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RESEARCH ARTICLE

African universities and the challenge of postcolonial development

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Abstract

Extensively ignored by the literature on the subject, recent interest in the fate of academic freedom in Africa is linked with shared concerns about the exploding nature of its societal crises. The collapse of political integration and social cohesion; the decline of the civil society and the implosion of conflicts; the rise of authoritarian, non-developmental populist regimes amid extreme poverty; and the worsening material conditions of the populations are major indications of such crises. Nowhere are these crises worse illustrated than in the universities where constrained funding, infrastructural collapse, massive brain drains and strained relations with the state inhibit the production of knowledge. This article reflects on the trajectory of the universities in postcolonial Africa. It draws on the national public universities in Nigeria and accounts for the changes and continuities underlying their performance against the backdrop of hostile material conditions and uncongenial political control, which not only remain disruptive but continue to undermine institutional autonomy and the integrity of scholarship in the universities across Africa.

Résumé

Largement ignoré par la littérature sur ce sujet, l'intérêt récent porté au sort de la liberté académique en Afrique est lié aux inquiétudes partagées concernant la nature explosive des crises sociétales. L'effondrement de l'intégration politique et de la cohésion sociale, le déclin de la société civile et l'implosion des conflits, la montée des régimes populistes non développementaux autoritaires sur fond d'extrême pauvreté, et la détérioration des conditions matérielles sont tous des indicateurs majeurs de ces crises. Ces dernières sont le plus clairement illustrées dans les universités où les contraintes financières, l'effondrement de l'infrastructure, la fuite massive des cerveaux et les relations tendues avec l'État sont autant de freins à la production des savoirs. Cet article s'intéresse à la trajectoire des universités en Afrique postcoloniale. Centré sur les universités publiques nationales du Nigeria, il explique les changements et les continuités qui soulignent leur efficacité dans un contexte de conditions matérielles défavorables et de contrôle politique hostile, qui non seulement demeurent déstabilisants, mais aussi continuent à fragiliser l'autonomie institutionnelle et l'intégrité de la recherche dans les universités africaines.

Resumo

Extensivamente ignorado pela literatura sobre o assunto, o recente interesse no destino da liberdade académica em África está ligado a preocupações comuns sobre a natureza explosiva das crises sociais. O colapso da integração política e da coesão social; o declínio da sociedade civil e a implosão dos conflitos; a ascensão de regimes populistas autoritários e não-desenvolvimentistas em meios de pobreza extrema; e o agravamento das condições materiais das populações – tudo isto são indícios importantes dessas crises. Em nenhum outro lugar estas crises são mais claramente ilustradas do que nas universidades, onde o financiamento limitado, o colapso das infraestruturas, a fuga maciça de cérebros e as relações tensas com o Estado inibem a produção de conhecimento. Este artigo reflete sobre a trajetória das universidades na África pós-colonial. Baseia-se nas universidades públicas nacionais da Nigéria e explica as mudanças e as continuidades subjacentes ao seu desempenho num contexto de condições materiais hostis e de um controlo político desconfortável, que não só continuam a ser destabilizadores como continuam a minar a autonomia institucional e a integridade dos estudos nas universidades de toda a África.

The problem

This article discusses the failed role of the state in Africa in the ongoing collapse and crisis of higher education and the public universities across the continent. Its backdrop is the development of academic departments and disciplines in the public universities in the early post-independence period in African history. The article accounts for the impact and influence of externally driven globalized asymmetries articulated chiefly in the activities and operations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). It also accounts for the impact of other class-based market-oriented policies and projects, as well as governmental neglect and state repression, on the ongoing predicaments of the public universities. Drawing on the context and the decades of industrial disputes between members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in Nigeria's public universities, I advance the claim that the first-generation postcolonial universities supported a developmentalist agenda indexed by strong nationalist narratives across the regions. This has been dissipated by devastating economic and political repression, among other setbacks, from the late 1980s. Attention is paid to the unresolved tensions in the FGN's agenda to charge high tuition fees in its commercialization and privatization of the public universities through its insistence that constraining federal revenue and other competing interests and needs limit its ability to meet ASUU's demands. In a context where all the public universities depend on governmental grants for more than 95 per cent of their capital and recurrent expenditures, ASUU's opposition to the government's position is problematic. This is complicated and worsened by Nigeria's continued indebtedness to the major capitalist economies.[1]

