The African Experience in Politics and Culture: From Monroe's Doctrine to Nkrumah's Consciencism
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Introduction:
On the African continent, President James Monroe is immortalized in the capital city of Liberia. The African city of Monrovia is named after this American President. But the inadvertent impact of James Monroe on Africa was even more far-reaching than his memorial tribute in Liberia. More by accident than by design, the Monroe Doctrine helped to transform Africa's relations with the Western World in fundamental and irreversible ways.

If Africa's Triple Heritage is a convergence of Africanity, Islam and Western culture, James Monroe's policies for the Americas had repercussions for the its Western segment. Let us first examine these three legacies more closely before we elaborate on the African consequences of the Monroe Doctrine.

Ghana's founding president, Kwame Nkrumah, coined the term "consciencism" to designate the three civilizations that have helped to shape contemporary Africa: Africa's own rich inheritance, Islamic culture, and the impact of Western traditions and lifestyles. The interplay of these three civilizations is the essence of the continent's triple heritage. This has given colour to Africa's unique character as a cultural bazaar, which reflects a wide variety of ideas and values drawn from different civilizations, all competing for the attention of potential African buyers. In every African country today, the triple forces of indigenous culture, Islam, and Westernization vie for domination, and provide a variegated backdrop for policies, group actions, and individual decisions.

This contest for supremacy can lead to open conflicts, as was the case with the 2002 Miss World Beauty Pageant in Nigeria, which was resisted by Islamic groups that saw it as an importation of undesirable Western values bordering on the prurient and as a debasement of women. The ensuing demonstrations against the organizers of the pageant resulted in the loss of lives and property, and led to the eventual relocation of the event from Abuja to London. Conducting any national exercise, such as a simple headcount or census, can easily have implications for African culture, Islamic practice, and Western values. Africa is indeed a contested territory with imported Islamic and Western values contending with indigenous African values and customs.

Even before Islam came to Africa there was an older triple heritage in the continent: an interplay between African culture, Semitic culture, and the legacy of Greece and Rome. This ancient triple heritage is best illustrated in Ethiopia, where Christianity has flourished since the fourth century, the impact of Judaism is captured in local versions of the legend of Solomon and Sheba, and the Greco-Roman legacy is manifest both in social traditions and in brick and mortar. This ancient triple heritage evolved when the Semitic element (which was once both Hebraic and Arabian) narrowed to become mainly Islamic. On the other hand, the Greco-Roman legacy expanded to become the impact of modern Western civilization as a whole on African life and culture.

Romantic Gloriana and Romantic Primitivism
But what is the African strand in these legacies? How much of an indigenous civilization did Africa have before the arrival of Islam and the West? One African school of interpretation emphasizes that Africa had indeed produced great kings, grand empires, and elaborate technological skills before the aliens colonized her. The evidence ranges from the remains of Great Zimbabwe and the sunken churches of Lalibela (Ethiopia) to the bronze culture of West Africa. Indeed, ancient Egypt was itself an African miracle and, in part, a "Negro" civilization. This perspective prefers to emphasize the glorious moments in Africa's history and the grand civilizations it produced. It is a perspective which has been designated as romantic gloriana.
In contrast to this approach, there is the perspective of romantic primitivism. Here the idea is not to emphasize past grandeur, but to validate simplicity and give respectability to non-technical traditions. This historical perspective takes pride in precisely those traditions that European arrogance would seem to despise. In the words of the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, who invented the word *Negritude*,

Hooray to:
Those who have invented neither powder nor compass
Those who have tamed neither gas nor electricity
Those who have explored neither the seas nor the skies . . .
My negritude is neither a tower nor a cathedral;

It plunges into the red flesh of the soil.
Hooray for joy,
Hooray for love,
Hooray for the pain of incarnate tears.

