment policy enhances the financial stability of microcredit organizations whereas most of the borrowers struggle to repay the loan. Many credit recipients still live below the poverty line. A convincing argument may be made that microcredit sustains poverty (Muhammad 2015, 2009; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). It survives on profiting from poor borrowers. While the role of microcredit in poverty reduction is unconvincing, its bandwagon still continues to move on. International development community constantly supports microcredit for its services to international political

economy. Microcredit acts as a vehicle to remove barriers to liberalizing financial sector—it opens opportunities for private investors to bank on the poor. It is ideologically biased to the doctrines of neoliberalism. Microcredit tends to delegitimize and disperse bottom-up efforts—to divert the poor from advocating state-led development strategies to endorsing private entrepreneurship for poverty reduction. It is silent about existing social structure—unequal power relations and property rights—that prolongs poverty in a society (Bateman, Maclean, and Galbraith 2017; Banerjee and Jackson 2016; Ali 2014; Muhammad 2015; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012).

Post-Washington consensus boosts free market economy and private entrepreneurship (microcredit) to manage the crisis of global poverty and global capitalism. Microcredit can be criticized for its controversial double roles in the international political economy. It accelerates liberalization and commercialization of financial sector worldwide to smooth capital accumulation in advanced capitalist states (Bateman 2012, 2014, 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). These countries face a crisis of capital accumulation after a prosperous postwar period in the 1960s. To come out of this crisis, developed countries pursue the liberalization of financial markets in developing countries. Microcredit, in fact, serves as an agent of global capitalism to maintaining the movement of capital from developing countries to developed countries. In addition to financial sector liberalization, microcredit acts as a political safety-net to curb community resistance to neoliberal policies in developing countries (Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). International development community employs microcredit to prevent the consequences of SAPs in developing countries. Microcredit engages the poor in income-generating activities that divert their concentration from reformation policies to private entrepreneurship. Microcredit acts on counterbalancing insecurity for income and engaging surplus labor in informal sectors that establish a tie between local and global political economy. It accumulates profit from poor borrowers that gradually penetrates local economies into capitalism in Bangladesh (Paprocky 2016).

Neoliberals argue that globalization helps reduce poverty effectively. Though globalization favors a few countries, regions, and corporate elites to accumulate wealth and power, it equally increases the number of unemployed, powerless, marginalized, and exploited people globally. It raises social unrest, anxiety, and violence. Microcredit as an agent of globalization undermines social welfare systems and public employment opportunities (Bateman 2012, 2014, 2017; Bateman, Maclean, and Galbraith 2017; Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012). The policies to privatize and liberalize financial

sector fail to facilitate peoples' life. Private entrepreneurs tend to gather profit, but wane government initiatives to ensure peoples' living and wellbeing. It perpetuates social risks and vulnerabilities of the poor. Profiting on the poor, hence, becomes an essential part of managing the crisis of global capitalism. It appears that microcredit becomes a lucrative sector to channelize private capital. Bateman and Chang (2012) examine that financial outfits deploy funds in microcredit to gain monetary returns. The Bank enforces stiff refund strategy and high interest rates to make profits; thus, it makes borrowers as a subject for exploitation. This process reinforces neoliberalism (Muhammad 2015; Weber 2004, 2006, 2014).

4. Political Economy of Microcredit in Bangladesh

The coincidence of the political economy of microcredit and the implementation of SAPs can be explained in the context of Bangladesh. Bangladesh adopted microcredit as an alternative development strategy in the 1990s to employ surplus labor in production activity and divert the resistance to privatization and SAPs. The World Bank approved a microcredit project for poverty reduction in Bangladesh in 1996 to expedite the liberalization and commercialization of financial sector (Muhammad 2015; Weber 2002, 2004, 2006, 2014). This project opened opportunities for international investors and organizations to invest in financial sector in Bangladesh. Earlier in 1983, the government of Bangladesh passed the ordinance of the Grameen Bank as a private sphere to provide small loans to the poor and enable them to create income-generation opportunities by self-employment (Midgley 2008). In 1976, the Grameen Bank deployed the idea of microcredit for poverty reduction and women empowerment. The Grameen Bank had been hailed worldwide for its success in delivering microcredit to rural poor women through the solidarity lending system, in which small groups borrow collectively and group members encourage one another to repay. The Bank invented the idea of group lending to distribute credit among borrowers—no written documents (collateral) between borrowers and the Bank requires to disburse the loan; the system works based on trust (Zephyr 2004).

The Grameen Bank captured much international attention to its microcredit programs because of very high repayment rates and the role in liberalizing financial sector in Bangladesh. In the mid-1980s, international donors, NGOs, and IFIs were motivated to invest in microcredit. The USAID was the first organization, which directed its poverty reduction efforts to promote the Grameen Bank in the world in the 1980s and early 1990s

(Bateman and Chang 2009, 2012). Some other US-based NGOs and philanthropic donors namely Accion and Ford Foundation extended their helping hands to the Grameen Bank. The World Bank in the late 1980s, UNDP and UNCDF in the 2000s assisted the spread of microcredit programs at a larger scale (Kalpana 2005).

