IN SEARCH OF AFRICA'S DEMOCRATIC THEORY: EXPLORING LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND DEMOCRATIC CONSTRUCTION IN THE COLD WAR

Joleen Steyn-Kotze[1]

Abstract

Since the early 1990s, the world has been caught in democratic fever and Africa has not escaped the spread of liberal democracy. Yet, Africa remains in a state of perpetual democratic unconsolidation and faces many difficulties in achieving the coveted state of democratic consolidation. Democratic assessment of African political systems is at times very pessimistic about its democratic future, but fails to consider Africa's process of democratic development in constructing its interpretation of liberty and equality. The international construction of the meaning of liberty and equality and its relationship to democracy is closely tied to the discourse and debates that prevailed during the Cold War period, when many African states received their independence. Using a discourse analysis one can trace the philosophical and ideological construction of democratic liberty and equality for Africa. This article highlights the debate between liberty and equality that characterised the Cold War period, and its impact on the philosophical construction of democracy in Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Democratic discourse essentially centres around liberty and equality of the individual within the context of a constitutional nation state. From a liberal democratic perspective, equality is related to political equality within democratic processes and does not necessarily refer to socio-economic inequality. Due to increased levels of inequality within and between states, substantivists argue that liberty and participation are hindered due to poverty which effectively removes the freedom of citizens and their ability and capability to participate in the democratic process.

The debate between liberty and equality still persists in democratic discourse through debates surrounding development and democracy (Adedeji 2007:19) and, consequently, many African states find substantive democratic consolidation difficult due to the high levels of absolute poverty and increasing inequality. This article presents the debate between liberty and equality, utilising the Cold War period. It endeavours to demonstrate that dialogue and cultural interpretations of the

1 Department of History, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. E-mail: joleen.steynkotze@nmmu.ac.za

democratic philosophical traditions of liberty and equality entered the debate which ultimately informed philosophical democratic construction in Africa.

America, on the one hand, felt it imperative to ensure liberty and democratic survival of states during the Cold War. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, aimed to enlighten all to the virtues of equal life where equality is found in all spheres.[2] Both liberal and communist interpretations of liberty and equality influenced the philosophical foundation upon which Africa's democracy is based.

Consequently, conceptualisation of liberty and equality requires an outline of the theoretical *status quo* during the Cold War, when liberty and equality were pitched against one another. The various "truths" that dominated during the Cold War highlight the value that specifically African states place on both liberty and equality. When engaging in ideological analysis, language and text are essential. The first employ of the article is to provide an overview of the relationship between dialogue and ideology, as they are the means through which humans transfer views, knowledge and arguments. The article will endeavour to present the relationship between culture, ideology and reality construction. This is essential as liberty and equality will be situational in that interpretations of what these concepts entail. This will be followed by a presentation of the major interpretations of liberty and equality from both a liberal and communist perspective and its construal value for Africa as an emerging democratic continent.

2. CREATING POLITICAL REALITIES: DIALOGUE AND THE SYSTEM OF PERCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION

Dialogue and discourse can portray much about a society or group's political dispensation. Discourse analysis facilitates identifying positions on the political spectrum, how their world view informs reality construction, and sets boundaries for acceptable and unacceptable political behaviour. It can also denote the interpretation of concepts across various political standpoints,[3] such as liberty and equality.

Freedan (1996:40-50) highlights the impact of linguistics on ideology in that language does not derive meaning from an essential source, but from "contingent relationships at a particular point in time". It is therefore important to understand the debate between liberty and equality as all discourses around liberty (liberal) and equality (socialist, Marxist and communist) follow similar patterns in their discourse.

2 Equality will relate to political, social, and economic levels and encompasses all spheres of life.

3 Freedan argues that "by introducing the political concept as a central unit of investigation, we enter the dual realms of language and of the conceptual analysis of ideas. Words are the outward forms of concepts. But concepts can constitute theories, and theory is to concepts what language is to words: an organiser, a regulator, a set of rules and uniformities, a grammar, a system" in Freedan M 1996. *Ideologies and political theory A conceptual framework*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 48-49.

All Marxists, for example, will regard capitalism as the ultimate oppressor of man and the state exploitative, whereas liberals argue capitalism's virtues in creating opportunities for "pursuits of happiness". Language and how analyses of communist and liberal regimes are portrayed become important as, invariably, any analysis, coming from a specific unit,[4] will influence the interpretation of the concept as well as the construction of political theory relating to those concepts.

Freedan (1996:50-51) further argues that political words and thoughts are interrelated as one can identify an intimate relationship between a political term and its associated concepts. In this light, political concepts are referants to political ideologies and not merely signifiers, and, Freedan continues, these concepts refer to "observable facts and concrete social practises". Therefore, for Freedan, political concepts become both units of structure and meaning rooted in culture and history. The collapse of communism served as reference for liberal democracy's global "desirability" and Francis Fukuyama reminded one that the "end of history" had arrived in the early 1990s. The structure of a concept relates to societal structures and how those translate into political power and influence. For that reason he argues that it is "important that we address the morphology of political concepts, without which an exploration of ideology remains fragmentary".[5] This is essentially lacking in African democratic studies in that the primary departure point of any democratic assessment remains liberal in nature, with little appreciation for the influence of ideology on the philosophical development of concepts such as liberty and equality in an African and non-Western democratic context.