As Jean-Paul Sartre once pointed out, this African revelling in not having invented either powder or the compass, this proud claim of non-technicalness, is a reversal of the usual cultural situation. "What might appear to be a deficiency becomes a positive source of richness." There is a sense in which "not to have" means "to be rich", using a different sense of "richness."

Now let us juxtapose these two African perspectives. While proponents of Africa's glorious past look to the pyramids as a validation of Africa's dignity, take pride in the ruins of ancient Zimbabwe, and turn to the ancient empires of Ghana, Mali, and Malawi for official names of modern republics, those who prefer romantic primitivism, on the other hand, seek solace in stateless societies, find dignity in village life, and adulate the cultural validity of the traditions and beliefs of rural folk.

What both types of African society have shared is nearness to nature. For centuries the continent has had abundant animal life and vegetation, and the indigenous religions have fused God, man and nature. Islam and Western Christianity have challenged this fusion. Man alone is supposed to have been created in the image of God – contrary to indigenous African beliefs in which the image of God takes many forms. Among God's creatures, only man – according to Islam and Western Christianity – is close to sacredness, in possession of a soul, and destined for spiritual immortality. This is contrary to indigenous African religions, which allow other creatures to share in sacredness and sometimes endow mountains and springs with a holiness of their own.

The arrival of Islam and especially of Westernism disrupted the African's ancient relationship with nature. The impact of the West has been particularly harmful. Capitalism and the cash economy have resulted in the rape or prostitution of Africa's environment, often by Africans themselves. Under the impact of the profit motive which came with the West, the African no longer holds nature in awe – he holds it in avarice and greed. Traditionally, Christianity has neither sacred nor profane animals. Islamic doctrine includes profane animals (especially the pig and the dog) but no sacred ones. Indigenous African religions have always had room for both sacred and profane fellow creatures. By taking the animal kingdom outside the realm of moral worth, the Western impact on Africa has reduced animals to their economic worth.

The Monroe Doctrine and Comparative Empires
The arrival of Western imperialism in Africa might, in part, have been precipitated by the decline of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas.

The modern phase of globalization began with the role of the Iberian Peninsula as a link between Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Portugal's Vasco da Gama helped Europeans to circumnavigate the African continent and link up Europe with Asia. The Royal House of Spain facilitated the voyages of Christopher Columbus and linked up the Americas with the older world.

The Iberian Peninsula played a variety of roles in the history of Europe's relations with Africa. There was a period when the Muslim empire in Spain and the Muslim empire in North Africa were interlinked.

There was a later period when Portugal and Spain, in their different ways, helped to open up the world – Vasco da Gama and the circumnavigation of Africa, Christopher Columbus and the opening up of the Americas, and Spanish conquerors and explorers in the so-called New World.

Thirdly, there was the involvement of the Iberian Peninsula in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The rise and consolidation of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas partly relied on African slave labour.
All this is familiar to everybody. What may be less familiar is the link between the decline of the Spanish empire in the Americas and the rise of European colonialism in Africa.

There is the black factor in the racial composition of Latin America, with special reference to countries like Brazil and Cuba. In the case of Africa's relations with Cuba, this black factor in Cuba's composition as a nation has already been of some relevance in lending legitimacy to Cuba's involvement in African affairs. The

government in Havana has often emphasized that Cuba is ultimately "an Afro-Latin country". Black Cuban troops engaged in African wars helped to reduce the image of foreignness in Cuba's intervention.

Another link between Africa and Latin America in the future may well be the Portuguese language. Brazil is to Portugal what the United States is to Britain: a child that grew too large for its mother. And just as the United States will in time over-shadow Great Britain in its influence in former British colonies in Africa, so Brazil will one day overshadow Portugal in its influence in former Portuguese colonies in Africa.

There is also another link between Africa and Latin America, a major historical link which is perhaps underestimated. There is reason to believe that the Monroe Doctrine, which the United States proclaimed in order to keep Europeans out of Latin America (Spanish and Portuguese), helped to seal the colonial fate of Africa in the decades which followed. The Monroe Doctrine was contained in a message to the Congress of the United States on 2 December 1823. The situation which provoked the message was the threat of European intervention in the Spanish-American colonies which were in revolt at the time. The threat amounted to the possibility of a European re-colonization of Latin America.