The Grameen Bank enforces group responsibility to collect information about borrowers to reduce costs of operation and increase profits. Although joint liability has replaced collateral, the Bank scrutinizes family condition, economic situation, neighborhood and entrepreneurial skills to approve loans to new members. The Bank is entirely commissioned to flourish microcredit as a model of poverty alleviation; however, the organization is alleged to support to strengthening the functions of neoliberalism. The Grameen Bank act 1983 is the very first step in Bangladesh to embark on eliminating state interference in financing to allow individuals for operating entrepreneurial activities (The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Bangladesh 2010). It transfers the responsibility from the state to the individuals for maintaining their own wellbeing. The Grameen Bank leads from the front to remove state barriers in participating microcredit programs commercially in Bangladesh. The Bank commercializes social relationships between borrowers to operate microcredit for improving their socioeconomic condition in a free market. For price (2017), microcredit capitalizes on women's tendency to earn and repay.

The Grameen Bank plays an active role to liberalize the flow of private capital in microcredit that gradually transforms its borrowers as self-employed responsible commercialized agents. Similarly, borrowers' disposition to run private enterprises motivates the Bank to spread its credit programs. In spite of uncertainties or failure to produce an income from credits, the borrowers must repay instalments and savings. The financial investment generates profits for the Bank where women face dangers to earn from the enterprises. This accretion from ever-growing funding in microcredit connects women with the capitalist system. Ali (2014), Geleta (2016), and Price (2017) inform that the commercialization of credit enlarges to the extent of women's socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Microcredit amasses profits to put borrowers in a debt cycle that spawns commercial nature of relations in rural areas of Bangladesh (Paprocky 2016). For Bateman and Chang (2012), the commercialization of private funds in microcredit endorses its alliance with neoliberalism. The high interest rates and weekly compulsory savings contribute to the economic growth of the Bank.

Financial liberalization generates social risks as microcredit fails to break up the vicious circle of poverty. Microcredit engages the poor in commercial

activities in order to palliate social vulnerabilities (poverty, income disparity, and political unrest) originated from global economic and political restructuring. It also seeks to weaken other credit oriented conventional development approaches (government-run credit programs). Although microcredit is strongly supported by the IMF and the World Bank as an effective program to address poverty, it increases spiraling of debt, fragmentation of local safety nets, and physical violence at community and households level (Muhammad 2015; Ali and Hatta 2012; Weber 2004, 2006, 2014). The changes in government policy to allow microcredit to administer private entrepreneurship facilitate the liberalization of financial sector; microcredit performs the responsibility to manage accompanying social risks of liberalization and privatization through poverty reduction and women empowerment programs. Furthermore, microcredit attempts to embed global financial liberalization locally. While the Grameen Bank claims massive success in poverty reduction and empowerment in Bangladesh, the field researches suggest mixed results about its credit programs. Aslanbeigui, Oakes, and Uddin (2010) describe that microcredit fails to improve the processes of development and the quality of life of the poor. Desired development may not be achieved without altering age-old customs and institutions that shape unequal gender relations.

The outcomes of microcredit in the lives of the borrowers are obscure. Microcredit may reduce borrowers' poverty in the local economy but at a very low rate. Panel data from Bangladesh shows that the impact of cumulative borrowing on poverty reduction among women borrowers was lower in 1998/99 (2 percentage points) than in 1991/92 (5 percentage points) (Khandker, 2005). Feiner and Barker (2007) claim that there is little empirical evidence that microcredit programs like the Grameen Bank decreases poverty. Microcredit treats poverty as an individual problem; it overlooks structural causes of poverty.

5. Conclusion

Microcredit is considered as an effective tool for poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor borrowers. It claims to improve borrowers' socioeconomic condition in developing countries. Many studies support the positive outcomes of microcredit. The critics, in contrast, argue that microcredit may generate some short-term benefits (income-generation and instant satisfaction of basic needs) for a few lucky borrowers in many societies, but its long-term effects are questionable. They particularly point to the high interest rate, lack of skills to run enterprises, and its adherence to

neoliberalism as the limiting factors for the success of microcredit. Microcredit facilitates the expansion of financial market worldwide instead of addressing the structural causes of poverty. It rather ignores the structural causes of poverty and fails to ensure sustainable community advancement. Microcredit is alleged to enhance and sustain neoliberalism. Development communities deploy microcredit as a mechanism to counteract community reactions to SAPs in developing countries. Microcredit has been flourishing worldwide despite its weaknesses and flaws only because of its connection to neoliberalism. It is within the international development community's prescribed economic and social model. Microcredit, through a financially steered poverty reduction strategy, serves as a political instrument to manage the crisis of capital accumulation in the advanced capitalist states. Overall, it seems that the crisis management of capitalism depends on the extent to which it maintains poverty.

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UNIVERSAL LEGITIMATION OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN POLITICAL DECISION MAKING

Xhuljeta Krasta

Marin Barleti University, Albania

E-mail: xhuljetakrasta@yahoo.com

Abstract: *This article highlights the legitimacy and the perceived positive role of women's universal participation in politics, both nationally and internationally. More gender equality into governmental institutions strengthens the principle of equality and of democracy, and at the same time implies an efficient use of human resources' talents and potential abilities coming from a broad specter of the society as a whole. A representative democracy leads to a better governance. Achieving gender equality in political decision-making is an objective that relates to de facto respecting human rights. It brings automatically a discrimination' reduction, an increase in democratization and representation. The above perceived positive results come as the first facts and analysis are showing that girls/women politicians are more involved in laws that benefit women, children and families. Their participation seems to bring an increase of social welfare states' policies, and consequently, more social equality.*

Keywords: *Political Participation, Gender Equality, Social Justice, Social Policies, Representative Democracy, Welfare State*

1. Introduction

Around the world and throughout recent history, women have built their political consciousness and practical organizing skills in popular movements for change, but the subsequent changes have often failed to take their interests and voices into account, since even the most revolutionary political movements often maintain conservative attitudes about gender (Tommasoli 2013, 14). This is another reason why it is important to study the positive effects of more women entering politics and making sure to depict with facts and reason that there are no women's rights but only human rights! This last fact would calm as well all the misunderstandings related to the battles for gender equality.