Beyond Nigeria, this article shows how economic repression – escalated by the workings of international neoliberal programmes – undermines national education

[1] Nigeria's national debt currently stands at 77 trillion naira. See 'Worries over Nigeria's N77 trillion debt burden', *Guardian Daily Newspaper*, 30 April 2023. Sadly, from May 2023, this has been soaring.

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policies in Ghana and Senegal. From Algeria to Zimbabwe, the challenges are underlined by heightened external dependence and unabated national debt profiles. These are shaped by unresolved challenges in material conditions and political economy in relation to the role of the state. I reflect on the implications of these developments. Following this formulation of the problem, the article comprises six sections. The first clarifies the historical context of the study. The second describes the methodology. The third draws on Nigeria and South Africa and discusses the development of academic disciplines and, in particular, History and Political Science in the early postcolonial universities in Africa. The fourth examines the limitations of the golden age in the history of higher education in Africa and discusses them in relation to the continuing problems of the public universities. The fifth examines the efforts by ASUU to achieve academic freedom, improved funding and university autonomy vis-à-vis the responses of the FGN. This is discussed as part of the organized resistance from intellectual labour against the autocratic impositions – economically and politically – of the states in Africa. The sixth offers the conclusion.

The context

Postcolonial Africa is marked by the existence of institutionally weak intelligentsia (Mamdani 2004: 121). This is illustrated by the relative absence of a strong African voice in the production of knowledge on the continent. Competition on unequal global terms, the involvement of corporate political interests and the profit-driven presence of private universities[2] as new entrants in the continent's educational systems have all become compelling concerns. In addition to externally driven global asymmetries, the chief constraint on academic freedom and university autonomy in Africa is the state. Africa has one of the highest records of attacks on academic freedom in the world. In 2021, the Scholars at Risk Network reported 285 attacks on scholars working in higher education in the world. Seventy-six of these were in Africa. These included two professors – a human rights activist and a novelist in Egypt – arrested for hosting a protest demanding that the state took measures to guard against Covid-19 outbreaks in prisons. The 2022 industrial strike action by the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) against the Public Universities Bill is the latest struggle against diminished academic space and legislative attack on academic freedom in Ghana.[3] In South Sudan, a lecturer fled with his family to the USA in 2020 after being charged with political activism and treason in 2018. The South Sudanese Government had ordered his abduction or execution. His abduction took place in neighbouring Kenya (Kariuki *et al.* 2022).

[2] There are 258 universities in Nigeria as at December 2023: 50 federal universities, 60 state-owned universities and 148 private universities. The key universities are the federal universities, along with some of the state-financed universities.

[3] Past constitutions provided for the appointment of chancellors by the universities' governing councils. The new, opposed law empowers the president to unilaterally appoint the chancellors of all public universities in Ghana and intends to increase the number of government representatives in governing councils. Public universities are also required to obtain prior approval from the Minister of Education before entering into agreements with other institutions in and outside Ghana. Based on the anticipated impact of UTAG's planned protests during the last election period, the government suspended the bill in December 2020 and reintroduced it after the elections in 2021.

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Public universities in Africa were established under different conditions and in various contexts. Some were established under European colonial rule; others were established before colonization or after the attainment of formal political independence. In Central Africa, these universities included the Federal University of Yaounde (1962), the University of Kinshasa (1954) and the National University of Gabon (1970). In East Africa, they were Makerere University Kampala (1922), the University of Nairobi (1956) and the University of Dar es Salaam (1961). North Africa had the University of Algiers (1909), Al Azhar University (970), Cairo University (1908) and the University of al-Qarawiyyin (859); and Southern Africa the University of Cape Town (1829), the University of Zimbabwe (1952) and the University of Namibia (1992).[4] In West Africa, there were the University College of the Gold Coast (1948), the University College Ibadan (1948) and the University of Dakar (1957).[5] Their first generation of professors were trained overseas at the home institutions of the major metropolitan powers – Belgium, Britain, France and Germany. Their modernizing impact has continued to influence their existence on a generational scale even beyond the early phases of decolonization.