The Monroe Doctrine stipulated that the American hemisphere was no territory for future European colonization, and that the United States would regard any attempt by European powers to penetrate the Americas afresh as a threat to the peace and security of the United States. However, it added that the United States would not interfere with European colonies already established in the hemisphere, nor would the United States participate in purely European wars.

The question which I am raising is whether the decision by the United States to insulate Latin America from European re-colonization helped to divert European imperialism more firmly towards Africa. After all, the Americans took the Monroe Doctrine quite seriously. It was applied in 1867 to force the withdrawal of French troops from Mexico after the French had established Emperor Maximilian. And in 1895, the United States brought pressure to bear on Great Britain to settle the boundary between British Guyana and Venezuela by arbitration.

If Latin America, in the wake of Spain's decline, had been available for re-colonization by other European powers, then the scramble for the African continent might have been delayed. Moreover, it is conceivable that a smaller portion of Africa would have been colonized if the European powers had been busy with new colonial and neo-colonial possessions in Latin America. After all, at the time, Africa was a much less attractive proposition, partly because so little was known about it. It was less developed than Latin America, less accessible to outsiders, less evaluated in economic and strategic terms. Putting a French emperor in Mexico seemed to be a far more attractive proposition than sending a conquering expedition to the mouth of the Senegal River or the meandering torrents of the River Congo.

My second hypothesis is that the Monroe Doctrine, having preserved Latin America for American influence, helped to keep the United States out of the scramble for the African continent later in the century. After all, the United States was already a major power (though not yet a superpower) in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It was represented at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, where the rules of the scramble for and partition of Africa were attentively discussed and worked out. But American imperialism decided to concentrate on potential acquisitions closer to home. To this extent the Monroe Doctrine was combined with the slogan "Manifest Destiny". This was a phrase used by Americans in the mid nineteenth century to legitimize territorial expansion. Its origins have been traced to an unsigned article in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* of July 1845. The article referred to "the fulfilment of our Manifest Destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions".

The phrase soon became popular with expansionist members of Congress, anxious for war with Mexico in order to acquire more territory, and hungry for the acquisition of California. Thus the Monroe Doctrine allowed the United States greater leverage for indirect imperialism in, or exercised over Latin America, and the Manifest Destiny slogan allowed the United States to indulge in the more direct imperialism of annexing contiguous territory into its own body politic. Through the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo (February 1848) Mexico ceded to the United States New Mexico and California, where incidentally, or not so incidentally, gold had just been discovered. Mexico also renounced all claims to Texas and recognized the Rio Grande frontier. The question which arises is whether these imperialist activities by the United States in its own hemisphere were at least a contributing factor towards the absence of American colonies in Africa, apart from the special case of Liberia as a home for returning black Americans (whose capital was named after President Monroe). Without the special hemispheric preoccupations which kept the United Stated busy in Latin America and in

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expanding its own body politic, it is quite conceivable that the Star-Spangled Banner would indeed have been flying somewhere between the shores of Tripoli and the snows of Kilimanjaro, or somewhere between the mouth of the Volta River and the storms of the Cape of Good Hope.

In this sense, Latin America played a part in neutralizing the United States as a potential imperial power within the African continent. On the other hand, Latin America, by being insulated from European re-colonization, helped force the Europeans to look even earlier to Africa for new worlds to conquer. It is partly these historical issues which helped to convert Africa into the middle continent of the Third World. Black Africa, as we indicated elsewhere, provides an important link with Latin America; Arab Africa in the north provides an important link with Asia. But both parts of Africa, north and south of the Sahara, have had links with other sides of the Third World in any case, and have continued to consolidate Africa as the middle continent in the Third World movement.

