
ZIKISM AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines the Azikiwe's philosophy of African Renaissance and attempt to discuss its aptness in present day Africa and Nigeria at a time when the African identity is gradually fading away. To do this, the paper made use of extant literature and employed content analysis to arrive at its conclusions. The paper found out that Zikism is an ideology to look up to as it combines attributes of capitalism, socialism and welfarism and anchors its major thrust on the major catchment points of these ideologies to produce a unique if not peculiar system known as neo-welfarism which suggests among other things spiritual balance, mental emancipation, economic determinism and African Risorgimento. The paper suggest among others things that young people on the continent must take their rightful place in society and jettison completely their mental colonialism of inferiority complex and place themselves at par with all other people not minding colour, race, ethnicity or religion, more importantly the paper calls on countries on the continent to embrace an indigenous ideology like Zikis, that proposes the regeneration of a continent in constant copying spree of western ideologies as only an ideology developed within Africa's peculiarities can alleviate the continent from its political and economic quagmire.

Introduction

The debate or controversy on whether there is an African philosophy or thought is dead and buried (Uduigwomen, 1995 in Ekanem, 2012). Martin (2012) opined that "African political thought refers to political theories and ideologies developed by various African scholars and statesmen, as enunciated in their speeches, autobiographies, writings, and policy statements, the main focus being on the *ideas* rather than on the individuals". Be that as it may, from time immemorial, Africans have always had the ability to think and ponder at a level quite magnificent, from long ago, they were able to produce sound philosophical thoughts way before their contact with the white man. Though they lacked the requisite skill of preservation of their thoughts through writing, they were able to preserve their thoughts through oral tradition passed from one generation to another. During the decolonization decade, some Africans who had grown in skill and thoughts were able to perpetuate their thought and echo them loud enough for both their countrymen to hear and their oppressions to take heed.

During the 19th century, the scramble for territories by European powers took a new turn as they began to make significant advances to tropical Africa. By 1913, European powers had divided the African continent into a patchwork that showed little or no regard for ethnic and linguistic boundaries. This opened the African version of colonialism. The human and natural resources of Africa were exploited, independent African communities lost their political liberty, Africa suffered a crisis of self-confidence creating a lasting sense of inferiority and subjugation that built a barrier to growth and innovation.

In the face of these challenges, many Africans began the search for an ideological project of self-affirmation and assertive cultural nationalism. Among these were Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Pilot of Nigerian Independence, Leopold Senghor, appraised as an apostle of Negritude, Kwame Nkrumah, a radical nationalist and a proponent of Pan-Africanism, Obafemi Awolowo, a socialist oriented nationalist, Julius Nyerere, the father of Ujamaa Socialism. Be that as it may, this work is streamlined and focused on the philosophy of Nnamdi Azikiwe, as an ideology of political regeneration for Africa (Kanu, 2010).

African intellectuals and prominent leaders of African nations are seen to be of the opinion that ideological discourse plays some very crucial role in the physical, psychological, socio-political and cultural emancipation of the people. In this light, issues of "African identity personality, consciencism, communalism, Pan-Africanism, Negritude and Humanism were inadvertently brought into sharp focus". (Elejo, 2015).

It is in this attempt that this paper examines the Azikiwe's philosophy of African Renaissance and attempt to discuss its aptness in present day Africa and Nigeria at a time when the African identity is gradually

fading away. The paper also attempts to scale the relevance of Ziks philosophy of African Renaissance. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's first indigenous Governor-General, Nigeria's first President as well as one of the most popular African citizens of the twentieth century. The name Nnamdi Azikiwe fondly called the "Great Zik of Africa or Zik" for short, means many things to many people, not only in Nigeria, but in most African states and among the rest of the black race in the New World and beyond.

During the decades of decolonization and the struggle for African liberation from the colonialist in the last century, the name was synonymous with Pan-Africanism and African emancipation. Similarly, for the greater part of the twentieth century, a recurring decimal in Nigeria's political history was Azikiwe- the "Great Zik of Africa". During his life time, Azikiwe was a legend, who stood out among his contemporaries, and as at the time he passed on in May 1996 at the ripe age of 92, many described him as the "last of the titans" (Igwe, 2015).