At their take-off points, the first generation of African universities were globally competitive and locally relevant. They birthed all the second- and third-generation universities in Africa – including the private universities – and also provided the intellectual resources that produced the second and subsequent generations of African academics. One of the remarkable achievements of African universities in the early post-independence period was the neo-Marxist debate at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in the early 1970s. Its chief contribution was its transformative impact on the paradigm shift and radicalized orientation of Bernard Magubane, Claude E. Ake, Mahmood Mamdani, Samir Amin and other African scholars in the early post-independence period (Babu 1982: 1–12; Tandon 1982; Arowosegbe 2012; Mamdani 2020). This effort led to the establishment of the African Association of Political Science (AAPS) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Dakar, Senegal, in 1973.

Methodology

This article is culled from a forthcoming book on the universities in postcolonial Africa. Its fieldwork research was expansive and longitudinal. I began this between January 2018 and August 2019. The initial draft was written between September 2019 and September 2020.

I undertook extensive archival enquiries at the ASUU libraries in Nigeria's five first-generation universities: Ahmadu Bello University Zaria; Obafemi Awolowo

[4] Al-Azhar University (970) in Cairo predated British colonization of Egypt (1882). University of al-Qarawiyyin (859) in Fez was established before French colonial domination of Morocco (1907). The University of Cape Town (1829) was established after the Dutch settlement in South Africa from the second half of the seventeenth century and ultimately before apartheid in 1948. The University of Namibia (1992) was established after self-rule in March 1990.

[5] Established in about 1827, Fourah Bay College in Freetown is another pioneering educational institution. It developed as a truly West African university with an ancient connection with Durham University. This list is not exhaustive: I have mentioned only some of the major universities across the regions.

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University Ile-Ife; University of Ibadan; University of Lagos; and University of Nigeria Nsukka. These enquiries were backed up with further archival research at ASUU's six zonal headquarters. Data generated from these sources were complemented with additional fieldwork at different locations in 2023. From these sources, I retrieved data on ASUU's industrial strike actions and the court cases between members of the Union and the FGN from 1981 to 2023.[6] ASUU is my illustrative focus. It was preceded by the Nigerian Association of University Teachers (NAUT), which was formed in 1965. ASUU was formed in 1978. In addition, I explored archival data at the Abuja headquarters and the six zonal headquarters of the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU). These are the dominant unions for non-academic staff in Nigeria nationwide.[7] These efforts provided me with enriched perspectives and expanded sources for appreciating the developments that predated ASUU's emergence vis-à-vis the challenges noted in its existence and its own development.

Beyond Nigeria, I generated secondary data on the state of academic freedom across Africa. The collections at CODESRIA's library on academic freedom and university autonomy were very helpful for my purpose. In addition to this in-person library-based research, I examined the online catalogues and databases of CODESRIA's Documentation, Information and Communication Centre (CODICE). These resources enabled me to interrogate the constitutions and legal frameworks for protecting academic freedom and human rights in Algeria, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Sudan and Zaire from the 1980s to the 2020s. This research was complemented by my analysis of the experiences of the postcolonial universities across Africa vis-à-vis the roles of the existing national academic unions in coping with state-informed contradictions and state-led tensions from the late colonial and early postcolonial periods up to the present. I examined the historical roots, changing contexts and dynamic nature of governmental control and interference in the periods under discussion. Data were also generated on the developments that underlay the attempts by states across Africa to commercialize and privatize higher education generally and public university education in particular. The 1980s were an instructive decade during which neoliberal policy interventions and other class-based macro-economic stabilization packages – SAPs – were imposed on and implemented in higher education and across most African states. These research efforts were complemented by oral interviews with different generations of university academics. Drawing on History and Political Science, the interviews focused on the development of academic departments and disciplines in the early post-independence universities across the continent.