In the 1970s Afro-Asianism was strengthened mainly through the Arab connection and the rise of oil power. Afro-Latinism was also strengthened, mainly through the Cuban connection, especially Cuba's participation in the liberation of Angola.

Political Culture and Stability

Christianity had two entries in Africa. Its first influence emerged through Egypt and Ethiopia early in the Christian era (as part of the ancient triple heritage of African, Semitic, and Greco-Roman influences). Its second arrival was through European colonialism (as part of the modern triple heritage of Africanism, Islam, and Westernization). Kwame Nkrumah called this "Euro-Christianity". This new European religious thrust found older gods in the continent. Indigenous religions were still alive and strong. Islam arrived in Africa during the seventh century. Currently, Africa is witnessing increasing evangelization from foreign religions, which are enfeebling indigenous African religions.

Today, different historical stages of technology co-exist at the same time within Africa – the "tribal" spear co-exists with the modern missile, the ironsmith with the steel mill, the talking drum with satellite broadcasting, witchcraft with nuclear physics, herbal medicine with advanced surgery. Both Islam and Westernism helped to introduce new tools of production (cultivation and manufacture), of construction (building both states and bridges), of communication (vehicles and verbs), of rehabilitation (different forms of medicine), and of destruction (from the Arab sword to the Western machine gun). This is quite apart from the rich heritage of skills that have evolved independently in Africa over the centuries.

The West has been better at transferring its tools of destruction than its tools of production. Postcolonial Africa is becoming militarily more sophisticated but industrially less efficient. The religious strands of the Semitic and Western legacies have been particularly successful in transmitting the tools of construction – from the churches and synagogues of Ethiopia to the mosques of the Sahel. Islamic tools of communication range from the role of languages such as Arabic, Hausa, and Kiswahili to the historic functions of dhows (boats) in East Africa and camels across the Sahara. The new tools are not being successfully adapted to fit into the indigenous milieu, and thus some of them introduce problems and new conflicts, instead of serving as solutions.

Trans-Atlantic slavery was the first globalization of labour. Western guns were the bribes in exchange for slaves. In many African societies, guns came with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The arms trade was a globalization of gun power. Africa has, in fact, experienced a triple heritage of slavery – indigenous, Islamic, and Western-oriented. Indigenous slavery was the least commercialized and basically the most humane. With regard to Islamic slavery, why do we not hear of black Arab rebellions and riots the way we hear of black American riots? A major reason is that over the centuries Islamic culture and lineage have permitted both cultural assimilation and interracial marriages. If the father is Arab and free, then the child is Arab and free – even if the mother was originally an African slave.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the most race-conscious, the largest in scale, and the most resistant to assimilation. But at least the West generated its own abolitionist movement – while simultaneously generating new empire-builders. England, the leading abolitionist power in the nineteenth century, was simultaneously the leading imperialist power. Additional conflicts afflicted Africa – imperial wars of conquest, primary African resistance, Africa's involvement in other people's wars (World Wars I and II, the Cold War and the French War in Vietnam), and modern liberation wars against colonial rule and white minority regimes. And now, Africa is being drawn into the war between Western militarism and Middle Eastern terror. Post-colonial Africa has also experienced conflicts arising from artificial colonial borders (e.g. the Biafran War and the Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian conflicts), from limited resources (e.g. rice riots in Liberia and water

riots in Ibadan), from entrenched conservative institutions (e.g. the Ethiopian revolution), from new fragile institutions (e.g. the series of military coups all over in Africa), from ethno-sectarian differences (e.g. the Sudanese civil war) and from emerging class differences (e.g. labour unrest, etc.). The new triple heritage (Nkrumah's consciencism) has given Africa the warrior tradition from indigenous culture, the jihad tradition from Islam, and the guerrilla tradition from revolutionary radicalism. This is quite apart from the tradition of the colonial army sometimes inherited by the postcolonial state. African countries are plagued by incessant internal conflicts that make state governments unstable, and foreign direct investments unattractive. Many of the conflicts in Africa have defied easy solutions due to the intricate interrelationships among the elements of the continent's triple heritage. Yet there are now fewer military regimes than there were in the 1980s, significantly more multiparty experiments and fewer single-party regimes in Africa. Africa is moving two steps forward and one step backward.

