Democracy as Imperialism

By Yusuf Serunkuma

If Marx had lived during our time, he would edit his timeless phrase about religion. He would write, as religion is the opium of the masses, democracy is the crack cocaine of the elite. Especially the African elite, we are high on it. As it quietly destroys our internal organs, we strive for more and of better quality. The vendors are merchandisers all the most aggressive and most persuasive. Their adverts have refused to add the cautionary label, “democracy smoking will kill you.”

These vendors are not only ‘creaming away’ all the profits from their product, but also eating the carcasses of their victims. By the time the African intelligentsia overcome their addiction, they would understand that the enemy to their governance-development question has never been themselves, their bad education or bad leadership but rather the stuff they have been smoking as medication – democracy itself, its crusaders and merchandisers. Democracy is not just a language of [colonial] exploitation, it is the practice of exploitation itself. Problematically mixed with civil liberties, democracy has inextricably, irrevocably tied the African elite to exploitative capitalism, while at the same time, exciting, distracting and completely blinding them from real concerns, or even revolution.

Just the same way colonial exploitation thrived on divide and conquer, democracy does the same, but more tactfully, more elusively. Democracy thrives on a double-layered divide and conquer (a) it disconnects the elite from ordinary folks with the elite not only developing new tastes and cultures—not simply consumptive ones, but lifestyles and practices—but they also become obsessed with
their own preservation. On the other hand, the lifestyles, struggles and pains of rural folks are exorcised as slight inconveniences, painful sores and humanitarian— not structural—challenges needing benevolent intervention. And (b) the elite are then split into often terribly polarised “political parties” and other smaller camps, where sustaining or grabbing power becomes the single most important preoccupation. The task of the African intellectual therefore is to understand the colonial exploitative nature of democracy (divide and rule, shameless vulgarity of free markets, disruptive endless ‘human rights’ quibbles, foreign aid, and loans, media bombardment); and the myriad lofty seemingly good-intentioned crusaders.

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Let’s start with some basic seemingly obsolete questions: Do former colonial masters still want to exploit the resources of formerly colonised places – specifically Africa? By exploit I mean, to steal or benefit at the expense of the Natives of those countries. Stated differently, are Africans convinced that their former colonisers are happy to see them thrive, and the endless streams of aid and loans, and the gospel of democracy are all meant for their betterment? How about new powers such as America and China? Are they benevolent friends helping in times of need or honest business partners? Has this urge, ambition and plotting to pillage ended? Again, this is not about countries in West Africa where the colonial powers, specifically, France actually didn’t leave after independence but rather retained its grip on their former colonies through especially banking. I am concerned about countries where colonial masters actually “left” upon independence.

The response to these questions is an easy YES; all the world’s new and old powers are interested in stealing from weaker countries especially in Africa. A sombre cry by novelist Ama Ato Aidoo on 500 years of European exploitation captures the painful state of affairs, and a recent meticulous study by Angus Elsby on coffee and cotton captures this ongoing pillage. But the question is this: if Africans know that there are thieves all around them plotting, scheming, and conniving to steal their resources, why are they not resisting the way their predecessors resisted colonialism? Why do Africans feel and behave so weak, incapable, and conditioned to playball as their countries are looted by the same powers their anti-colonial mothers and fathers resisted? Why don’t we have a second wave of anti-exploitation struggle on the continent resisting the new manifestation of colonial-like exploitation?

If Marx had lived during our time, he would edit his timeless phrase about religion. He would write, as religion is the opium of the masses, democracy is the crack cocaine of the elite.

Let me make one caveat here: this has nothing to do with the so-called legacy of colonialism – see Mahmood Mamdani and co. – because that would mean seeking to bring an end to a way of doing things, or simple removal of the structures that were left behind after independence. Mine is not a quest to decolonise but rather to see foreign exploitation in all its new forms. Perhaps my first proposition is that seeing and discussing western exploitation of the African continent through the language of colonialism, and its blighted offshoots, neo-colonialism, decolonisation, etc is not necessarily obsolete, but is actually distractive. It denies us the chance to appreciate the performatively non-colonial ways in which the continent is being looted. My core proposition is that we need to see democracy as the new absolute manifestation of exploitation. There is urgent need to go behind it, expose its traps, and confront its beastly smiley face. Africa will need to proudly pursue a de-democratisation struggle—which is certainly much more difficult than the anti-colonial struggle.
Let’s return to my central question: why are Africans not resisting this new form of exploitation – democracy? My answer to this question is threefold: (a) the new exploiters, couched in the slick but highly deceptive, confusingly omnibus understanding of democracy (to include free markets, free and fair elections, freedoms and human rights, free speech, choice, people, representation, equality, justice) have deftly disguised the manifest exploitation of democracy. The face of democracy appears attractive and sophisticated as it displays and performs ironically non-existent Mzungu practices on governance in Europe and North America.