My analysis is based on a subjective evaluation. This draws on a concatenation of the knowledge I gleaned from the primary data I accessed and the secondary sources I worked on, in addition to my three years of lived experience as a Postdoctoral Researcher in South Africa and as a Senior Researcher in Europe and North America. I argue that the anti-intellectual character of the colonial state shaped the repressive

[6] The first strike action by ASUU took place in 1981. Hence my choice to begin my focus from this date.

[7] Other non-academic unions in Nigerian universities include the Association of Staff in Academic Research Institutes, Administrative Staff Union of Nigerian Universities, Association of University Technologists of Nigeria and Senior Staff Association of Universities, Teaching Hospitals, Research and Affiliated Institutions. These are coordinated locally, nationwide and zonally by NASU and SSANU.

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nature of Africa's postcolonial states. The dependence of African intellectuals and scholars on the state reduces academic freedom in Africa to mere rhetoric. I cast this argument comparatively to illustrate the role of the state in Africa in upholding its relationship with the academic not as an individual from an independent social category but as a subordinated wage commodity bearer. I compared higher education funding in Africa with its equivalents in Asia, Europe and North America. I found that the neglectful impact of the authoritarian, bureaucratic-military, neo-patrimonial and politically overdeveloped state is counterproductive and overwhelming in Africa.

To appreciate the abandonment and crisis of higher education in Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, I paid attention to the massive funding injected into the basic categories of research groupings in South Africa for academics-in-training (postgraduate students); emerging researchers (postdoctoral and Senior Researchers); and established, experienced and senior scholars (professorial research and teaching positions) (Arowosegbe 2016: 333). Post-apartheid South Africa provides the best example of state investment into African universities. This investment is administered through the National Research Foundation and the South African Research Chairs Initiative of the Department of Education and the Department of Science and Technology. These are supported by other funding streams from numerous international and local foundations. It is therefore not surprising that a significant proportion of the research produced on Africa now emanates from the professorial chairs funded by these bodies on the basis of longitudinal endowments for promising researchers and their laboratories in South Africa.

In finalizing this research, I carried out the following assignments. During my two-year funded professorship at Humboldt University of Berlin, from September 2021 to June 2023, I collaborated with an expansive network of scholars in Austria and Germany on this work. I deepened my collaboration with colleagues at the Global Intellectual History programme at the Free University of Berlin and Humboldt University of Berlin as well as at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient and the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin.

Development of academic departments and disciplines

In addition to other structures of knowledge and power, academic departments were the primary institutional platforms through which knowledge production and the development of the modern university took root in colonial and postcolonial Africa.[8] The establishment of these departments followed markedly different contexts across the continent. In Central and Northern Africa, disciplinary foci privileged the creation of academic departments at the neglect of centres of area studies. In Southern and Western Africa, the establishment of academic departments went hand in hand with the formation of centres and institutes of African studies. In South Africa, this development dates back to the early part of the twentieth century at the University of Cape Town. These contexts were tied to the varied nature of colonial policies as well as the patterns of capitalist penetration and settlement in those societies by the imperial powers. These contexts have been examined in other works (Jewsiewicki and

[8] Others included the respective centres and institutes of research, like Area Studies and, much later, fields of enquiry, created by the colonial and postcolonial states across the regions.

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Newbury 1986; Jewsiewicki 1989; Bates *et al*. 1993; Vilhanova 2002). I focus here on the development of History and Political Science in Nigeria and South Africa.