The man Nnamdi Azikiwe

To understand Ziks philosophy, one needs to understand the man Azikiwe and what propelled his philosophy of African Renaissance. It is in this light, that this paper made an attempt at producing a brief biography of Azikiwe, the great Zik of Africa.

Nnamdi Azikiwe, popularly known as Zik, was born on November 16, 1904 in Zungeru, Niger State into the family of Obodedom Chukwuemeka Azikiwe and Racheal Chinwe Azikiwe. His father was a clerk, and his mother was a trader. Residing all over Nigeria enabled him know how to speak the three main Nigerian languages: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. He left for the United States in the late 20s. While in the US, he attended Storer College in West Virginia for two years (1925-1927). He later left for Howard University, DC, where he was for two years (1927-1929). In 1929, he entered Lincoln University.

In 1930, he received his Bachelor of Art degree in Political Science. In the summer of 1930, he was admitted to Columbia University to read journalism. He obtained an MA degree in Religion and Philosophy at Lincoln University (1932) while still at Lincoln University; he was employed as a Graduate Assistant. In 1933, he concluded two Master's degree programs in Anthropology and Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was appointed a full-time lecturer in Political Science in 1933. While still pursuing his Master's at Columbia University, he registered for his PhD. After accomplishing his academic dreams, he knew it was time to return to Africa and join in the fight to free the black race from the whites, who were then colonial masters (Kanu, 2010).

He returned to Nigeria in the mid-30s and got involved in politics forming the NCNC party. He was actively involved in Nigeria's fight for independence. His dream was finally realized on October 1, 1960 when Nigeria became an independent nation and he was sworn in as her first indigenous Governor-General and Commander-in Chief of the Federation. In 1963, Nigeria became a republic, and he was then made the First President. He was forced out of office in 1966 by a deadly coup. He returned to politics in 1978, by founding the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP). In 1979 and 1983 his bids for the presidency were unsuccessful. He retired from active politics until May 11, 1996 when he passed away at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital. He was buried on November 16, 1996, at his country home in Onitsha (Kanu, 2010).

Nnamdi Azikiwe and his Philosophy of African Renaissance (Neo-Welfarism)

What then is Azikiwe's philosophy of African Renaissance, what are the attributes of this thought, what does it say and how contemporary is this thought in today's world. What can Africans and Nigeria's learn from this thought. These and more are some of the questions that this paper attempts to answer, bringing to fore the cardinal pointers of Ziks philosophy which he called Neo-Welfarism or Zikism. "His philosophical thought zeroes down on regeneration of Africa socio-political spheres. This he believed, calls for mental freedom and the transcendence of racial and tribal barriers. The politics that needs the progressiveness, the spur and the catharsis of the youth-elements of the society" (Elejo, 2015).

Azikiwe's Neo-Welfarism is an economic system which blends the essential elements of capitalism, socialism and welfarism in a socio-economic matrix, (Igwe, 1992 in Ekanem, 2012). Furthermore, *eclectic pragmatism*, a coinage of the idea of Azikiwe suggests that the most suitable method for dealing with multi-faceted reality, especially in economic and political matters (Igwe, 1992 in Ekanem, 2012). This method attempts to harmonize apparently opposing views not by resolving the contradictions, but by selecting and blending what is useful and practicable in each for the purpose of attaining the desired goals. Hence, eclectic pragmatism accommodates the fact that man is selfish and altruistic, rational and irrational, individualistic and communalistic, all of which can be adequately balanced to achieve a harmonious social life.