Should we have more women in politics for the sake of the global or European trend, or because they, by consisting half the voters and population, do carry human rights and responsibilities to solve and represent the interests the social group which they belong, children and their families? In this study I will discuss about the second argument, though profoundly they do not exclude each other. The struggle to achieve more gender equality in all the dimensions of what comprises a well functioning society has been continually misunderstood and misinterpreted for many reasons. They are perceived as a positive discrimination towards the “second sex”, using Simone de Beauvoir terms. This struggle has been perceived unnatural as well. Therefore, in order to clarify these misunderstandings, it has been felt the necessity to answer the most frequent question of gender equality politics: why is promoted the concept of gender equality in political decision making?

We all agree that citizens deserve to be guided by the best; lack of promotion of girls and women in political decision-making suggests that patriarchal societies might be selecting their leaders from a very restricted group of human talents. In order to get the best quality, we should necessarily go through the quantity in the context of political representation and political decision-making processes. This implies that the more the representation of an underrepresented group by gender, ethnicity and minorities, the better it is in terms of quality representation.

In this article it is claimed that an increase of the underrepresented gender entering politics has proven to bring more positive results than ever in terms of the overall improvement of the society. The added significance the article brings to the existing literature is that it portrays the overall political value women worldwide do bring to the existing unjust world, where everything starts and ends in politics. This is done by elaborating the national as well as international political positive effects that as more women enter politics will bring to the table. Since politics itself produces long-lasting *domino effects*, regionally and internationally distributed; and since other articles discuss only specific effects and variables, this article in particular, discusses the positive outcomes of what women or more gender equality could provide from an universal perspective. By bringing a scientific overall view of what it is or will be like to accept and support gender equality in politics worldwide, this article is a very good starting point of reference for international students of social sciences and politics, for conservative political party leaders as well as media managers and administrators who often do not mirror women properly in media programmes.

Most studies, however, create a sound link between the number of women in parliament and policies aiming at safeguarding women's rights and the

addressing issues related to family and child protection (Childs and Withey 1997). It has been observed from the social and political changes made so far that the quantitative presence of women constitutes a prerequisite for qualitative changes related to the political decision-making process, mainly through women's greater motivation to promote and fight for the realization of human rights of women and their interests, of families and not only. In achieving more equality in general stands the greatest potentials of any society.

Why is it so important to follow the progress of gender equality in politics? Despite this intensification of international obligations for promoting gender equality, today fewer than the 10 percent of countries have female heads of state or government, and only 33 countries have reached 30 percent or greater in the representation of women in national parliaments. This underrepresentation of women in positions of political leadership, which can be seen in all parts of the world and in both developing and developed contexts, indicates more than just a lack of commitment toward gender equality—it also signals a lack of commitment toward democracy (Tommasoli 2013).

The opening subchapter begins by arguing the importance and legitimation of women representation. A good representation is a very constitutional right in every pluralistic democracy after all. By highlighting the »not so positive« consequences we still experience from the lack of adequate gender representation, this literature is detailed by claiming the positive role of women, not only in the service of democratization, but also in the promotion of social welfare state policies as well as advancing to a superior level the concept of *substantial representation*. All these arguments legitimizing the issue and request to achieve more gender equality in politics will be presented as follows.

2. Why talking about the legitimization of gender equality in political representation?

There are some sensible reasons why recently it is emphasized the participation of women in politics, and especially in the parliament. Firstly, the equal opportunity given to participate political decision making is everyone's right. The recognition and respect of the political rights for all the citizens, by not excluding women, is the primary principle of democracy. These rights are protected by "the fundamental laws of a state, which are the constitutions of any country" (Alliance of Women's Deputies, Parliament of Albania).

Secondly, it should be understood that equal involvement of girls and women in governance is a more "perspective" issue than merely an issue of numbers. A woman and a man have different point of views in relation to various issues, so real politics should give women and girls at least and minimally, the opportunity to speak about their problems, to communicate them in the place of the nation's representatives: into the parliament. More women should exercise at their best their legislative power as a very considerable power, beyond legislative formal functions: being the legislative, electoral, and controlling functions. It is proven by political studies (Thomas 1991; Carroll 2001) that "... women and men have different perceptions of a country's policies priorities" (quoted in Zilja 2011).

Studies show that countries with less than 30% of seats in parliament by female gender are less democratic and more discriminating, and there are a considerable number of countries with below these *critical mass* percentages even within the intergovernmental organization of the European Union, which is well known for highlighting respect in issues of human rights. Facts show that women are more involved in laws that benefit women, children, and families, an argument that will be broadly discussed in the following sections. Consequently, equality in representation enables the best protection of women and their issues, of issues that go hand in hand with the promotion of the family's and children's interests as they are more related to them than men, this even due to social tradition and to their unrepeatable role of motherhood as a biological, natural role.