Most academic departments in Nigerian universities began first at the University of Ibadan. Distinct disciplinary epistemologies, histories and practices have been produced through attempts to domesticate them across various institutional sites nationwide. As a historian and philosopher, I limit my account to the disciplines of History and Political Science. The Department of History was one of the earliest units, created in 1948 in the Faculty of Arts. This old faculty comprised Classics, English and Phonetics, Geography, Mathematics, and Religious Studies. Its students were awarded the Bachelor of Arts general degree by the University College Ibadan through a special arrangement with the University of London. It was not until 1950 and 1952 that approvals for honours degree courses were secured under the special relationship with London for Classics, English and Phonetics, Geography, History, and Mathematics.[9]

History and historical studies

A major figure in the development of historical scholarship in Nigeria is Henry Fredrick Charles Smith (1920–84). Together with Kenneth Onwuka Dike (1917–83), Smith developed the Department of History at the University College Ibadan in 1955. They created the Historical Society of Nigeria and the National Archives of Nigeria, which began at Ibadan and extended later to Enugu and Kaduna. Dike became the first president of the Historical Society of Nigeria, while Smith served as its pioneer secretary (1956–69). At Ibadan, Smith supervised the first doctorate degree awarded by a Nigerian university – earned in History by Murray Last in November 1964 at the University of Ibadan (Kane 2016). After converting to Islam, he became Abdullahi Smith. In 1960, Abdullahi Smith and John Owen Hunwick (1936–2015) developed the Centre for Arabic Documentation at University College Ibadan. Between 1960 and 1967, John Hunwick established the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University College Ibadan. He started the *Research Bulletin* and also supervised and taught the first generation of students in the department.[10] In 1962, Smith founded the Department of History at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. There, he supervised the pioneer doctorate theses in History – by Abdullahi Mahdi, Kyari Tijani, Mahmud Modibbo Tukur, Sa'ad Abubakar and Yusufu Bala Usman.[11] Between 1970 and 1980, Smith established the Centre for Documentation and Historical Studies in Kaduna – a formidable unit within Ahmadu Bello University – now known as Arewa House Kaduna. He led and served as the founding head of the Department of History as well as being the first director of the Centre for Documentation and Historical Studies, both posts at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

A major achievement of these efforts was the deconstruction of European colonial intellectual hegemony through the development of alternative historiographies,

[9] Approval for the honours degree course in Religious Studies was only secured in 1962.

[10] The Centre for Arabic Documentation microfilmed all collected Arabic manuscripts. As a journal, *Research Bulletin* published articles on the microfilmed manuscripts and the manuscript tradition.

[11] This list is in alphabetic order and not in any historical sequence. According to the records at the Northern Historical Research Scheme, beginning with Sa'ad Abubakar, who completed his doctorate degree in History in 1970, Abdullahi Smith supervised three MA and nineteen PhD dissertations in History at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

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interpretations and sources for accounting for African history. Knowledge of West Africa from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries came largely from Arabic sources (Kane 2016: 344). By the first half of the twentieth century, the colonial archive provided the apparatus and sources for studying African history. By developing substantive curricula, the interventions in Ibadan and later Zaria projected African history and African philosophy as teachable sub-disciplines in all Nigerian universities (Arowosegbe 2014). Arabic sources and oral history were affirmed as authentic and valid sources for the production of African history. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* and *Tarikh* were on the front line in disseminating African scholarship. Explored as a retrieval project and led by Abdullahi Smith and Kenneth Dike, the Schools of History at Ibadan and Zaria drew on the heritages of Africa's golden past to reclaim and rewrite the nineteenth-century historiography of West Africa. Later, J. F. Ade Ajayi, Adiele E. Afigbo, E. A. Ayandele, Obaro Ikime, Philip I. Igbaje[12] and Tekena Tamuno corroborated the efforts of the Ibadan School. Alkasum Abba, Enoch Oyedele and George A. Kwanashie joined the Zaria School. Others involved included Africanists such as J. B. Wester, John D. Omer-Cooper, R. J. Gavin and Robert Smith, all of whom worked with the Ibadan School.