As Ali Mazrui, 1997 succinctly demonstrated, the humanitarian values (freedom of speech, women emancipation and empowerment, freedom of choice, religion, etc.) believed to the guaranteed as so terribly inexistent even in the so-called democracies of the west. The denial of these values, Mazrui noted, only takes a different more subtle form. One doesn’t have to look too far to see how “democratic” America or the United Kingdom treats its black folks, workers, women, drops bombs on other nations for sport, continue to openly loot abroad, etcetera.. The beautiful decorated façade of regular elections, freedom of speech and religion mask a rather dangerous strain of thuggery and exploitation.

There is an army of pleasant looking, beautiful, ever-smiling, sweet-talking and cash-dangling handlers and brokers pushing democracy with high-sounding and seemingly beautiful arguments about justice, rights, the people... etcetera claiming these are provided and guaranteed by democracy. Who could be against that...? They subtly ask. These handlers - these new colonial administrators - do not call themselves Governors and Colonial Lords, but rather “regional coordinators,” “country directors,” “programme managers” and academics. They operate without the brutality, overt racism and insults that defined earlier exploiters. They are constantly “seeking partnerships,” not dominions. They claim to “respect” national sovereignty and independence and will seek to execute their duties in the confines of international law. They will never tell you the history of so-called international law, which explicitly does not recognise Africans as sovereigns but rather just as Africans (see Siba N’Zatioula Grovogui, 1996). In doing all this, they never lose sight on the estate. These new exploiter emissaries include charming fellows in the European Union, American and British embassies, the United Nations offices, World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and several experts of democracy based at British and American universities—studying Africa! They run tantalisingly named units such as the Democracy Governance Facility (DGF) where they narcotize thousands of local elites into inertia, spending endless hours in offices writing proposals and forging accountabilities (see Makau Mutua, eds. 2009).

These strategies have quietly, methodically captured all local media houses, schools, and all other spaces of active learning to push the democracy agenda into curriculums. In the end, they produce democracy thinking clones – literally, producing democracy’s Uncle Toms. Ever wondered why war-torn countries such as Somalia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Libya, etcetera have intellectuals and politicians on podiums chanting democracy amidst ruins and dead bodies—entering contracts for oil and other mineral resource explorations, signing off loans and debts? Yes, it is the good work of these handlers.

Oftentimes, these democracy “merchandisers” operate under the language of development assistance. They flood the NGO sector, and civil society. This is in spite of the copious amounts of scholarship that vividly demonstrate that aid does not work (see Andrew Rugasira, 2007; Juluis Gatune, 2010; Dambisa Moyo, 2010). African countries surely do not need aid to stave off famine or prosper – no country ever did – but the givers will not listen. Even when asked to leave, they go away sour-graping like they loved the recipient country more than its leaders. But these new exploiters, wearing their false smiles have, through a series of lengthy and underhand methods—including
manufacturing narratives of poverty, predictions of disease, fake annual indices on this and that—they actually force, squeeze, cajole, and harass an African country into receiving aid, but will never mention better terms of trade (see Slavoj Zizek, 2009). If they fail to push this through more technicalized forgeries and liberal concoctions, they’ll resort to outright violence. Examples abound of both covert and overt uses of violence: Egypt, Libya, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, etcetera under the cover of civil liberties. In truth, these are fortune hunters – like their colonial predecessors who rode on the deceptive language of civilising the Natives, these are simply sophisticated thieves who have managed to manufacture a common sense around their practice of theft as the best form of governance (elsewhere, see Pepe Escobar, 2009).

And finally, against such an environment of deftly disguised exploitation and aggressive brokers (c) the current breed of leaders – in the academia, media, and mainstream politics – have been extremely softened by urban life, and the perverse spread of bodily pleasures from Europe and North America. Softeners range from their beautiful wives (and, occasionally, husbands) and long streams of concubines, comfortable beds, to sweet foods, which they have not earned and are haunted by the fact that they do not deserve. Incredible amounts of money circulate among these fellows over and above the rent for their labour. It is a cartel.