The market economy and the individualized lifestyle of the 21st century do not agree well with patriarchal norms of a priori empowerment of one gender at the expense of another. According to researcher Merita Ponari, the urbanizing global processes and the growing demands for material well-being encourage individuals to be present in the labor market regardless of gender, so that they can survive economically. This market trend exerts pressure on individuals to be part of labor and consumption market. In order to be able to fulfil their "consumerism habits" (Ponari n.d., 206), individuals should be employed, and no one would argue that, employment based on professionalism, does not differentiate on genders but on values. Therefore, women, as well as men, are legitimized to seek and should pursue academic excellence, career, professionalism, managerial skills, and in many cases, why not even decision-making at high official political seats.

The inability of the old norms to put order into a new socio-economic reality results in what (Durkheim 1951) calls "social anomie", as quoted by Ponari (n.d., 207). Anomie often constitutes a threat to social order, and if a political thought fails to intervene on time to prevent the disastrous effects of

the anomie, it follows what Thomass Kuhn (1962) describes as a "social crisis", which in case it does escalate into a widespread conflict, it does eject the society out of control as defined by Brzezinski (1993), as quoted at Ponari (n.d., 208). In many countries, although this lack of women at official political decision-making levels does not seem to cause any social crisis, it has in fact caused another kind of crisis: that of persistent political non-representation.

The underrepresentation of women as a social group of a population that accounts for more than 50% of the general population has caused in the region of Southeast Europe (in the Balkans) in particular, an insufficient political insensitivity or inaction towards the social policies. Social policies, on their part, are more than necessary for countries still running under an unhealthy democracy, an economic capitalism which is uncured and uncorrected with social policies, and within a fragile democracy that is still being discussed whether it is going through a transition or post-transition period.

3. The need for a better understanding of gender equality principle

Gender equality is still misunderstood in many societies around the world. It is difficult to prioritize on the policy agenda a concept that not everyone – particularly politicians, decision makers and policymakers – understand. When elected representatives are able to define gender equality and identify the benefits of gender equality for society at large, there is a greater chance that these messages can be communicated in a positive way to citizens – both males and females. Thus, in 2012, a survey was prepared by OSCE / ODIHR to measure the concepts of gender equality in ODIHR countries.

For the most part, respondents to the 2012 ODIHR Survey generally demonstrated a good understanding of the concept of gender equality. A male respondent from Kazakhstan, for example, described gender equality as a "necessary attribute of modern life, meaning equal rights for women and men." A female respondent from Moldova defined it as "the opportunity for both men and women to express their position, to affirm their qualities, to participate in the process of making life better, to be heard and try to realize their ideas and plans for the benefit of the society." For a male respondent from Georgia, "gender equality is a full democracy." A female respondent from Kyrgyzstan defined gender equality as "equal rights and responsibilities of men and women in all the spheres of life, as well as equal income and access to resources." However, the strongest arguments to be brought to attention are the following: "Gender equality is EQUALITY regardless of gender.", being

the claim of a male respondent from Moldova, and another other one: "Gender equality is necessary to create equal conditions for women and men in political, social and cultural life.", claimed a female respondent from Kazakhstan.

Other interlocutors have mentioned the necessity of legal measures for gender equality, the provision of a level playing field for both genders, the presence of women and men in all spheres of the society, as well as an understanding of the roles and importance both genders play in society. Gender equality, nevertheless, does not mean support of one gender in particular, but support for the underrepresented groups of the whole society in particular. Today, is the social group of women in minorance, tomorrow might be the social group of men might find themselves (themselves) in the same situation as women today, who knows, although this might sound unbelievable, or any other underrepresented group, not necessarily related to gender.

4. A better governability can be achieved through substantial representation of both genders

Girls and women are an influential sector in the electorate of our democracy, hoping that it is increasing. For this reason, the growth of women's access in the political process as a voter, party member, a candidate and a functionary, has a great importance in their prosperity not only as a social group in general, but also in the interest of the general democratic development of the political parties. Achieving gender equality in important official seats and political decision making is an objective which is closely related to the human rights respect of being equally represented. Of course, when one does expect results which depend entirely on politics and its implementation success, one should also consider other political objectives such as the goal to win and keep the power or the governance for a long time.

As much as this political role for a woman is preferred, however, this active role of women in public decision making's life might be inhibited by the "inherited social-cultural impacts that want females to be committed to their families more, prejudices; discriminatory practices, etc" (Krasta 2015, 50). In the inherited barriers' impacts I would enumerate not only the social-cultural impacts, but also those political-institutional ones as well as the cultural-political impacts.

Female lawmakers are significant not only for democratic intentions, but also for their power to undertake actions: "Representatives have autonomy, which is the main reason why it is important who these representatives are"

(Phillips 1995). In fact, the lack of women in the legislature around the world is a major concern due to the concept of substantive representation. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1967) notes that substantive representation is defined as: "acting in the interests of the represented in a responsible manner towards them" (Pitkin 1967, 209). Thus, as mentioned earlier, the focus is on the concept of "acting for" rather than "staying for" particular voters (Pitkin 1967, 60-1, 112-3; Galligan, Clavero and Calloni 2007, 40). Women thus, are needed to 'act for' their own social group and they are responsible to represent it: women of their country. Substantial representation focuses on the idea that an elected official "seeks to advance the political preferences and interests of a group" (Lovenduski 2005, 3). In the case of the female politicians, this means that they do "represent women's concerns ... [and] think they have a specific responsibility to talk about women's interests" (Galligan 2009, 280).