New States and Old Societies
All societies have political systems, but not all political systems are states. Traditional Africa consisted of both states and stateless societies. The states were often in the tradition of "romantic gloriana" – a glorious view of the past. The states in Africa (as everywhere) attained stability through instruments of coercion. The stateless societies attained stability through traditions of consensus. Both Islam and Westernism are state-building civilizations. Africa's stateless heritage has been endangered first by Islam and its state-building jihads and later by Westernism and its obsession with boundaries and standing armies. Africa's stateless societies ("tribes without rulers") are an endangered species – almost doomed to extinction. But meanwhile "tribes" which were stateless in pre-colonial times (like the Langi of Uganda or even the Ewe of Ghana) have sometimes captured the post-colonial state.

But what is the fate of the post-colonial state? It is subject to two negative pulls: the pull of tyranny (entailing centralized violence) and the pull of anarchy (involving decentralized violence). A major reason for the dialectic between tyranny and anarchy is the fragility of the institutions inherited from the colonial era. Politically, Africa is caught between two or more traditions. There is a culture gap between the new institutions from the West and the ancient cultures of Africa and Islam. The elder tradition gave special legitimacy to Jomo Kenyatta's rule. The sage tradition was manifested in Mwalimu (Teacher) Julius Nyerere and in (Poet) Leopold Senghor. The Islamic sage tradition (the "mullah") is perpetuated among the marabouts and maallems of Africa. The monarchical tendency in Africa made the former president of the Ivory Coast – Felix Houphouët-Boigny – construct his own Ivorian "Palace of Versailles" in his home town, Yamoussoukro. New political developments in the twenty-first century will introduce new criteria of qualifications. A former journalist (Benjamin Mkapa) became president in Tanzania, and Sierra Leone elected a former international civil servant (Alhaji Tijan Kabbah). Nigeria and Ghana elected former military rulers. It is too early to discern a continental pattern, though it is tempting to expect more professionals to aspire to political leadership, as Western education spreads more widely, and ordinary people become disenchanted with career politicians and ex-dictators.

Race and Comparative Diasporas
For a long time Black Cubans and Black Brazilians enjoyed more formal rights than Black Americans. But Black Americans are increasingly enjoying more power than either Black Cubans or Black Brazilians. The most crucial African Diaspora is that in the United States.

From Africa's point of view, the best solution would be if African Americans were re-Africanized enough to care about what happens to Africa and Americanized enough to influence U.S. policy towards Africa. Renewed interest in their ancestry – travel to Africa and contact with Africans – is the beginning of re-Africanization. The civil rights movement initiated the process. But by definition that movement was a struggle for rights. The second phase is a struggle for power. At the moment it is taking the form of running for elections and trying to penetrate the citadels of authority. One American city after another has, for a while, elected a black mayor. And when Jesse Jackson made a bid for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party, the unthinkable at last became mentionable – a black effort to reach the very pinnacle of American power. The Black Power movement of the 1960s was characterized by marches; its equivalent today is the strategic rise of African Americans into high political office and the top levels of corporate life. General Collin Powell as Secretary of State, and Condoleeza Rice as National Security Adviser (to President George W. Bush) are providing visible role models for a new generation of African Americans, less accustomed to open racism.