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These comprador leaders and elites surviving off the crumbs of elite capital are condemned to perpetual praise and gratitude to their present oppressors – for enabling them access to these crumbs in the theft of their compatriots. Intellectually inferior, and without the backing of a traditional modernities upon which their predecessors—the anti-colonial intelligentsia—were bedecked, our new leaders are barebones, thrown into modernities where they have no histories and are simply drowning. When Partha Chatterjee writes about ‘tradition’ presenting the anti-colonial intellectuals with ‘a liberal rationalist dilemma’, that is, in the words of Lidwien Kapteijns, the challenge to be modern and traditional at the same time, he actually recognises the base upon which the anti-colonial intelligentsia constantly made reference as they negotiated their entry into a colonial modernity in a postcolonial moment. Our new would-be liberationists have neither and are simply swimming with the tide.

Spending endless hours watching European football on SuperSport, and admiring lofty English on BBC and CNN, googling stuff, and busying themselves on the myriad social media platforms, they cannot imagine abandoning these pleasures for thoroughbred struggle, which could benefit the collective. It is simply enough and too much. With the majority of this elite imprisoned at their small desks in parliament, NGOs and Civil Society, they are seemingly content with the status quo since they can ably afford the bodily pleasures mentioned above (you’ll find them endlessly chanting: ‘Compatriots! Do not risk throwing the existing order up in air – who knows where we will land!’). They are obsessed with their pleasures and freedoms guaranteed by democracy as the actual wealth of the country is quietly scooped up by their NGOs and Civil Society funders.

Democracy as divide and rule: Lessons from Uganda

Ugandans are now familiar with constant images of mostly white folks from the European Union, and other western embassies driving to homes of leading opposition candidate after every election. Their agenda remains the most enigmatic. When it was Col. Kizza Besigye, amidst the tension of a stolen
election in 2016—the Uganda confirmed gross irregularities on two occasions but refused to nullify the election—EU folks would drive to his home in Kasangati for some conversations. We will never know exactly what they discussed but it wouldn’t matter anyway. But they often had such a grand entry and exit from the dusty Kasangati road turning into Besigye’s home. From Kiiza Besigye’s home, they would then go and meet the incumbent, Yoweri Museveni. This Museveni meeting was never as prominently publicised. Most recently, with Bobi Wine becoming the lead opposition candidate in the country, they have been driving to his home in Magere, and quite often to his party offices in Kamwokya. Again, they often make quite an entry. From meeting Bobi Wine, they then travelled a few kilometres to meet Museveni where he assured them that Uganda was not “their enemy” [sic] before posing for pictures.

There is no better manifestation, or blatant display of divide and conquer than seeing these democracy merchandisers strutting from one corner of Kampala to the other just like colonial lords patronising the lead politicians on either side of the rather superficial aisle. Their obvious but deftly disguised intention are threefold: (a) ensure that while these two groups remain diametrically opposed to each other, they do not disturb the peace creating a mess for business. Preach peace—there should be no disruptions to our looting! Because if they did, you will never know where it ends. (b) should either side emerge victorious, no alliances are lost, as all of them will consider you a friend. But more significantly, (c) once the cameras are gone, the EU uses opposition leaders as bargaining chips against which they force Museveni into tougher concessions. They constantly remind Museveni of their potential to support his adversary if he does not play ball. Indeed, if this were the 1970s, these fellows would actually sell guns to both sides, and then bring relief food supplies to war-displaced natives.

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If colonialism thrived on the principle of divide and conquer, democracy thrived on a likeable but sadly, equally dangerous arrangement, ‘multi-party governance.’ As a principle, a multi-party order divides the elite into polarized camps, political parties, with one forming the government and the other, the opposition. After the country’s intelligentsia are divided, the democracy brokers and merchandisers proceed to conquer them. Deeply divided, and sometimes at the point of violence against each other, Natives never get the opportunity to stop and see their real enemy. The contest over retaining office becomes the major concern for the ruling party at the expense of developing the country. Instead of actually uniting to consolidate their position and use their combined brain power (as their anti-colonial intelligentsia did), the sitting government both imprisons and murders its critics—key human resources—leaving it empty of brain power, and terribly exposed. By the time the democracy thieves strike, the sitting president has sycophants and praise singers to consult with.