Women often do "bring a range of different attitudes, interests and priorities to policy making" (Bratton and Ray 2002, 428). Specifically, various studies have also found that female representatives, during the electoral period, speak on behalf of their constituents and do address women's political issues more than their male counterparts (Bratton and Ray 2002; Catalano 2009; Childs 2001; Childs and Withey 2006; Meyer 2003; Osborn and Mendez 2010; Swers 1998; Wangnerud 2000). Thus, based on the premise of substantial representation, the lack of gender equality in legislature harms the "legitimacy of political decision making results". Since under the notion of (Lovenduski 2005, 3) a substantial representation, an elected official "seeks to advance the preferences and political interests of a group", when applied to female parliamentarians, substantial representation means that they do "represent women's concerns [and] feel that they have a specific responsibility for talking about the interests of women" (Galligan 2009, 280).

5. Achieving some representation' equality: a request of the democratic process

The right to gender equality in all dimensions is above all a requirement of a democratic process. In particular, the democratic process has led to escalating demands for social welfare as well as for popular participation and an increased social equity" (Heywood 2008, 236). Achieving gender equality in governmental institutions and within the political parties "does strengthens the principle of equality and the democratic character of political bodies, and this implies an efficient use of talents and potential abilities" (McCulloch 2012, 8). In other words, a representative democracy leads to better governance.

Scholars have proposed explanations that focus on the traditional attitudes of the citizens towards gender roles and the overall climate towards gender equality in a given country (Paxton and Kunovich 2003, Ruedin 2012). The lack of women in party positions is undeniably problematic for the notion of democracy (Galligan 2009, 283; Leyenaar 2004). Specifically, the concept of representative democracy specifies that a "representative body should mirror / reflect the diversity of the electorate, and the MPs are elected by their "constituents" and "are accountable to them" (Leyenaar 2004, 230). Thus, a men-dominated legislature, naturally does not reflect the gender composition of the society in general. In fact, the supporters of the parliamentary gender quota in France argued that "there can be no real democracy without full representation of each gender". After all, we all agree that citizens deserve to be guided by the best person.

Moreover, achieving gender quality in political representation is a condition and a challenge of the democratic process, since "the challenges for a fair, qualitative and proportional representation are the real basis for a stable and functioning democracy" (UN Women Albania 2017). Governance models coming mainly from men politicians, a model which we are used to accept, constitute an important democratic deficit. This old-mannered model suggests that society might be "compiling its leaders from a very narrow group of human talents", as more than half of the human population is continually "excluded" or underrepresented, and this phenomenon is universal.

However, gender equality should not be just an added value of democracy; it must be a clear objective to build democracy. It is publically claimed at the very heart of the hugest political universal institution, United Nations (UN), by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that "gender equality must be treated as an explicit goal of democracy-building, not as an 'add-on", as quoted at Tommasoli (2013, 15). The Secretary-General emphasized the important role the UN can play in bringing about the kinds of changes in the political culture that will allow gender equality—and democracy—to flourish. "Mindsets can change", he pointed out. 'National actors have to lead the transformation. But it is our responsibility to assist them" (Tommasoli 2013, 15). Also as Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General at *International IDEA* put it: "Gender equality does not make democracy. And democracy does not make gender equality. But when both principles of popular control and equality between citizens are realized, then democracy and gender equality are both maximized—and society is on a much better path to development, security, and human rights". It cannot be left unquoted the Professor Mala Htun from New School University also (quoted at Tommasoli 2013, 16) claiming the following: "I am

optimistic about the effects of democracy on gender equality, not because it produces changes in an automatic way, but due to the processes it makes possible”.

6. Representation through group similarity appears to be the most democratic one

Representation through the model of similarity of the respective group is the most democratic among others. It offers the choice of representatives on the basis of two main criteria: *meritocracy* (the intellectual ability to take decisions) and *reflecting the interests of the represented*. It gives the opportunity to the best candidates within the interest group and/or the social group to protect the interests of this group at decision-making levels. This theory reflects Pitkin's answer that "representation is a medium between independent decisions for the benefit of the represented and a reflection of their interests"(1972, 4-5) or as Hardin (2004, 92) puts it: "the elected officials are simultaneously agents and governors of citizens" (both authors quoted at Danaj n.d., 22.).

There is substantial evidence to support the presence of substantial representation in Southeast region, of course by examples coming from Western Europe. For example, Kathleen A. Bratton and Leonard P. Ray (2002) ascertain that female legislators in Norwegian local governments have a positive impact on the deciding process of setting the agenda (429). Specifically, they find that "women elected in the local councils brought a new set of concerns on the political agenda" (435). For example, female lawmakers advocate childcare policy, which is a very important issue for women. In Britain, research shows that female deputies are more likely to speak on behalf of issues that women tend to give priority, such as health care (Catalano 2009, 61). Similarly, Sarah Childs and Julie Withey (2006) discuss the fundamental impact of the work of the British female deputies, in successfully achieving a reduced VAT of 12.5 percent in female products.

In Northern Ireland, the interviews with women lawmakers show that they are "more concerned than men in healthcare issues, care for children, education and care for the elderly" (Cowell-Meyers 2001, 72). Finally, female lawmakers in Germany supported the divorce reform in the 1970s, which was beneficial for women (Meyer 2003, 415). In short, the support of women lawmakers leads to the introduction of many pro-social protection policies in law, something that any society needs, in particular the societies in transition.