Any attempt to utilise discourse analysis would have to take into consideration the impact of ideologies on political life and theory. Szalay and Kelly (1982:585) argue that political ideologies can mature into compelling forces when adopted as a normal part of the group belief system by acting as a guide and justification for group actions. Therefore, political ideologies are by no means merely a "public relations exercise",[6] it can and does possess the ability to mobilise and inspire people in their journey towards a better future. Just think of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the massive social change that it initiated to realise the dream of a just and equal society.

Underpinning ideological concepts influence the development of political theory. Ideology translates those theories into plans of action to obtain a better, or at least somewhat improved, *status quo* in the future. Therefore, all theoretical

4 Unit in this sense relates to a given state (liberal or communist) and an ideological departure point. Inevitably, ideological analysis and acceptance of a specific world view would be translated into theory, therefore it is important to take cognisance of the units of language from which a given author is arguing.

5 *Ibid*.

6 Daniels states: "(I)deology is 'a mere public relations device'" and "Ideology is…the only medium of public discourse, the language of politics" in Daniels RV 1966. "The ideological vector", *Soviet Studies* 18(1), p. 71.

underpinnings of political theory are governed by a belief system rooted in an ideological conviction, whether liberal or communist. Thus ideology governs the language of theory, depending on discourses and factors that are present at a given point in time. Language has the "magical means of transfiguration" and can lead to "[an] euphoria of a new life, new man" (Dimitrora 1990:7). Realities are gradually reconstructed using words which "cloak themselves in a verbal construct that had nothing to do with the actual reality" (Dimitrora 1990:7).

Szalay and Kelly (1982:585-587) highlight a relationship between ideology and subjective culture through a system of perceptual representation in that "dominant shared perceptions, beliefs and motivations…[thus] psycho-cultural dispositions will predict how the doctrine, if accepted, may be adopted and possibly changed". The system will then follow a basic human function of responding to "configurations of characteristics" and from these "extract[ing] from the extensive flow of representation provided by our senses that relatively modest amount which can be effectively stored and used for survival". The system is multidimensional in that when one utilises perceptions as mental representations, it includes all facets of society.[7] It also demonstrates immediacy in that there "is a compelling sense of reality conveyed by perceptions that have the power to order, organise and control human behaviour". From this view then interpretations of reality are experienced as a true and accurate reflection or experience of reality. Subjective selectivity is the final characteristic of the system in that the interpretations of reality will depend on a mixture of aspects relating to the experience of reality.

Szalay and Kelly (1982:586) point out that the system is organised as a whole, and it results in "an inclusive, global worldview that is characteristic of a particular people". The system at this level will result in "interdependent, representational units organised along several parameters which are hierarchy of priority,[8] relatedness or affinity,[9] and affect loading".[10] Hierarchy of priority means a higher value of equality for communists and liberty for liberals. Affinity can be related to the dominant views expressed by America and Communist Russia in terms of anti-communism and communist expansion. Affect loading can be found in the communist aversion to capitalist-generated mass inequality

7 Szalay and Kelly state that the dimensions which the system influences "include the observable dimension and material, human, social, racial, political, and other dimensions used by people to sort and organise experiences" in Szalay LB and Kelly RM, 1982. "Political ideology and subjective culture: Conceptualisation and empirical assessment". *The American Political Science Review* 76 (3), pp. 586-587.

8 In terms of hierarchy of priority "certain representational units will be more salient, while others are less salient", *ibid*.

9 Relatedness or affinity means the "units cluster together into a domain that have a high affinity and share a great deal of meaning indicating strong views and beliefs", *ibid*.

10 Affect loading refers to "perceptions and images which are coloured feeling re-evaluations… where a culture will be…attracted to certain elements and repulsed by others", *ibid*.

capitalism, while liberals were appalled by the mass oppression that communist states inflicted in the creation of a practical equal society.

The Cold War encompassed the elements of the perceptual representation system. The foundations of the arguments posed by both East and West were underpinned by definitions and views of what constitutes liberty and equality in a democratic system. The Soviet Union claimed to be democratic as they had equality as the defining value of democracy and America favoured liberty in the Schumpeterian tradition of democracy, thus the focus was on the ability of a society to elect their leaders through a competitive structure. Equality is thus political and on a socio-economic level it is guaranteed in the equal opportunity in the pursuit of happiness. Invariably, the way in which both regimes defend their "democratic" sanctity is through discourse, influenced by ideology which influenced political theory.

Democratic assessment in non-Western and African contexts needs to consider the impact of theory, ideology and philosophy on behaviours, relationships and institutions. An example might contextualise the argument better. In his analysis of the "ideological vector", Daniels (1966:71) posits that

> "the Soviet leaders – mainly Lenin and Stalin – used their political authority to make substantial new interpretations of the meaning of the doctrine and force acceptance of these interpretations upon all communists on pain of excommunication or worse" and that "no sense was maintained of a distinction between the original doctrine and the twists of application; at each stage, the current interpretation was alleged to be what Marxism had always meant. In this manner, ideology was kept intact as a going concern, rigid in terminology and ever more stringently enforced."