In the Ugandan example, we will never know (a) how much money Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni invests in keeping the office of president, since he has some of the most sumptuous classified budget votes—such as state house (spending US550m daily – US$152,000) with a budget allocation above tourism, the lead foreign exchange earner). It is certainly in billions. Since he has life presidency ambitions, Museveni spends a great deal of time and money procuring members of the opposition. To divide them further. Museveni is also endlessly facilitating and privileging the security forces, which in 2020, took 10% of the entire national budget above health and agriculture. [There is no war in Uganda, and the budget has been as high as this for the last 15 years]. The guardian ministries of the man (state house and security) also get sumptuous supplementary
budgets for classified expenditure! But the larger goal is to keep the president in power, since he sees a constant threat in the opposing side.

Parliament, which Museveni obviously does not need if there were no democracy merchandisers pushing him, is terribly bloated with over 530 legislators currently making it the biggest in Africa—bigger than South Africa and Nigeria. Annually, the Ugandan parliament burns USH1.3 trillion (approximately US$360m) of Ugandan taxpayer just for the theatrics of it. *Just for the theatrics of it*. Yet, everything of consequence in Uganda is pre-decided by Museveni before it is dramatized on the floor of Parliament. Additionally, Museveni employs hundreds of advisors, ministers, Residential District Commissioners (RDCs) with equally senior deputies, simply as part of his great retinue of patronage.

The amount of money and energy Museveni spends on playing other centres of power especially the Catholic church, Muslims and the Buganda kingdom elite is equally immense. These are not simple cash-stuffed brown envelopes—which are far too common—these are big sums ranging from billions to churches to four-wheel Land-cruisers. *Just to buy off opposition in the name of democracy.* But democracy merchandisers hold these items in his face, which forces him into concessions with specifically the foreign exploiters. Let’s now consider the related part of this argument.

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Living in simple fear—not the principle—of the opposition (b) we would never know the amount of concessions, Museveni has had to make with the new democracy-wagging exploiters, the self-appointed vanguards of democracy to allow them to continue their pillage of Uganda, and him to continue governing. If he is not sending mercenary forces to Somalia, he is sending them to South Sudan, and DRC. The details of these concessions remain top secrets to the Ugandan public. The Ugandan parliament predicts that the country will *need 94 years to clear this debt*, which continues to surge every passing day. Business deals where Uganda is left with *minority shareholding* over its own resources such as oil are simply baffling.

Incidentally, all this rides on the wreck left behind by vanguards of democracy into African economies in the late 1980s when they coerced country after country into dismantling cooperatives that had enabled societies and the people to survive. The dismantling of cooperatives led to a *rise in rural poverty after tilling* the land had been made unprofitable. If this was no colonialism—an outright plot to exploit and break the toiling masses of Africa —then we’ll never appreciate the depth of its damage to the continent. Because after local economies were ruined, including the closure of all local banks—many of them *closed without explanation*—the vacuum left behind was filled by European and Asian banks. The Ugandan banking market is now dominated by foreign banks, with *business-suffocating interest rates*, making banks in Africa the *most profitable* in the world, yet the most inefficient—according to *The Economist*. It is extremely difficult, if not outright terrifying, for farmers and small scale businesspersons to access credit. Surprisingly, this so-called Washington Consensus is still enforced 20 years on—even when the damage is visible everywhere—*and the WB has acknowledged its mistakes*. What the fuck is this?

Yet farmers across Europe and North America are not on their own. They are heavily funded by their states. Take the example of Mali that *Slavoj Zizek (2009)* writes about, despite producing high quality cotton and beef, the two pillars of its economy, the country could not compete with the US
and EU, where the same industries are heavily subsidised:

...the problem is that the financial support the US government gives to its own cotton farmers amounts to more than the entire state budget of Mali... the EU subsidizes every single cow with around 500 Euros per year—more than the per capita GDP in Mali.

These double standards are visible to every single soul from South Africa to Mali and Uganda (see also, Jörg Wiegratz 2019). The promotion of free markets remains a central idea to a so-called democratic government. But in truth, it is outright exploitation through the international dictates of structural adjustment and open markets which are pushed down the throats of Africans as a core parts of ‘democracy.’ Only in Africa!

To return to the question why is there no concentrated movement against this new form of exploitation dubbed democracy (its free market economics, loans, and grants, and foreign aid) and enforced onto only small countries? This is because of democracy’s disguised logic of divide and conquer. The language of democracy ensures the best brains of the country are split into conflicting camps with one obsessed with the holding onto the presidency as much of the intelligentsia remains blind but also conscripted to the networks and channels of exploitation.