As a result, the best way to be represented for women is the representation by women from their very social group. Some interests and priorities need to

be represented by women themselves. Likewise, in terms of their political representation, the liberal thinking requires that regardless of the electoral system's nature, women and other disadvantaged groups should be present as members of the legislative body, especially if we refer to the empirical evidence which do show that "the involvement of groups' members historically disadvantaged in the legislative bodies, in itself displaces the decision-making dynamics towards a consensual-oriented discourse model", a conclusion claimed at (Williams 1998, 146-147) quoted at (Danaj n.d., 25).

7. Counter arguments related to the representation by the respective group

Nevertheless, even though the right representation can be depended somehow on the presence in the legislature, it would be absurd to think that a representative, just because she is a woman, she will represent the interests or the perspective of all women in general. We can go further and say that just the presence of marginalized groups' members on legislatures is not enough to properly represent the citizens of this group, even though it is often necessary. This is explained by the fact that even in cases when representation is improved and is reflected into the parliament, marginalization is repeated at that level of representation and decision-making, since in the majority electoral system models, they will still be a minority and as a result, they will not affect the politics and decision-making. In order for the presence to be effectual, it should be translated into "policies impact and policy-making" (Williams 1998, 6-7). In other words, for the women's presence to have political value and to affect the decision-making, women should be offered "treatment as equal and not equal treatment" using here the terms of (Yuval-Davis 1999, 222). The key word here is "as" equals.

A gender equality researcher, Sonila Danaj, nonetheless, says that in order to be achieved equal treatment, women themselves should be aware of how they should exercise their rights in order for them to feel and act as equal. The first step towards doing this is precisely "the change of sexist mentality, which predetermines the roles of the individuals in society based on gender" (Danaj n.d., 24-25). Furthermore, they should understand that "being a woman means some different particularities, interests and priorities, which in addition to their other features as race, ethnicity, socio-economic level, religion and more, need to be represented by women themselves". Apparently, Danaj passes up the primary responsibility to women themselves for gender roles breakage and the patriarchal mentality, but I think that this is just one side of the coin. There are also some external, uncontrollable

factors that do affect female gender, for example what I will name as “social constructions” or the gender role models designed from the society and not only.

8. Societies need lawmakers who tend to pay more attention to welfare policies

In some places there are differences, between positions taken from parliamentary male members and female ones of the same party. For example, women parliamentarians tend to pay more attention to the welfare policy (Wangnerud 2000, 68). In the United Kingdom, study evidences show that members of the male Conservative Party are more supportive of reducing public spending than female party members (Campbell and Childs 2012). Similarly, in the debate back in 1957 of Equal Rights Act in West Germany, “the debate was set up throughout the party lines between male candidates against female candidates. Woman argued in a progressive way, and without doubt, for recognition of all the rights, while men rejected equality as an “unnatural equality” (Meyer 2003, 412). Moreover, in United Kingdom, Michele L. Swers finds that moderated conservative women of the Republican Party, are more likely to vote in favour of the bill of women issues, rather than moderate men Conservative Republicans (Swers 1998, 444-5). So, as a consequence she concludes that: “The main republican voter who agrees with a more liberal position on women’ issues can serve better by choosing the woman candidate”. This seems to be a powerful testimony in favour of women's presence in the government.

Throughout the interviews, women lawmakers have intimated about the importance of a substantial representation. In Czech Republic, a woman candidate stated that: “I see myself as a woman who represents women’ interests, of those who chose me, and of my party” (Čurdová 2009, 232). In a same way, the British candidate of labourist party said: “I don’t see men, who line up to speak for care towards children, they have never done that” (Childs 2001, 181). Another labourist candidate described a case in which a mother had described the rape done to her daughter. “I felt that she could talk easier to me, rather than to a male candidate”. Sarah Childs concludes that: “it is being developed an initial policy of transformation within the electoral zone – deputy (MP) relationship, as a result of political presence of women”. In this way, it can be speculated that female electors/voters, can have a better view of governability if female candidates do represent their needs. It is not surprising the substantial representation of women when it is taken in to consideration that women in general have different reasons to compete for

official posts. Specifically, in Northern Ireland, Kimberly Cowel-Meyers (2001, 84) points out:

“Most of the interviewed women consider the political activity as a form of activism in community or in social affairs, an extension of their service in other contexts. Men, on the other side, have more chances to consider politics as an individual activity or for a career”.

Women, also, have a different style when it comes to direction and leadership compared to men. "Men and women differ in attitudes towards decision-making: women are more focused on consensus and balance in communication and with a more democratic orientation, while men are more focused on competition and have a more autocratic orientation" Leyenaar (2004, 82) claims. Deputies in Eastern Europe have expressed similar feelings (Rueschemeyer and Wolchik 2009). Collectively, these evidences show that the gender of representation is extremely relevant and deserves discussion.

We are being conscious that, slowly but definitely, and not necessarily conscious, we are moving towards a world in which everything is on sale. By using (Peterson 2003, 78) words: "babies, human organs, sexually-charged bodies, intimate care, sensual pleasure and spiritual salvation are on sale" (quoted at Dhëmbó and Agolli 2010, 214). Having said the above, I believe that a greater numerical presence of more women in real politics would bring a more human perspective and a political veto to fight against all this dehumanization exported by the worldwide established neoliberal economic globalization in which we are living.