It is interesting to pay attention to the choice of words used in attempting to generate theory through empirical analysis of a socio-political system. The connotation given to the communist regime is negative and instils fear or uncertainty through creating a sense of oppression and sympathy for the oppressed. The author is an American employed at the University of Vermont. It is doubtful that his analysis would have been the same if he was employed in a Soviet university. This simple example fails to consider various factors, but wishes to demonstrate the role of discourse and language on theory. If the communist system creates oppression, the only viable option is to restore liberal democracy to ensure freedom and political equality through rule of the people in the liberal democratic tradition.

3. CULTURE, IDEOLOGY AND THE PERCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION OF REALITY

Cultural diversity dominates the contemporary world and consequently there are diverse democratic experiences founded upon perceptions of reality created by a system of perceptual representation. The basic concepts of democracy, liberty and equality will, depending on which takes precedence, translate into an ideological orientation of

groups. Diversity of economic situations and political orientations see some cultures favouring a liberal interpretation of liberty and others a communist interpretation of equality. Western cultures perceive liberty as the moral democratic virtue whilst the "poor, non-Western" (Huntington 1991) Third World expresses a preference for equality, not only on a political level, but a socio-economic and cultural level as well, due to the history of colonisation and its associated indignities.

Szalay and Kelly (1982:587) highlight the relationship among ideological beliefs, belief systems, and a culturally-shared perceptual representation system between three tiers linked on the basis of three considerations. Firstly, how can ideological influences be traced through comparisons of doctrines, actual perceptions and meanings. If one relates it to the concept of equality, a particular experience may have resulted in a perception of class domination. Therefore Marxism may be applicable to the working class as the suffering they endure under an unjust capitalism results in their plight of inequality. As for liberty, many Western nations see no political access to power under the monarchs and hence their suffering is due to the feudalist and monarchist systems. For colonial states liberty and equality were influenced by imperialism and result in inequality, due to attitudes of superiority and therefore they will enjoy freedom and equality (both politically and economically) at independence.

Secondly, how can similarity and distance between various culture groups be measured? Arguably communism values equality over all other concepts, including liberty. Therefore, on one side of the spectrum liberal America valued liberty through democratic processes above practical equality in that political equality and equality of opportunity are sufficient in a system that guarantees rule of the people. On the other side was communist Russia who claimed that only through practical equality can true liberty be attained.

Thirdly, how do deep-rooted cultural views and modern ideologies interact in shaping people's views, their shared subjective representation of the world and their behaviour? If capitalism results in mass inequality, Soviet Russia felt morally obliged to export their enlightened social system and thereby facilitate the demise of inequality through the eradication of capitalism. The counter argument posed by America would be to ensure the freedom of people and their inherent right to be free from oppression by exporting liberal democracy as a means to guarantee liberty. Therefore, a conflict of ideas and, as was seen with the Cold War, a conflict of social systems and justifications of actions taken, will exacerbate ideological conflict.

Culture and ideology are intrinsically linked based on experiences of a people and their cultural socialisation and the extent to which the ideology fits their world view. Hall (1998:521) states that "[no] universal being…makes one realise that every part of our social world is culturally constructed, with behaviour that might seem outlandish from the outside 'making sense' to the actors themselves". Consequently, Szalay and Kelly (1982:587) argue that one needs to determine the

level of compatibility between culture and ideology, and secondly, the possibilities of tracing the ideological inferences and influences on the early judgement stages by a particular culture to assess when the ideology became roughly integrated with the culture. Ideological influences on culture determine the analytical route of a society. There is no universally accepted model of democracy as it is determined by cultural contexts. Objective interpretations of ideology are not possible. Dominant cultural reality constructions inform ideological orientations which will be translated into political theory. Different concepts like liberty and equality have different interpretations across the ideological spectrum. Discourse analysis facilitates analysis of the construction of democracy in that "systems of meaning shape the way in which people understand their roles in society and influence their political activities…and the concept of discourse includes all types of social and political practice, as well as institutions and organisations within its frame of reference" (Howarth 1995:115).

4. LIBERAL AND COMMUNIST LIBERTY AND EQUALITY

Liberalism is committed to the procedural interpretation of democracy through a pledge to institutions, cooperation, and constitutionalism, and advocates the necessity of freedom for positive social change. Whether freedom refers to property rights or assisting people to attain a level where they can exercise their freedom or practical equality[11] is of little consequence. Liberty is guaranteed through the institutions created by the polity where political equality prevails under rule of the people in a constitutional state.