**The west’s no-change regimes, and PR presidents**

One of the most powerful jokes of the 21st Century is the highly cited notion that “power belongs to the people.” It never does, has never, and will never. That in the exercise of democracy—specifically voting—ordinary folks wield their power to determine the ways in which they are governed, remains one of the biggest lies of our time. The lie continues that by this single act of voting, they have power to restore civility, end dangerous policies of previous governments such as removing American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, which since the start was based on fake intelligence, closing the very embarrassing Guantanamo Prison, or ensuring a minimum wage for workers etcetera. It is all high sounding nonsense. Ordinary folks have no power—except through violent revolution—but would be constantly manipulated into the belief in their electoral power.

The Slovenian theorist, Slavoj Zizek, was right when he claimed that while humanity was okay, 99 percent of people are boring gullible idiots. They have been deluded into belief of possessing electoral civil power. In truth, the world is run on self-interested authorities or autocracy. These take two forms, institutionalised and individualised. While in Europe and North America, authority or autocracy is institutionalised, it has tended to take individualised forms in Africa. The west has extremely autocratic institutions, which constantly change their public relations officers—often problematically called Presidents or Prime Ministers. The holders of these titles and offices actually have no power besides speech and celebrity. See for example, be it Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump and now Biden, America’s domestic policy on immigration, the police force, black folks, guns, women, the minimum wage will remain the same. There will be minute adjustments that the very noisy American press will blow out of proportion discussing it endlessly. But by and large, stuff remains the same. American foreign policy towards the Middle East, Israel, Palestine, Iran and Africa will not change. Change only comes by way of violent revolution, marches, strikes, community organising, media activism, etcetera—not through the facades of elections.

As an African watching America from the outside, I agree with Syria’s Bashar-al-Assad’s conclusion that President Donald Trump’s crime was transparency about the intentions of America’s imperial interests. While Obama and Clinton smiled and joked through their crimes in the Middle East and at home, Trump was boisterous and embarrassingly candid. With more gusto, Trump simply continued Obama’s policies at home and abroad. Surely, Joe Biden is already doing the same — with just a
little sophistication and disguise. American and European presidents are like shirts and dresses, while some make the wearer turn out smart, others could simply mess-up their appearances. But the bodies behind these fabrics remain the same. The truth is, heavily invested, albeit invisible Hitlers, Mussolinis, Stalins, Lenins, and Napoleons control American and European institutions. True to their power, these invisible Hitlers and Mussolinis blatantly took away the megaphone from Donald Trump for constantly embarrassing them with terrible PR. They went ahead and killed those smaller units that sought to challenge their power? [Please note, Facebook and Twitter are simply a manifestation, not the wielders of actual power].

The cycle of deception continues. Americans will always unite in stealing and killing from the rest of the world. Then back home, lobbyists, bankers and the super rich will squeeze life out of workers and African Americans will constantly be jailed and murdered, as women march for equal work equal pay like democracy never existed. It is all a deception.

The deceptive entanglement that democracy is more than elections, but all other civil liberties and humane treatment is terribly ahistorical. African history is replete with civil regimes that have no connection with our present perceptions of so-called democracy. In truth, the proposition that their democracy guarantees and is synonymous with humaneness and civil liberties is not just problematically ahistorical, but a dreadful deceptive. It is the trick. It is behind this claim that Africans have been duped, as their resources are being stolen under their noses.

Towards regimes of authority

After Tanzanian President John Pombe Magufuli had died, and the deafening elite noise boomed from every corner of the region, sloganeering about how Magufuli stifled dissent and free press, a friend of mine asked me to name the major opposition political party in China, and how many MPs they had in their parliament. I didn’t know. He then asked me to name the main opposition party in Russia, and how democracy—as dramatized in western Europe and North America—played out there. I did not know it either. He moved on to the much admired Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. He mixed it up with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Argentina, North Korea, Iran asking me to name their opposition political parties. It was such a mixed bag, and I did not know how to respond. He then asked me about the quality of life in those countries compared to say the “more democratic” Great Britain, Kenya, Uganda or even South Africa.