9. Women' contribution to the socio-economic development

Gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. There is also a growing consensus among international actors that gender equality is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. There is some evidence suggesting that a higher number of women in elected offices lead to greater economic advantages. The World Bank, for example, argues that promoting gender equality is "smart economics" because it can increase output per worker by 3 per cent to 25 per cent across a range of countries: "Countries that create better opportunities and conditions for women and girls can raise productivity, improve outcomes for children, make institutions more representative, and advance development prospects for all" (World Development Report 2012). Similarly, the World Economic Forum's 2011 Gender Gap Report finds that: "Countries and companies will thrive if women are educated and engaged as

fundamental pillars of the economy, and diverse leadership is most likely to find innovative solutions to tackle the current economic challenges and to build equitable and sustainable growth” (The Global Gender Gap Report 2011).

Another finding is that women are more likely to invest a larger proportion of their household income than men in education and health of their children (The Global Gender Gap Report 2011). Similarly, a 2011 study found that if one dollar of development money is given to a woman, she is likely to spend 90 per cent of that money on her family and on her community. If one dollar of development money is given to a man, he is likely to spend only 30 to 40 per cent of that money on his family and on his community; the rest he will spend on himself (Booth QC 2011).

Moreover, according to McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), if women—who account for half the world’s working-age population—do not achieve their full economic potential, even the global economy will suffer. While all types of inequality have economic consequences, MGI, focusing on the economic implications of lack of parity between men and women, reports that, *advancing women’s equality can add up to \$12 trillion or 11 percent, in annual 2025 GDP to global growth*. MGI has mapped 15 gender-equality indicators for 95 countries and finds that 40 of them have high or extremely high levels of gender inequality on at least half of the indicators. The indicators fall into four categories: equality in work, essential services and enablers of economic opportunity, legal protection and political voice, and physical security and autonomy (McKinsey Global Institute n.d.).

Even after decades of progress toward making women equal partners with men in the economy and society, the gap between them remains large. According to MGI, gender parity in economic outcomes (such as participation in the workforce or presence in leadership positions) is not necessarily a normative ideal, as it involves human beings making personal choices about the lives they lead; however, the Institute recognizes that men can be disadvantaged relative to women in some instances. Nevertheless, realizing all the above, the general belief of the Institute is that the world, including the private sector, would benefit by focusing on the large economic opportunity of improving parity between men and women.

10. Women Politicians in International Relations

Increasing women’s participation in political decision-making and leadership roles internationally is an expression emphasized in many resolutions, treaties and regional co-operations, legal norms and national constitutions.

One of the considerate resolutions to be referred to is Resolution no. 1325 "Woman, Peace and Security" adopted on October 31, 2000 at its 4213 meeting of the UN Security Council of the United Nations Organization (quoted in Goldstein 2001, 132) claiming the following:

"By reaffirming the important role of women in preventing, resolving of conflicts and peace building, and by emphasizing the importance of their equal participation and the full involvement in all the efforts to preserve and advance peace and security, as well as the need to enhance their role in decision-making processes, related to conflict prevention and resolution, Reaffirming the need to fully implement international humanitarian and human rights laws, which protect the rights of women and girls during and after the conflicts....."

This resolution, among many other goals, emphasizes how positive woman's role is in resolving political conflicts, and in that way, being in favour of progress of the political matters and international relations or of the progress of any country with each other. Not only within the borders of a country is the woman an added value to the public policies, roles and decisions, but also in the international arena, woman is or at least has started to be seen as a very valuable asset for her contribution in supporting peace and international security.

Another view of women's role in important decision-making, such as the very considerate decisions in international affairs, war, peace and global security suffrage is that of Professor Joshua Goldstein, a field expert, expressing in his well-known book in international relations, being among the best seller university textbooks in the field (Goldstein 2001, 136):

"...Women are usually described as more peaceful creatures than men from feminists, both biologically and culturally, or (what is most likely) of both factors together. These feminists emphasize the irreparable, unprecedented ability of women in their assistance as peacemakers. They emphasize the role of women as mothers / future mothers. Because of such a guardian role, women are taught to be more inclined than men to fly in the face of, to fight against the war and to find different alternatives to violence in conflict resolution."

Considering the analysts and researchers of international relations (IR), there were examined the feminist judges who emphasized the importance of the role played by gender in IR, especially the traditional distinction between men in politic-military roles and women in domestic-female roles (Goldstein 2001, 131). One of the lines of researchers on the influence of feminism in IR, the so-called *outlook feminism*, focuses on the evaluation of the female side, namely, in assessing the irreparable role of women as women. "The outlook feminists do not think that women do all the things as good as men, or vice versa". But because of their greater experience with nutrition and human

relationships, women are thought to have the opportunity to "be more active" than men (on average) for conflict resolution and for group decision-making. The *outlook feminists* believe that there are real differences between the genders, which are not only those having to do just with the social structure and cultural formation (although these also do help to human roles according to the gender background). Some outlook feminists believe that there is a fundamental *biological essence* in being a female or a male (a view which sometimes is called *essentialism*), but in the most part, they think that women's view is defined more "by culture than by biology" (Goldstein 2001, 132).

I would close the last paragraph section with the former UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon's declaration, stating that: "Women need to be at the negotiating table, playing their rightful role in conflict prevention and resolution, in peacekeeping and peace-building. Not only to ensure that women's needs and perspectives are reflected, but as a basic human right" (Tommasoli 2013).

11. Mainstream feminism has nothing to do with society's progress

Finally, I will present a feminist making a case against feminism. Jessa Crispin in her book "Why I am Not a Feminist" discusses the issues of patriarchy and capitalism, and how the mainstream feminism is not doing anything positive against these. "Making feminism a universal pursuit might look like a good thing," author Jessa Crispin writes, "but in truth it progresses, and I think accelerates, a process that has been detrimental to the feminist movement." (Crispin 2017). A feminist politics is (she means it should), according to Crispin, necessarily anti-capitalist. Patriarchy is bound up with capitalism, and thus the two must fall together. She is not the first person to criticize feminism in this way. Socialist feminists have long argued that feminism demands the dismantling of capitalism.