The impacts of these schools have been consolidated and expanded nationwide and beyond. The orientations and specializations implied in their articulations of points of departure have also been noted in the regional spread of their scholarly influences. Notwithstanding their constrained connections and limited relations to power, the University of Ibadan, University of Ife and University of Lagos have remained hotbeds of liberal academic scholarship through their continued efforts against and critique of Eurocentric dominance of the production of historical scholarship. Conversely, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Bayero University Kano, University of Maiduguri and Usman Dan Fodio University Sokoto remain the hub of radical – sometimes Marxist – scholarship on Nigerian and West African histories. These have also remained decisive in determining the agenda of national politics at the federal centre and the direction of Nigeria's foreign policy. Their continued focus on the caliphate and jihad in West Africa affirms this point, as do their engagements with the Islamic Library of West Africa – particularly with regard to Arabic literature and Arabic manuscripts – and their emphasis on the relevance of indigenous sources for mapping and recovering the genealogies of nation building and statecraft in the ancient and modern cities of Northern Nigeria – Adamawa, Borno, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yawuri, Zamfara and Zauzau – which continue to define and shape Nigerian historiography. These achievements are further confirmed by the enlightened leadership of Yusufu B. Usman at Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research; the Centre for Democratic Development, Research and Training; and the Centre for Documentation and Historical Studies at Ahmadu Bello University. Usman's (2006) critique of Heinrich Barth's (1965 [1857–58]) thesis on Hausaland and Katsina remains instructive and seminal for studying change and development in Arabic West Africa and the Islamic intellectual history of Muslim West Africa.

[12] Following the completion of his undergraduate and postgraduate studies as a historian at the University College Ibadan, Philip Aigbona Igbafe (1936–2021) became a major figure in the Ibadan School of History. He was affiliated with the University of Ife and was famous for and well published on the history of the Benin and Edo people.

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Members of the early post-independence generations offered exemplary leadership in university administration and also in the development of Nigeria's public services. Kenneth O. Dike was vice chancellor at the University of Ibadan (1960–67). Saburi O. Biobaku was vice chancellor at the University of Lagos in 1965. Ishaya Audu was vice chancellor at Ahmadu Bello University (1966–75) as well as Minister of External Affairs (1979–83). J. F. Ade Ajayi was vice chancellor at the University of Lagos in 1972. Essien U. Essien-Udom was secretary to the military government and Head of Service, South Eastern State, Nigeria (1973–75), founding vice chancellor of the University of Maiduguri (1975–79) and chairman of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigeria (1986–92). Tekena Tamuno was vice chancellor at the University of Ibadan (1975–79). Oladapo Akinkugbe was vice chancellor at Ahmadu Bello University (1978–79). Omoniyi O. Adewoye was vice chancellor at the University of Ibadan (1996–2000). Abdullahi Mahadi was vice chancellor at Ahmadu Bello University (1999–2004). After their respective appointments, these doyens returned to academia and the classroom – their first love.

Political Science in Africa

The historical context for the development of Political Science in Africa was defined by the hegemonic Euro-American role in the diffusion and expansion of social science knowledge worldwide; the character of the colonial state; and the logic of anti-colonial nationalism (Jinadu 1987). Notwithstanding its globalization and professionalization after World War Two, the shedding of its traditional roots and the acquisition of its present identity as a modern social science discipline following the behavioural revolution of the 1950s, limited aspects of the discipline were taught in African colleges and schools before 1960.[13] This attitude was informed by the colonial officials' perception of intellectuals as detractors and enemies rather than collaborators in state building.[14] Its inception as a discipline and in concrete academic programmes in African universities coincided with the attainment of independence by individual states. Its continued existence has been consolidated by the development of communities of scholars such as the African Association of Political Science and the Ethiopian Association of Political Science. Its ideological role in facilitating the cultural imperialism and superstructure of Western hegemony in its application to the global South is what underlies the decolonization agenda across Africa.

[13] Examples of such aspects of the discipline taught in colonial Africa are the rudiments of political institutions. These were taught under the rubric of Civics, Government and History as well as International Relations and Public Affairs.