Communism found its inspiration from the writings of Karl Marx that criticised capitalism as a system that institutionalises mass inequalities. Institutionalising inequality relates to the ownership of the means of production in that "what afflicts the badly off is that they are forcibly denied control of physical resources and under that construal of plights, the demand for redress" (Cohen and Graham 1990:29). Inequality is generated by the "lack of ownership of natural resources" and therefore "accounts for their vulnerability to exploitation by capitalists"[12] and effectively removes social cohesion (Hall 1998:510). To achieve utopia revolution was necessary where workers reclaim their rightful ownership of the means of production. This will create a classless society where the workers labour productively as they are working for themselves (Freedan 1996; Dobrin 1957; Hall 1998; Sherman 1970; Carsens 1986; and Cohen and Graham 1990).

11 Issues of equality within the liberal tradition are addressed through the works of TH Green which argues for a welfare approach to liberalism. In this approach civil society has an obligation to assist those who are unable to attain freedom in such a way that they reach a level where they can fully exercise their freedom. L Tower-Sargent 1993. *Contemporary political ideologies a comparative analysis 9th edition*. Wadsworth: Belmont, p. 112.

12 *Ibid*., p. 29.

The revolution required two phases, namely socialism and pure communism (Sherman 1970:24; Dobrin 1957:342; Hall 1998:511; and Cohen and Graham 1990:32-33). The socialist phase was the first phase of achieving the utopian society painted by Marx. Here the people own the means of production, but need to work to create an abundance needed for pure communism. In this phase each worker will receive according to his or her contribution[13] (Dobrin 1957:342; Cohen and Graham 1990:32-33; Carsens 1986:683-684). To overcome the "free-rider" problem, Marx argues a specific civic virtue where the individual desires work so as to lead a full and productive life. Therefore "voluntary equality" prevails in that "labour is ennobled and is now a life's primary want… from each according to his ability is not an imperative, but part of communism's self-description: given that labour is life's prime want… people fulfil themselves in work which they undertake as a matter of unconditional preference rather than in obedience to the imperative rule" (Cohen and Graham 1990:36-37).

The civic virtue thus translates into an obligation to work. Participation in the socialist process therefore relates to fruits of labour in that "man becomes most fully what he is potentially by what he does for a living" (Hamburg 1972:172). It is this commitment to work which is "scientifically organised" and employing all resources "of the ever-increasing scientific discovery" that would produce "endless stocks open to everyone" (Dobrin 1957:343). In order to reach the level of abundance necessary to sustain pure communism is the inequality generated by "each according to his ability" as production needs to increase significantly to ensure a common stock open to all. Sherman (1970:26) correctly asserts that the economics of communism is "the economics of affluence". When sufficient wealth is generated, the state will progress to pure communism, the ultimate social utopia. In this produced paradise each member will help themselves to the common generation of goods according to what they need and this would be possible due to the "superabundance" (Dorbin 1957:343) as

> "even under socialism to produce a pair of trousers may be a difficult problem for man, but under communism men will not bother about trousers, trousers will run after them, in the hope that someone will do them the favour of putting them on".

Collectivism forms the philosophical foundation. In pure communism the polity realises that individuals are interdependent and have a strong sense of commitment to the collective (Carsens 1986:685). The individual realises that their interests are entirely linked to society in that "man receives whatever essence he has from society… [and] can become fully aware of himself only in the collective activities and only through his work" and will find "the perfect coincidence of personal and social interests" (Hamburg 1972:171-172). Collectivism then ensures that socialism

13 This is defined as the bourgeois principles (Dobrin 1957:342) or the socialist-proportionality principle (Cohen and Graham 1990:32-33) and essentially states that the amount of effort and labour an individual puts in will determine the amount of goods she/he is able to get and translates into "each according to his ability".

becomes a historical necessity as "by knowing the laws of nature and society and having the proper consciousness, mere ephemeral, 'Western', 'subjective' freedom can be changed into true freedom"[14] (*Ibid*., p. 173). The individual is not liberal but inherently socialist through the commitment to personal self-development through work and societal allegiance. Thus, for communists, this is democracy as equality is guaranteed through a strong social solidarity and commitment to labour for the benefit of the self and the collective. Schumpeter (1943:236) notes:

> "Socialism in being might be the very ideal of democracy. But socialists are not always so particular about the way in which it is to be brought into being. The words Revolution and Dictatorship stare us in the face from the sacred texts, and many modern socialists have still more explicitly testified to the fact that they have no objection to forcing the gates of the socialist paradise by violence and terror which are to lend to their aid to more democratic means of conversion."

There are differences in the role of the state, the individual, what is meant by equality, how freedom is to be enjoyed, and the type of civic culture in a communist state. A view of the society, or process that communism attempts to create, can be demonstrated as follows:

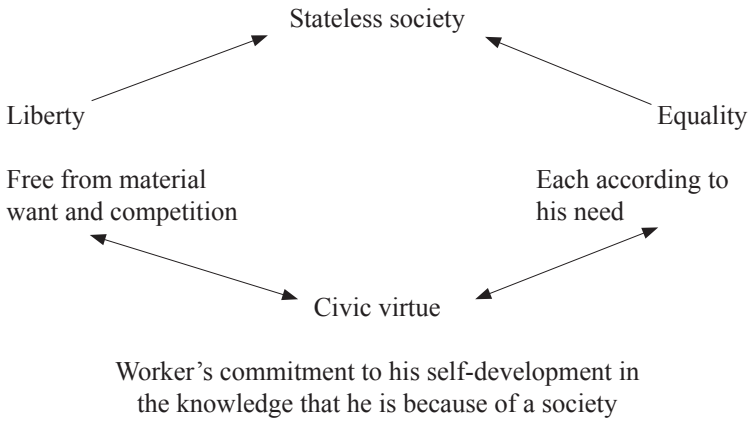

Figure 1: Liberty, equality and civic virtue in a communist society

Although liberalism and socialism share the concept of equality philosophically, the meaning of equality and how to obtain equality differ. Marxists regard the survival of institutions and processes of inequality unnecessary, whereas liberals in the

14 Therefore "the…independent states of Africa have become an arena for the competition between East and West…the communist goal is unmistakeable – world-domination…make a common cause with the aspirations of the African masses and to make them identify their own interests with Marxist socialism…the Communists want Africa to adopt their ideology. The Western goal is to encourage the formation of friendly governments, or at least governments that are not antagonistic to the Western way of life." Melady TP 1965. "Nonalignment in Africa", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Nonalignment in Foreign Affairs* 362, p. 53.

interest of freedom and peace regard democratic processes and institutions as vital to democracy. Liberty for communists translates into freedom of materialism and the nobility of work. For a liberal, freedom relates to individual rights and the rule of people through a competitive system of electoral choice. This requires a civic virtue rooted in participation through the freedom of choice, whereas a communist system demands a civic virtue rooted in a commitment to labour for the common good of society.

5. CONSTRUCTING LIBERTY AND EQUALITY IN THE COLD WAR PERIOD

The bipolar nature of the Cold War resulted in the debate between America's liberty and Soviet Russia's equality spilling over into global politics. This is evident in democratic theory and knowledge generated during the Cold War period from the two actors that sought to influence and gain favour from other international parties. Thus, it informed the international dialogue that constructed democracy theory during that period. International democratic construction was relatively successful considering the failure of the great utopian communist experiment and its return to liberalism and liberal principles in the conduct of their economy and government.

Penecy (1999:96) notes that "literature on democracy resembles constructivism in its belief that the environments in which [actors] are embedded are an important part of cultural and institutional, rather than material". This points to two aspects of democracy theory: firstly, there is no universal truth when dealing with democracy in that there is no universal truth when dealing with what constitutes democracy as realities are constructed based on experiences. The argument posited is that the international climate accompanying the Cold War constructed democracy theory's "truth" as it relates to the philosophical foundation of liberty and equality. Its interpretation is dependent upon the ideological orientation of the theorist. It would entail therefore that the focus would be on either liberty or equality, depending on the position of the theorist on the political spectrum. Secondly, an element of culture is introduced. This is important as there is a school of thought that argues that democracy is not a culturally friendly concept. Many authors, including Huntington (1991), Di Palma (1999) and Cammack (1994), question the protracted democratic unconsolidation (O'Donnell 1996) and point to cultural democratic acceptance, yet make no great theoretical strides in addressing issues of cultural acceptance of liberal democracy. Democratic assessment ignores the link between subjective culture and ideology and the consequent system of perceptual representation. Theorists, including Huntington (1991) and Diamond (1999), assume that there is only one viable democracy, liberal democracy. Consequently, there is a bias towards the Schumpeterian tradition of democracy, i.e. a procedural view with equality of opportunity rather than declining practical equality.

Perceptions created by the difference in the ideological doctrines of liberalism and communism as well as the cultural experiences of two different, yet powerful, nations, led to an international instability as the argument between which concept is more important increased. America's involvement in various nations like Cuba, Vietnam and Korea provided the communists with the argument that America is a neo-imperialist state that seeks to overthrow regimes for their own interests as capitalism is a system of greed and competition that takes no cognisance of the community. Yet, the repressive measures of Soviet Russia and its involvement in Afghanistan in the 1980s provided liberal America with the argument that as a revolutionary state, Soviet Russia is threatening the peace and liberty of many nations across the international system.

International political dialogue was controlled by hegemons and, consequently, weaker states became entwined in various hegemonic conflicts of interests in that "commercial interdependence can produce conflict as well as welfare when a society becomes dependent on foreign actions it cannot control" (Doyle 1983:325). History has revealed that globalisation and the spread of capitalism led to the spread of liberal democracy, and the communist societal aspirations fell. Yet, perceptions and cultural compatibilities are often an ignored element when discussing non-Western democracy. This is specific to the interpretation of the concepts of liberty and practical equality. An example of this is found in the works of Castle (1934:158), who states that

> "there is much proclaimed ideals of government which we Americans can highly praise; there is much in its practices which we, as Americans must condemn if we love and respect our own system. We applaud the insistence on universal education; we deplore an education which is governmentally controlled and ignores a large part of the collected wisdoms of the centuries. We applaud the professed attempt to inaugurate a reign of social justice – an attempt which many admirers of the system [communist] claim has already succeeded; but we deplore the class warfare which is one of the cherished tenets of Communism, which results in justice to selected groups only. We are thankful that the people of Russia need no longer live under the oppressive rule of the Czars and of the bureaucracy which surrounded them; but, having escaped that ancient oppression, it seems to us tragic that they should still be unable to express themselves, to think for themselves, except along those lines prescribed by Government. We Americans are inclined to put freedom of the spirit above freedom of the body."