Cardinal pointers of Ziks philosophy of African Renaissance (Neo-Welfarism)

Zikism is a political philosophy or ideology designed by Azikiwe, aimed at the decolonization of the minds of young Africans, in preparation for a battle against the old Africa, brainwashed by their colonial masters. At a time when the chiefs supported British hegemony and were used to fight the liberal intelligentsia of Africa, Zik developed his philosophy as a reformist ideology. He stressed that Africa could only be emancipated by those who believed in the concept of a nascent Africa. The realization of a new Africa must not be through bloodshed or disorder. The spirit of cooperation, respect and honour for the old Africa must abound (Kanu, 2010). Nwoko, (1967) cited in Elejo, (2015) classifies the basis of Azikiwe's

philosophy of the Neo Welfarism into five:

- i. The cultivation of **spiritual balance** which takes into cognizance African values such as tolerance and respect for elders.
- ii. The experience of **social regeneration** which is the need to overcome all forms of social barriers and prejudices, racial, religious, political, moral, economic and other forms of prejudices so as to be united as one Africa.
- iii. The realization of **economic determinism** with emphasis on economic stability or self-sufficiency. This involves most especially, manner of channelling skilled man-power and economic renaissance.
- iv. The creation of **mental freedom** which entails that it is self-destructive for the Africans to exhibit any form of inferiority complex. This calls for mental emancipation as the African recalls his glorious past capabilities.
- v. The expectation of a **political resurgence (a Political Risorgimento)** which assumes that politics is not an end in itself but only a means to an end. And in bringing the Africa of his dream to reality, he calls for the spirit of cooperation and the regeneration of various states.

Corroborating the above, Kanu (2010) observed that Azikiwe in 1943, enumerated five principles that are vital to the political emancipation of Africa, and they could also be referred to as the five canons of Zikism. His aim was to provide a foundational structure on which a free national political system was to be built. His thought according to Kanu is produced verbatim:

- i. **Spiritual Balance:** While talking about spiritual balance, Zik called for respect for the opinion of others. This would involve allowing others the right to state their opinion without denying one's right to state his or her opinion, what can be referred to as the cultivation of the spirit of tolerant skepticism for the views of one's antagonists.
- ii. **Social Regeneration:** Zik calls for the jettisoning of all forms of prejudice whether they are they racial, national, tribal, societal, political, ethical etc. Azikiwe makes this call because an African, no matter where he or she is born, is an African. To postpone the breaking down of all forms of barriers of tribal prejudice, be they inter-tribal or intra-tribal, is to postpone the social unity of Africa.
- iii. **Economic determinism:** Zik sees economic self-sufficiency as the ultimate means to the redemption of Africa. No matter how educated Africans may be, as long as they lack economic self-sufficiency, they will fail to realize a stable society. Education for the African is useless, unless it is adapted to the African environment. This was the idea of Zik, when he called for "a state of society where the mind is brought into harmony with matter... a psychological conception deeply rooted in a material environment. He further argues that "The usefulness of any concept, idea or theory, lies in its implications for the practical solutions to the problems of society. In this sense, pragmatism requires that man's efforts and intelligence should be geared towards the liberation of man and the satisfaction of his needs in society and so our education should be aimed at providing means of livelihood for Africans, to fail in this regard, Zik argues, is to dent the African social fabric for the African to cultivate an inferiority complex is to sign the death warrant of Africa's future. He calls for emancipation from the crisis of inferiority and assures the African that he had a glorious past and can design a more glorious future. Zik wants the African to follow Socrates' principle: *Gnothiseauton, (Man know yourself)*, and like a sleeping giant wake up from his slumber and harness his power for his own good and that of mankind.
- iv. **Mental Emancipation:** The slave trade and colonization of Africa created a situation of the "crisis of self-confidence" in the African, which has opened apertures for a lasting barrier to growth and innovation. Zik argues that there is no specific proof to sustain the idea of superiority or inferiority of any race.
- v. **Political Resurgence:** If the African cultivates a spiritual balance, experiences social regeneration, cultivates and realizes economic self-sufficiency and mental emancipation, he or she certainly finds himself or herself in a state of political *Risorgimento* (renewal or rebirth). Zik says politics is a means to an end which is more glorious than the means through which this end must be attained. Socially, the end is guarantee of social security, and a right to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, just as do other peoples. Once this is attained, a people can boast of a stable and reliable political system.