[14] Colonial power regarded the knowledge of Political Science and radical social sciences scholarship more generally as subversive to its enterprise. This accounted for its infamous knowledge censorship legislation and practices and the delayed establishment and marked paucity of universities across the colonies in Africa. The colonial state affirmed its support for the teaching of Classics, European Studies, Geography and other non-ideological disciplines but neglected History, Philosophy and Political Science. Funding and scholarship support were denied to students in the latter disciplines. In place of African History, colonial education privileged the teaching of European Constitutional Development, European History and other diversionary topics. To perpetuate colonial rule and limit critical questioning of the legitimacy of imperial regimes, colonial education policies confined indigenous populations to skill acquisition as administrative clerks, customs officials, elementary school teachers, file carriers, low-ranking policemen, medical orderlies and typists, among other functions that directly supported the day-to-day running of colonial systems (see Barongo 1983: 1).

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The earliest appearance of Political Science at a Nigerian university was at the University of Ibadan. It began as a sub-department of government, founded in 1960 by James O'Connell[15] at the University College Ibadan. O'Connell served as its first professor and head of department. He built the department from its inception and encouraged several overseas scholars, mainly US-trained political scientists, to join it. Mentored and trained as a liberal scholar in the North American tradition, Essien Udosien Essien-Udom (1928–2002) was the first Nigerian head of department (1965–72). He was preceded by James O'Connell (1925–2013; in post 1960–63) and Joseph E. Black (1921–2007; 1963–65).[16] After completing his doctorate in Political Science at the University of Chicago (1955–61), his revised dissertation was published in Essien-Udom (1962) as *Black Nationalism: a search for an identity in America*.

The first doctorate degree awarded in Political Science by a Nigerian university was at the University of Ibadan. This was earned by Christina Le Moignan in 1970 for her dissertation on 'Foreign aid in Nigeria'. She was supervised by Billy Dudley.[17] The second was awarded to Gabriel Orka Orewa in 1971 for his thesis 'Taxation in mid-western and western Nigeria'. He was supervised by Essien U. Essien-Udom.[18] The third and fourth were awarded on Friday 10 March 1972 to Christopher E. F. Beer, for a dissertation titled 'The farmer and the state in western Nigeria',[19] and to John A. A. Ayoade for 'Electoral politics in western Nigeria'. Beer was supervised by Dudley[20] and Ayoade by Essien-Udom assisted by Dudley.[21] Others followed, including Kola Balogun, whose doctorate, supervised by Essien-Udom, was awarded in 1973.[22]

From the 1960s to the late 1980s, the strength of the first and second generations of political scientists at Ibadan was their excellence. This was noted not in administration and politics – as it is today – but in their global competitiveness, as evidenced by and indexed in their contributions to knowledge at the highest levels in the world. Their exemplary scholarship is an enduring testament that has placed the Faculty of the Social Sciences and the University of Ibadan among the top-ranked world-class universities. Without exception, the faculties produced canonical works of scholarship. Alex Gboyega published his theses on local government administration in Ghana and Nigeria. Bayo Adekanye became a world-class authority on civil–military relations in Africa; the high point of his scholarship was his critique of Samuel P. Huntington's (1957) and Morris Janowitz's (1960) theses on national armies – through his analysis of the destruction of the national character of Africa's and Nigeria's armies by colonially implanted ethno-linguistic fragmentation – and his work on the impact of civil–military relations in authoritarian and quasi-democratic states on the discipline, *esprit de corps*, integrity and professionalism of the military as an

[15] An Irish Catholic Father, James O'Connell (1925–2013) was a radical, strongly anti-colonial political scientist. Notwithstanding his role in Nigeria's socio-political engineering, including helping redraw Nigeria's constitution after the civil war, however, based on his radical standing, the FGN refused him Nigerian citizenship.

[16] Interview with John A. A. Ayoade, University of Ibadan. See also Molteno and Cohen (2020).

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] *Ibid*.

[19] This thesis was published as Beer (1975).

[20] Interview with John A. A. Ayoade, University of Ibadan. See also Molteno and Cohen (2020).

[21] *Ibid*.

[22] *Ibid*.