However, "If you have women in positions of power behaving like men do," Crispin says, "that is not a defeat of the patriarchy. That is just patriarchy with women in it". Since she considers patriarchy and capitalism as features of the same system, it is raised the question if feminism, rightly understood, is a revolutionary project? In many ways — and this is part of the argument she makes in her book — "feminism became apolitical or divorced from its political roots" (ibid.).

Crispin is objecting to feminism as it currently exists in the mainstream culture. This idea emerged that if societies just put a lot more women in

positions of power, somehow that would defeat the patriarchy, not understanding that the patriarchy has nothing to do with men. If women in power behave like men do, that is not a defeat of the patriarchy. That's just patriarchy with women in it. Crispin's definition of patriarchy is a society that is structured by hierarchy. So, unless that is reformed, unless the society is reformed so there are no hierarchies, because the hierarchy used to be white, property-owning men at the top of the hierarchy and everybody else in varying positions underneath that, and now it is just money and power. So women can easily attain a high position on the hierarchy, but that is not the end of patriarchy.

Second-wave feminism, even first-wave feminism, noticed that patriarchy was intertwined with capitalism. The point is that patriarchy and capitalism are of the same system. They support one another and one cannot be removed without the other. There is not a way of defeating one without the other.

It is broadly believed that progress is made through participation; that one participates in a system that one is trying to reform. Crispin's viewpoint for real feminists is that "you do not participate; you abstain". It is much easier to criticize corporate culture when you are not allowed to be in the higher levels of corporate culture. As soon as you are allowed to be a CEO of a large company, then it is like, "Oh, we will just reform it from within. We do not have to destroy it. Now that I am running it, it is fine. Therefore, for Crispin, mainstream feminism is bland; it is the "you go girl" self-empowerment version of feminism, which has nothing to do with progress.

The solution, Crispin suggests, is that there should be more solidarity between feminists and other groups who feel marginalized, but our society is too atomized for that. A lot of the social justice movements are atomized: There is too much competition, too much in-fighting.

12. A good role model politician should be created by women for women

A range of studies has found that female politicians often serve as role models who inspire other women to become politically involved, as citizens, party members and political activists (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007, 921-939; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, 233-247; Karp and Banducci 2006, 105-115). This is because female leaders can enhance female voters' identification with the political system - and in turn their sense of being able to influence the decision-making process, making their participation worthwhile. These effects, however, are not only confined to women: the presence of women in

a wide range of political offices can increase the confidence that male citizens have in the political system as well (Santo 2011; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005, 407–428). Consequently, electing greater proportions of women to political positions can deepen democracy and encourage civic engagement in the general population.

In a promotional video for its “2012 Project”, the United States-based Center for American Women and Politics of Rutgers University reversed the question to ask: “Why *not* more women in politics?” (Phillips 1995). The non-partisan video encouraged more women to run for public office in the United States (2012 Project Videos 2012). In it, one of the women elected to the United States Congress noted that what convinced her to run was: “Wanting someone who looked like me to represent me. Someday, you just look in the mirror and say ‘I need to be that person’. Encouraging women of different identities, backgrounds and levels of experience is critical to achieving the essence of representative government. It will also ensure that women are present to influence policymaking on issues of particular concern to different groups of women and even to increase the overall social and economic development worldwide.

13. Conclusion

This article gave the main arguments about the positive, so far, role of women entering legislative bodies around the world. More women in politics means definitely, but not directly, an increased democratization, a promotion of social welfare policies, which are so much needed especially in transition economies - and not only, in this capitalist world.

A greater participation of more women entering politics has shown that countries become somehow more democratic and less discriminating. After all, achieving a greater amount of gender equality in political representation is directly related to the respect of human rights – the imperative of the century we are living, in particular in post-materialist societies. More women in politics appear to ensure that women are present to influence policymaking on issues of specific concern to different groups of women and even to increase the overall socio-economic development worldwide.

In conclusion, we can state that a woman is able to represent women better than a man can do. This statement is important since, women, even though comprising half of the population worldwide, are still perceived as a particular social group. So, who is going to represent them in politics better than they themselves? Being a woman implies that she does not need to be sensitive or to learn the needs and interests of her represented women,

because by being one of them, she knows their needs and shares with them the same or similar interests; said differently, she belongs to the same social group.

Certainly, this respective belonging to a social group does not necessarily guarantee a fair representation; however, in order to realize representation in parallel, it should be worked for the quality improvement of this representation, in order to truly serve to the interests of women as a social group. When it comes to the issue of representation's quality improvement, and how represented do the citizens feel by the deputies elected, there arise other issues on the surface, that do not have to do with gender at all, but with other variables of how could we value different politicians based on their engagement, character, performance, merit etc.

There are no other rights except human rights; as a result, there is no room for expressions such as “men’s rights” or “women’s rights” in Angelina Grimke words. We decided to embrace democracy from all the political systems we have seen so far through centuries. In this paper were given evidences that women’s participation improves democracy, and not the other way around. Therefore, the question that arises in the end is: will we make the actual democracy work better for women? In principle, two forces that develop and grow one another tend to go in the right proportion.

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