Relevance of Zikism in Contemporary Nigeria

At a time when 'Africanness' is fast fading away, Zikism is an ideology to look up to as it combines attributes of capitalism, socialism and welfarism and anchors its major thrust on the major catchment points of these ideologies to produce a unique if not peculiar system known as neo-welfarism which

suggests among other things spiritual balance, mental emancipation, economic determinism and African Risorgimento. It calls on youths to take their rightful place in society and jettison completely their mental colonialism of inferiority complex and place themselves at par with all other people no minding colour, race, ethnicity or religion. This is the kind of thinking that Nigeria needs at this time of her development, when Nigerians most especially youths are confronted with the dilemma of modernization and the confusing paradox of westernization. To say Zikism is apt in Nigeria today will be an understatement, as Ziks philosophy of African renaissance is a sure liberator of minds and deserves more than the propagation it currently receives.

Zikism tells the story of a brighter more prosperous Africa, where Africans are emancipated completely from their mental subjugation, where they enjoy the mind of their own, where they are able to think for themselves and refuse to agree that anybody brown, white or red is better or more superior than then. Zikism advocates for economic determinism where Africans determine their own destinies, the economies of African can refuse to allow the flowing tide of neo-colonial imperialists and determine what and how their economies operate, the economies of Africa can do better than what is currently obtainable only if there is willing and committed leadership, this is the kind of inspiration African leaders need right now, something that tells them it's possible and not the other way round.

Zikism advocates for the social regeneration of Africa, today, Africans are confused and they continue to confuse modernization for westernization, they are adopting the ways of the white man and inevitably burying Africa's culture and traditions, Africa's ways of life, Africa's language, Africa's form of dressing, Africa's spirit of hospitality and communalism all for the ways of the white man who has no culture to call his own, Africans are burying those core values that makes us Africans.

Zikism advocates for the awakening of Africa' cultures and traditions, let all Africans be proud of who they are and what they are. At this point in Africa's development, when our people most especially youths are confused, Zikism provides a new form of thought for the awakening of what once made us proud Africans. Zikism also advocates for Africa's political resurgence as a way of solving our political woes, he calls for Africa's unity as a way of liberating Africa from poverty, hunger and strife.

Suffice to say, Zikism or neo-welferism whatever nomenclature we give it, is a desirable tool and a healthy perimeter to restore Africa on its track, Africa has lost focus, Africa has lost direction and only the propagation of philosophies like zikism can return Africa safely back on its track. To say Zikism is a desirable tool for directing Africa to the promise land will be an understatement.

Conclusion

The authors of this paper greatly align their thoughts with Igwe, (1992) in Ekanem, (2012) when he opined that Neo-Welfarism otherwise called "Zikism is a method that best suits dealing with certain persistent problems, which includes tribalism, frequent coup d' etat and counter coups, religious strivings and the recurrent question of an effective developmental ideology which is common place in Africa". The legacies left by Nnamdi Azikiwe are so numerous and vital to the revitalization of the development potentials in Africa that have been undermined by inept post-independence political leaders across the continent.

Other than his recognitions through honorary doctorate degrees from universities in America and Africa, the intellectual input of Zik should be proactively harnessed and utilized so as to restore the true dignity of the African in this era of globalization. A major intellectual legacy is his political thought, which centers on the idea of a regeneration or rebirth of Africa in both socio-political cum economic and mental emancipation from all shackles of bondage (Igwe, 2015). Again, this paper aligns with **Oluwagbemi-Jacob** when she observed that the challenges posed by ethnocentrism, religious intolerance/bigotry, parochialism, dogmatism, mental masturbation and the clash of identity to the African developmental project, Zikism is the key to affirming and accommodating a new Africa, which more than ever before is becoming increasingly difficult to wish away in this age of globalization. Zikism is the antidote needed to douse the tension and the violent outbursts which the domination of one culture by another hinges on African Renaissance (**Oluwagbemi-Jacob**, 2011).

It is worthy of mention here that since Nigeria currently lacks a clear cut ideological political and economic orientation and during a very globally disruptive era, Neo-Welfarism is an alternatively viable option for Nigeria, as the ideology presupposes the regeneration of a people, it is instructive to argue here that Nigeria is highly deserved of some sort of regeneration more so, as the country has become a sleeping giant, Zikism offers a credible alternative for not only Nigeria but for all other brothers in progress on the continent.

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