The strengths that America celebrated were challenged as obstacles or weaknesses by Soviet Russia and *visa versa*. Haynes (1953:344-345) attacks communism in its failure to preserve individuality, which is the anti-thesis of communism. In this sense, there is a need to "allow…[a] right to hearing" each different opinion in an issue of debate. What the authors fail to realise is that there were debate within the culturally acceptable arena of the politburo in the communist context and not the context of civil society America is familiar with.

Ideological banter and veiled threats that dictated the international system was most notably felt in Africa where a multitude of proxy wars were sponsored (Rosenberg and Hayner 1999:92) in which Africa as an emerging continent of new nations

was caught up in.[15] Africa was desperate for freedom from colonial power and the accompanying colonial imperialist attitudes and equality in the international system of emerging sovereign nations.

Therefore the debate between America's liberty and Soviet Russia's equality translated into an ideological scramble for Africa. This included support to guerrilla groups operating against new governments and selective blindness and deafness on the part of liberal America on human rights abuses when dealing with pariahs like South Africa. Evidently, in the history of postcolonial Africa, it is clear that "since communism is seen as inherently aggressive, Soviet military aid 'destabilises' part of Africa in Angola and the Horn; the West protects its allies" (Doyle 1983:328). One can assume with relative certainty that Soviet Russia shared similar sentiments towards America in that America destabilised the crusade for practical equality in Africa and Soviet Russia protected its allies.

America's policy in Africa had mixed results in that the "liberalism record in the Third World is in many respects worse than in East-West relations, for here power added to the confusion" (Doyle 1983:330). Maledy (1965:56) provides context in stating that the global superpowers of the Cold War

> "approach Africa as an important prize, a continent of new nations emerging from colonialism and still developing their international postures [liberal or communist]. Many of them are unstable politically, and almost all are in desperate need of military and economic aid – conditions ripe for Communist adventures."

For that reason then America sought

> "protect[ing] 'native rights' from 'native' oppressors, and protecting universal rights of property and settlement from local transgressions, introduced especially liberal motives for imperial rule…[and] these interventions are publically justified in the first instances as attempts to preserve a 'way of life'; to defend freedom and private enterprise" (Doyle 1983:331, 335).

What is of importance is that the ideological considerations still remain in that communists sided with equality and a sense of identification with the African nations in that "we know what it is to be poor, ignorant, and sickly, and we want to give you the benefit of our way of changing things" (Melady 1965:55). There is a demonstration that the only way to generate the equality and social upliftment Africa desires is through following the stages of communist development.

What tainted the image of America further was while preaching freedom and the right to basic civil rights like equality and political voices for Africa, the African Americans, especially in Southern America, were subjected to white supremacy and imperialist and racist attitudes which many Africans had endured for centuries (Maledy 1965:54 and Dallek 2003:349). Maledy (1965:54) states accurately that

> "although the white man has surrendered political domination in most parts of the world, social and economic domination is evident everywhere…preoccupation of the press in the

15 *Ibid*., p. 172.

> African countries with discrimination in the Western world reminds the masses that the white man still suppresses the non-white…the civil rights struggle in the United States with its widespread repercussions in the press and public opinion of Africa. Non-whites make common cause with each other in the struggle for equality."

Dalek (2003:349) highlights the communist capitalisation on the civil rights crisis in liberal America during the 1960s by stating that

> "Khrushchev claimed that…the U.N. was being 'used to oppress peoples and help colonialists retain colonies'….[the] reply [was] that it would be 'wise to keep the Cold War out of Africa' moved Khrushchev to ask 'how socialist states could support a policy of assistance to those who betray their own people'. He promised that the Soviet Union 'would struggle against this policy with all its means'."

Yet, ideological consideration and a responsibility towards support for democratic struggle remained a focus of liberal America in that Dalek (2003:274) argues that a considerable thought was given to the perception that America generated for itself in that Kennedy during his presidency

> "saw a need to re-establish a sense of shared purpose, of inspirational goals, as the centre of this campaign. Could an America that had become the richest, most comfortable society in world history stand to the communist challenge? Were we ready to make the kind of sacrifices the ideologues in Moscow…urged upon their people in the long struggle they foresaw with the United States? Could we be fired as the revolutionaries in Cuba, Laos, Vietnam and Africa?"

Using a system of perceptual representation one can argue that both communism and liberalism or practical equality and liberty would compliment African democratic experience. The historical development of African nations was at the cost of dignity and oppression. Therefore the division between a liberal legacy and a legacy of equality would not have been too vast in that both concepts were desirable and are part of Africa's democratic experience. However, the sense of community expressed by the communist world view may have been more attractive to African nations due to *ubuntu* and a strong sense of community. This however is subject to further research which falls outside the scope of this article. What is important to remember is that America promised a better life to all when they adopt liberalism and the associated system of capitalism. Communism promised an enlightened society focussed on the collective in attaining an equal stateless society of abundance.