Humbled, I then recalled Muammar Gaddafi’s Libya which the UN constantly ranked highest in Africa on its Development Index. Focused on items including literacy rates, women empowerment, living conditions, and healthcare, Libya, for years ranked above more democratic spaces such as South Africa and Nigeria. On their part, Russia, China and Turkey have a higher quality of life for their populations in addition to being major economic powers. Why, if they aren’t democratic? Why don’t they have open markets? Didn’t structural adjustment reach these places? Before asking about the civil liberties in these countries, my friend raised the story of Julian Assange and the asked whether I had read a Mazrui 1997 essay discussing how similar the so-called democratic spaces in the west aren’t any different from so-called authoritarian spaces in the Islamic world.

The exploitative dangerousness of democracy is captured in Slavoj Zizek’s eulogy to Nelson Mandela that appeared in The Guardian upon his death. Concluding that Mandela was a failure—as regards the uplift the victims of apartheid from the backwaters of the economy, land redistribution. Zizek speaks to a difficult capitalist-democracy dilemma, and how leaders get derided and fought as authoritarians and sometimes even killed. Zizek writes,

A leader or party is elected with universal enthusiasm, promising a “new world”– but, then, sooner or later, they stumble upon the key dilemma: does one dare to touch the capitalist mechanisms, or
does one decide to “play the game”? If one disturbs these mechanisms, one is very swiftly “punished” by market perturbations, economic chaos and the rest.

Although Zizek speaks to open confrontation from capitalists, we need to appreciate that exploitative nature of capitalism has thrived with ‘democracy’ as its utmost enabler, its methodology, which most importantly, makes resistance to exploitation divided and distracted.

Across Africa, this dilemma of whether to or not to touch the capitalist machine is as old as independence. Those leaders who played the game were either favourably profiled in international presses, given lucrative deals in mining and other resource exploitation projects. In other cases, they were knighted, and sometimes awarded with Nobel prizes. If they touched or simply threatened to dismantle this exploitative structure, they were punished, either with sanctions leading to removal from office, assassinated or exiled. They would be labelled dictators.

It is noteworthy that those few African leaders in history who actually managed to destabilise the machinery of new exploitation—euphemised as ‘free markets democracy’—had to craft something entirely different. But they were fiercely resisted. Even if they had actually been elected, as soon as they touched the machinery of exploitation, they were challenged. Especially on land and resources exploitation reforms, Idi Amin, Robert Mugabe, John Pombe Magufuli are noteworthy. The core reason for dispensing with their democracy is that it has tended to bind government into contracts (globalisation, and free market), sensibilities (such as certain political freedoms, international human rights regimes etc), which are often selfishly and racially applied onto weaker countries and then exploited. International exploitative capitalism would be dead if it were not offered democracy as its handmaiden.

It is noteworthy that those few African leaders in history who actually managed to destabilise the machinery of new exploitation—euphemised as ‘free markets democracy’—had to craft something entirely different. But they were fiercely resisted.

Nelson Mandela’s Nobel Prize winning genius was in deftly deflecting ANC land reform and economic redistribution movement leaving the economy in the hands of white South Africans. And because Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Winnie Mandela presented a persistent threat to white capital, they were purged. It should be interesting to note that the land reform in Zimbabwe was for a while actually working despite the country continuing under sanctions and misinformation in the major media houses (see Grasian Mkodzongi and Peter Lawrence, 2019). Six years of John Pombe Magufuli would be characterised by immense international name-calling because he actually refused to cow-tow to the dictates of the democracy merchandisers.

Closely appreciating these exploitative dynamics of a mode of government—a more sophisticated mode of pillage and control just like colonialism—continues to be stifled by the democracy machine and lobby. Africans will have to take a stand. And standing up will be costly in terms of life and resources. Sanctions, death, wars will be created so as to reproduce democratic exploitation. But for the African who is convinced that democratic Uganda under Museveni or democratic Kenya under the Mwai Kibaki, Uhuru Kenyatta, or Raila Odinga rather than Libya under Gaddafi or Cuba under Fidel Castro has actually joined the thieves en-route to rob their father’s estate.

Of course, there are empty comprador autocracies, which are as bad as democracy. Of course, Libya’s Gaddafi would be more humane, and the example of what it has become is extreme. But democratic Libya would never return to Gaddafi’s Libya, unless all Africans stood up. Nor will democratic South Africa ever reach Gaddafi’s Libya. The values often confused with democracy were
more often preserved under the Ottomans. The scholarship on the Islamic tradition is deep and explicit on humaneness, rights of women, the poor, social security, equality between races, workers, independent scholarship, and thus freedom of speech, but the language is never “democracy.” In truth, democracy is divide and rule. It is thuggery.

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