But while the Diaspora of the formerly enslaved Blacks in America is experiencing less and less racism, the Diaspora of colonialism in Europe is confronting more and more discrimination. North Africans in France are vulnerable, as are large numbers of African, Latin American, and Caribbean asylum seekers in Germany,

Britain, Spain and other European countries. There are different variations of Euro-racism, depending on the peculiar circumstances of the European countries' experience with coloured people. French racism is partly cultural rather than based on colour. There seems to be less hostility to black Africans in France than to lighter skinned North Africans. The fact that Arabs are perceived more clearly as "Muslims" than are Senegalese may be part of the explanation. The French are more culturally prejudiced than the British, but have less colour prejudice than either the British or the white Americans. Perhaps that is true of Latin prejudices more generally – prejudices of not only France but also Portugal, Spain and Italy. Germanic racism (British, German, Afrikaner) was concerned with purity of blood. Latin racism was concerned with purity of culture.

To some extent, a culture war is taking place in France, between French civilization and Islam. The conflict includes moral tensions – Islamic prudishness versus French sexual libertarianism. Will France become more prudish as Muslims become more influential in French society? Or will Islam in France succumb to the temptations of French indulgence? For better or worse, the latter is more likely than the former. Islam is less likely to change French culture than Africa changed French politics. By fighting for their independence, Algerians changed the course of European history as a whole. The stresses of the Algerian war tore down the French Fourth Republic, brought Charles de Gaulle back to power, resulted in a more stable constitution in France (the Fifth Republic) and helped to transform both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Economic Community (EEC) under the influence of Gaullist designs.

Libya's Muammar Gaddafi regards oil as a historic opportunity for present-day Muslims to ensure an influential role for Islam in world affairs. I spent some three hours with him in his famous tent in Tripoli. He was passing through a stage when his pan-Africanism was stronger than his pan-Arabism.

Spain: Physical Nearness, Imperial Distance
In terms of geographical location, Spain is the nearest European power to Africa. One can almost swim from North Africa to the Spanish mainland.

In view of this proximity, why did Spain build such a tiny empire in Africa and such a huge empire in the Americas? Africa was colonized by Great Britain, France Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and – in a special sense – the Dutch, through Afrikaners. Before World War I, Africa was also colonized by Germany.

None of these countries – not even Portugal – was geographically nearer to Africa than Spain. And yet all of them built much more substantial African empires than Spain. In the final analysis, Spain's African possessions were limited mainly to Spanish Guinea and Western Sahara. Why this paradox of Spain's physical nearness to Africa combined with her imperial distance from Africa? Not even the Monroe Doctrine could energize Spain to seek an alternative empire in Africa.

Considering that Spain is so geographically near to Africa, the Spanish language should have been much more widespread in Africa than it is. And yet there are far more speakers of English, French, Portuguese and Afrikaans in Africa than there are speakers of the Spanish language. There are probably more speakers of Italian in the Horn of Africa and Libya as well. Speakers of German in Southern Africa may equal speakers of Spanish in North Africa. Why is the Spanish language so marginal on the African continent when Spain is so geographically close to Africa?

Among the relevant factors is that Africa's economic potential was grossly underestimated before the nineteenth century. European appetites were aroused more by the potentialities of the Americas. When Spain built its immense empire in the Americas, Africa was important more for the Western slave trade than for European colonization. Spain was more mesmerized by the lure of gold in the Americas than gold and diamonds in Africa. There was a European scramble for the Americas long before there was a European scramble for Africa.

By the time European powers were indeed scrambling for Africa, Spain was empire-weary. Spain had lost the will to colonize on a grand scale.

Yet another factor concerns Spain's experience of having been ruled by Africans in the past, rather than the other way round. This was the period of history when much of Spain was under the dominion of North Africans – the so-called Moors. For centuries Spain was a victim of African colonialism rather than a villainous colonizer of Africa. This reduced Spain's appetite for African colonies in subsequent centuries.

In the nineteenth century, Spain was licking its wounds as it lost one rebellious American colony after another. Imperial defeats in the Americas resulted in great preoccupation with internal domestic issues within Spain. While much of the rest of Europe was scrambling for Africa after the Berlin conference of 1884-85, Spain was suffering from imperial exhaustion and domestic preoccupation.