The international debate around liberty and equality in essence translated into one culture attempting to preserve a certain way of life and associated values. For America democratic morality was liberty and its associated economic system. Communism viewed the path to pure communism as essential to enlighten people to the virtues of their culture and way of life. Consequently, Africa was in no position to determine its view of democracy, as Maledy (1965:52) argues that

> "nonalignment in Africa also means that Africans have their own values, their 'own way' of doing things. In some cases these values and methods will be similar to one or several of the major powers; at other times there will be great differences. Non-alignment will give the people of Africa an opportunity to crystallise their own ideology. This ideology will be eclectic, indigenous, and variable. Its own roots will be African, as will its fruits."

Ideological convictions were constantly influenced during the Cold War period and many African countries played their roles in the theatrical production of liberty versus practical equality. The value systems proclaimed by liberalism does not sit well with African culture on various levels, which the following table will illustrate:

	Liberal value	Communist value	African value
Economic system	Capitalist competition	Socialist cooperation for the community	Spiritually orientated way of life rooted in collectivism
Social responsibility	Welfare system	Workers are working for society and as such for themselves – altruism	Community-orientated but lacks the economic development levels to sustain a welfare state
Form of government	Democratic process driven by electoral competition	All-powerful and controlling political party steering society	Discussion and values the input of elders due to life experience
	Individualist	Society-orientated to create a new classless and stateless society	Community-orientated in that each is a sister or brother
Pluralism	An essential element of democracy	Groups necesssary to spread the communist doctrine	One political party who brought liberation is adequate and other parties are welcome to form
Ideological orientation	Liberal	Pure communist	Socialist
View of the individual	Centre of political and economic life	Need to scientifically organise work to reach full development in a society	Inherently good and reliant on one another

Table 1: Comparative demonstration of values constructed from Maledy (1965:58-62) and Kaunda (1964:37-38).

Kaunda (1964:38) states that "democracy is of little benefit to the peoples if they are to remain uneducated and the number of illiterates remains high. Democracy cannot flourish properly unless the people are able to understand and take part in the institutions that democracy has forged for them." In a similar tone Maledy (1965:59) states that

> "the new African nations stand aloof from both capitalism and communism…they are determined to avoid any involvement in the ideological struggle of the Cold War. Involvement in the Cold War amounts to contamination to most of the leaders of the new African nations because it saps meagre resources that should be devoted to their all-important war on poverty, illiteracy and disease."

Democracy was therefore to bring a chance to uplift and empower a people crippled by centuries of oppression. However, the dreams of African democracy did not materialise as the reality is that absolute poverty, totalitarianism, conflict and illiteracy are still rife. Rosenberg and Hayner (1999:92) state that many new democracies

> "emerged…shocked to find…the crime, poverty…were not merely propaganda…the dreamers had failed to realise that the unhealthy political culture of the past would persist… most live in societies that embrace the excesses of the West – commercialism, inequality, insecurity – while disdaining the foundation of respect for civil rights and rule of law".

Experiences therefore influence perceptions of what the state entails. This translates into volatile socio-political and socio-economic relations in that there is shadow democracy, and yet the practices of the past domination continue. For that reason, Kaunda (1964:38) stated that

> "democracy cannot be the cure for all our evils; democracy is merely an umbrella which can exist for good or evil. Under a democratic system both good and bad governments can prosper and both just and unjust laws can be enacted. The system of slavery existed in a democratic system but this system of slavery was itself destroyed through democracy."

Culture and ideological considerations are therefore still important; it is just the contexts that change. Berger (2001:1079) argues that globalisation is "a world-historical trend…also parallel a perceived shift from authoritarianism to more democratic forms of politics in many parts of the world". The reason can be found in the collapse of the communist dream in that "most dictators who want world acceptance, foreign aid, or diplomatic recognition must at least go through the motions of democracy, holding elections and claiming to respect the rule of law" (Rosenberg and Hayner 1999:101). America now occupies a hegemonic position in the international system, hence there is increased commitment to liberty and its associated processes and institutions. Equality no longer resonate practical equality, but political equality and equality of opportunity in that the implementation of practical equality proved to be a grand failure when the Berlin Wall fell and put the final flower on the grave of the communist interpretations of equality that emanated from Soviet Russia. Yet, Rosenberg and Hayner (1999:104) make a valuable contribution when they assert that

> "(i)t is not surprising the idea of communism has become inseparable from the brutality and political repression that have accompanied it everywhere in the world it has been tried. Perhaps as a result, capitalist nations have not yet embraced the search for ways to carry out the genuinely beautiful parts of the communist ideology – concern for the downtrodden, economic equality, and fulfilment of the basic needs of every citizen…Capitalism could go a long way towards achieving the benevolent social goals of communism without communism's economic mismanagement and political coercion."

Kennedy-Piper (2000:750 – 753) argues that our realities are shaped by theory and for that reason ideology allows for the interpretation of reality and how that impacts on the development of political theory. Therefore, as the international debate between liberty and equality continued, their constructed realities and perspectives essentially blinded theoretical developments in political theory from both liberal and communist views. Kennedy-Piper (2000:750-752) argues that indeed it does as "the significance of this is that narrative is clearly a crucial aspect of historical works, but there are potential overlaps…between the historical concerns and at least of the issues which are central to the theorist…intersubjective understanding that helps the system to work the way it does. But it can evolve and change and need not be fixed."

6. CONCLUSION

Democratic assessment of non-Western and African states lacks an understanding of reality construction through a system of perceptual representation. Democratic theory construction, including democratisation and democratic consolidation theory are rooted in an essentially Western democratic experience. It is an understanding of discourses surrounding liberty and equality during the Cold War period and how it shaped the democratic development of non-Western and African states. Essentially, democracy theory attempts to deliver a do-it-yourself guide for a one-size-fits-all liberal democracy to the emerging democracies of the non-Western and African world.

An understanding of the philosophical backing needed to analyse non-Western democracies is absent and the interpretation of events occurs along lines of the ideological conviction and perceived threats and fear of a situation. One is able to trace this through history as demonstrated during the Cold War.

Political analysis needs to be sensitive to the cultural and ideological interpretation when assessing democracy in a non-Western and African context. This is especially relevant for the construction of liberty as the primary political value of the current international system. This is not to say that practical equality is null and void, indeed, there are many discourses that demonstrate that one of the major obstacles to African democracy is poverty and illiteracy and its subsequent effect on liberty. The challenge for democracy studies in Africa is therefore to find a culturally commonality that can be used as a foundation to build an understanding of the philosophical interpretations of what constitutes democracy in an African and non-Western context.

LIST OF SOURCES

Adedeji A 2007. "Democracy and development: A complex relationship". In: Matlosa K, Elkit J and Chiroro B (eds). *Challenges of conflict, democracy and development in Africa.* EISA: Johannesburg, pp. 19-31.

Berger MT 2001. "The post-Cold War predicament: A conclusion". *Third World Quarterly* 22(6), pp. 1079-1085.

Carsens JH 1986. "The virtues of socialism". *Theory and Society* 15(5), pp. 679-689.

Castle WR Jr 1934. "Russia: Conclusions of a statesman". *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 174. The world trend towards Nationalism*, pp. 158-161.

Cohen GA and Graham K 1990. "Self-ownership, communism and equality". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supplementary volumes 64*, pp. 25-61.

Dallek R 2003. *John F. Kennedy: An unfinished life – 1917-1963*. Allen Lane: London.

Daniels RV 1966. "The ideological vector". *Soviet Studies* 18(1), pp. 71-73.

Diamond L 1999. *Developing democracy: Towards consolidation*. John Hopkins University Press: Maryland.

Dimitrora B 1990. "Liberating language". *Cadoza Studies in Law and Literature* 2 (1)**,** pp. 7-8.

Di Palma G 1990. *To craft democracies: an essay on democratic transitions*. University of California Press: California.

Dobrin S 1957. "Lenin on equality and the Webbs on Lenin". *Soviet Studies* 8(4), pp. 337-357.

Doyle MW 1983. "Kant, liberal legacies and foreign affairs". *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12(3), pp. 205-235.

Freeden M 1996. *Ideologies and political theory: A conceptual framework*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Hall JA 1998. "A view of a death: On communism, ancient and modern". *Theory and Society* 27(4). *Special issue on interpreting historical change at the end of the twentieth century***,** pp. 509-534.

Hamburg R 1972. "Ideas and realities in the U.S.S.R.". *Polity* 5(2), pp. 169-189.

Haynes R 1953. "Can our democracy exist in the world today?". *Peabody Journal of Education* 30(6), pp. 344-345.

Howarth D 1995. "Discourse theory" in Marsh D and Stroker G (eds). *Theories and methods in political science*. Macmillan Press: London, pp. 115-133.

Huntington SP 1991. *Democracy's third wave.* Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press.

Kaunda K 1964. "The future of democracy in Africa". *Transition* 15, pp. 37-39.

Kennedy-Pipe C 2000. "International history and international relations theory: A dialogue beyond the Cold War". *International Affairs* 76(4), pp. 741-754.

Melady TP 1965. "Nonalignment in Africa". *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 362, Nonalignment in Foreign Affairs*, pp. 52-61.

O'Donnell G 1996. "Illusions about consolidation". *Journal of Democracy* 7(2). John Hopkins University Press, pp. 34-51.

Penecy M 1999. "The social construction of democracy". *International Studies Review* 1(1), pp. 95-102.

Rosenberg T and Hayner PB 1999. "The unfinished revolution of 1989". *Foreign Policy* 115, pp. 90-105.

Schumpeter JA 1943. *Capitalism, socialism and democracy***.** Routledge: Chatham.

Sherman HJ 1970. "The economics of pure communism". *Soviet Studies* 22(1), pp. 24-36.

Szalay LB and Kelly RM 1982. "Political ideology and subjective culture: Conceptualisation and empirical assessment". *The American Political Science Review* 76(3), pp. 585-602.