Of all European languages, the Spanish language has been influenced the most by North African Islam and the Arabic language. And yet, in comparison with all the major European languages, Spanish has had very limited impact on Africa and its culture.

Whether through inadequacy or by design, history made Spain a good neighbour to Africa. In modern times Spain was only minimally imperialistic towards Africa. Spain was imperially extravagant in the Americas but imperially restrained towards Africa.

But culturally there has been a cost. The European language closest to Africa geographically is far less a part of the African heritage than more distant European tongues. The history of the Third World as a whole would have been drastically different if the Spanish language had developed into a major cultural bond between Africa and Latin America. For example, had Nigeria been Spanish-speaking instead of Anglophone, its relationship with Mexico, Argentina and Chile could have transformed the whole political economy of North-South relations.

In imperial terms, Spain was a good neighbour to Africa. In cultural terms, the Spanish language paid a price for that good neighbourliness. Perhaps Spain's moral restraint was worth the cultural losses of the Spanish language. Who knows for certain in these equations?

Africa's Gender Relations
But in the final analysis, Africa's triple heritage is a social complexity rather than merely a historical doctrine. The triple heritage is about human relationships, not only with nature, not only with God, but also with humanity in other continents. Fundamentally, it is also about man's relationship with woman. Has Africa's triple heritage complicated the role of women in society or has it improved prospects for the female of the species?

Islam gives women more economic rights (e.g. the right to inherit land) than they enjoy under some indigenous "tribal" laws. On the other hand, Islam gives women narrower economic roles (e.g. cultivating the land or marketing the produce) than women pursue under indigenous traditions. There is a conflict here between formal rights (better protected by Islam) and practical roles (better promoted by indigenous culture).

A similar dilemma can be detected in the West's impact on Africa. Semi-educated or non-Westernized African women in the countryside are often at the core of agricultural production – tilling the land and sometimes marketing the produce. But with Western education, women move from the productive sector to the service sector. They learn a European language and other verbal and literary skills – only to leave the soil in preference to the office. Western education turns African women into clerks and secretaries instead of cultivators. This is a case of functional marginalization.

It may be true that the West's impact upon Africa has raised the legal status of women, but it has narrowed the economic functions of women. Women's rights are better protected in the post-colonial era, but the role of women is less fundamental to society than it was before. In short, the African woman is confronted with expanding rights and a shrinking role in the post-colonial state.

Another element of the triple heritage is seen from the perspective of searching for a cultural synthesis on gender. Africa's values are in conflict. The struggle continues for a new gender morality. Maybe Africa should not be trying to resolve the conflict between the ethic of monogamy and the ethic of polygamy. It should recognize both monogamy and polygamy – provided all parties confirm their consent under oath. Perhaps polyandry should also be considered where appropriate – provided all parties consent under oath. Perhaps issues like tribal nepotism and corruption are more serious morally than the numbers of wives or husbands that a single citizen may have. Africa is already debating issues like integrated legal codes, indigenized ideologies, the role of art in religion, and other dimensions of ethical synthesis. It is also debating female genital cutting (female circumcision). History is moving against this genital surgical custom.

Conclusion

But African problems are not merely between men and women. There are also problems between men and men in the political arena and economic domain. Africa's triple heritage is at the centre not only of the conflict between indigenous and imported cultures, but between tradition and modernity. The triple heritage has also affected the other basic conflicts within the African condition – the tensions between city and countryside, between soldiers and politicians, between the elite and the masses, between ethnic groups and social classes, between the religious and the secular, between a longing for autonomy and the shackles of dependency.

Given the dilemmas of the African predicament, there are searches for new ways of understanding its problems and a quest for a new science to solve them. In the past, Western economists have focused on theories of economic growth and economic development. In the case of post-colonial Africa, should we be looking for a theory of economic decay? Western aid donors have increasingly turned their consciences to those African countries which have always been poverty-stricken or the least developed, and may always remain seriously deprived. But a country like Ghana was once well-endowed and has since declined. So were Mali, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Are these more deserving or less? Are their worsening under-development and relentless decay a warning signal for Africa as a whole? Ivory Coast, once regarded as a bastion of political stability, is suddenly facing internal strife and rebellion by a section of the armed forces. The notorious internal crises in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire) are continuing with varying degrees of intensity. Are there any African countries that can be judged immune to the pervasive internal conflicts which are so common in the continent? All African states are fragile, but there are hopeful signs in the electoral experiences of Kenya, Senegal and South Africa.

The problem of societal decay can be measured by diminishing productivity, declining stability, and the erosion of public morality. Dependency theories do not really explain decay. Taiwan and Singapore may be very dependent, but unlike Kenya, Nigeria, and the DRC, they are booming rather than decaying. So why is Africa faced with the danger of decay?

We may already have theories of economic "take-off". We now need a theory of crash-prevention. It is arguable that a country like Kenya had already "taken off" economically when it became politically independent in 1963. Why is the ship of state now leaking so dangerously? How can Kenya start floating again? How much of a lesson to the rest of Africa is the whole story of countries like Kenya, Nigeria, and the DRC? And what has the triple heritage got to do with these dilemmas between development and decay, between a capacity for self-help and a weakness for dependency? What is the role of communication – in all its ramifications of interpersonal, intercultural, mass mediated, and diplomatic – in bettering management of Africa's rich resources? The soul of Africa is presently split three ways, and is in search of its own inner peace. The split soul of a continent is what the triple heritage is all about. The impact of James Monroe's Doctrine and the vision of Kwame Nkrumah's consciencism continue to illuminate the nature of the African condition.

Two strategies are needed at the macro-level of solving Africa's problem. The first strategy is the imperative of looking inwards towards our ancestry, placing due emphasis on our native intelligence, collective wisdom, and the true essence of Africanity. This requires recognition of the value of our innate and traditional resources, which made our ancestors survive waves of onslaughts from foreign enemies and natural hazards. Although our languages have been greatly enriched by the Triple Heritage, our communicators have not lived up to our expectations in the area of popularizing indigenous African values and resources, which are often positioned as inferior to foreign ideas. Our rich tradition of performing arts, pedagogical apparatus, and socialization tools should be marshalled to facilitate the purposive development of the totality of the African environment. In spite of the prevalence of modern communication technology in Africa, much weight needs to be given to indigenous communication, especially the power of the oral tradition. This inward imperative "requires a more systematic investigation into the cultural preconditions of the success of each project, of each piece of legislation, of each system of government" (Mazrui 1986, p. 21).

Kwame Nkrumah and his theory of consciencism emphasized that Africa was not an isolated island, and must exercise its rightful roles in an increasingly global world community. The second strategy is therefore an imperative of looking outwards to the wider world, which is the origin of the two foreign elements of the triple heritage. As Africa matures in its relationship with other world regions, it must stand ready to selectively borrow, adapt, and creatively formulate its strategies for planned development. Africa's contribution to the pool of immigrant human capital in the United States and Brazil is higher than that from most other world regions. This should not be a one-way exchange, and so African countries ought to devise strategies to tap into the global pool of human capital for development. In the final analysis, genuine

development of the continent is possible and sustainable only when we can reconcile with our ancestors and also forge new relationships with the wider world, with mutual respect and full dignity.

Our triple heritage of indigenous, Islamic and Western forces can serve as a catalyst for growth and development, if we find the right communicative environment. Africa is the most resilient of all the continents. After all, the Africans are a people of the day before yesterday and a people of the day after tomorrow. Globalization amounts to all the forces leading to the global village – the villagization of the world. Destiny has spread Africans so widely that the sun never sets on the descendants of Africa. If the world is a village today, it began as an African village in the mists of antiquity. The odyssey is awe-inspiring, but the story continues into the mists of posterity.