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institution of the state. Billy Dudley published *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (1968). John Ayoade developed the study of Nigerian federalism – with instructive and path-finding inspiration for Adigun A. B. Agbaje, Eghosa E. Osaghae and Rotimi T. Suberu. In addition to his seminal statement on the social exchange theory (Ekeh 1974), Peter P. Ekeh (1937–2020) published 'Colonialism and the two publics' (Ekeh 1975). In 1977, a former (1962) student of economics at the University College Ibadan, Claude E. Ake (1939–96), after obtaining a doctorate in Political Science at Columbia University, New York, developed the Faculty of the Social Sciences at the University of Port Harcourt with a strong specialization in Political Economy. He also served as its founding dean from 1977 to 1983. Later, Adebisi Busari and Bayo Okunade became noted figures in International Law and International Political Economy. Adigun Agbaje, Fred Onyeoziri, Kunle Amuwo, Larry Ekpebu and Osisioma B. C. Nwolise mastered Methodology and Political Theory; while Eghosa E. Osaghae and Rotimi T. Suberu made solid impressions in Ethnic and Federal Studies in their Ford Foundation-funded programme in this area.[23]

My three-year sojourn as a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of History and the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape (2009–10) and (2011) and in the Department of Political Studies and the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town (2013–14) affirmed my comparative evaluation and subjective insight that the Department of Political Science at Ibadan is one of the strongest in its field in Africa. As a tribute to that strength, a huge amount of the academic labour and intellectual resource that is developing all the research centres, institutes and universities in Africa – especially in South Africa – comes from Ibadan.[24]

At Ahmadu Bello University, Political Science was developed and founded by James O'Connell in 1967, who served as the head of the department from its founding to 1975.[25] He was succeeded by Russel T. Parkes (1975–76). After Parkes, Aliyu Dauda Yahaya was the first Nigerian head of department (1976–81). Political Science at Ahmadu Bello University attained the distinction of being an oasis of radical scholarship in West Africa. In addition to Afro–Arab relations, Marxism and the politics of the Middle East, the teaching of Political Science at Zaria focused on the

[23] As a critique, beyond their limited and narrow focus on Nigerian federalism, none of the doyens and later scholars in Political Science at Ibadan have bothered to develop or expand the sub-field of federalism into comparative federalism.

[24] Mentioning only a few, Eghosa E. Osaghae was at the University of Transkei; Jimi Adesina (political sociologist) was at Rhodes University, Grahamstown and the University of South Africa, Pretoria; Jimi Adisa was director at CIDO and head of ECOSOCC; and Kunle Amuwo taught for some years at the University of the North in South Africa. In addition to Hlonipha Mokoena (WISER), André du Toit and John Akokpari (University of Cape Town), Mahmood Mamdani (Columbia University and Makerere Institute of Social Research) and Suren Pillay (University of Cape Town), my list of active world-class African political scientists from French-speaking universities in Africa would include Luc Sindjoun (University of Yaoundé), Ousmane O. Kane (Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, Senegal and Harvard University) and Zekeria Ahmed Salem (University of Nouakchott, Mauritania and Northwestern University). I limited my emphasis on Francophone Africa since this work draws largely on Nigeria and South Africa.

[25] Owing to clashes of ideological positions with senior government officials, in 1975 he was issued a twenty-four-hour deportation order by the FGN. After this period, he established a new degree and the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University, where he served for fifteen years (1978–93).

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Latin American contributions to the theories of dependency, political economy and underdevelopment. Formerly located at the old Faculty of the Arts and Social Sciences, between the 1960s and the 1970s the discipline drew heavily from the scholarship of Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney. The developments that animated the *anni mirabiles* of African history (1950s–1960s) and the penultimate decade of the decolonization process were strong influences and inspirations for this school. More than anywhere else in West Africa, History and Political Science in Zaria embraced the insights of Marxist scholarship and the neo-Marxist debate of the early 1970s at the University of Dar es Salaam (Arowosegbe 2012: 131–5). This explains these academics' and scholars' cherished focus on Africa, class, imperialism and the role of multinational corporations and the state, as well as on the political economy of Africa. A major achievement of Political Science in Zaria was its contribution to the lively debate on the responsibilities of the discipline to political obligation and political practice (Awa 1980; Gambari 1980; Usman 1980). Its other achievements related to its teaching-intensive interactions with students and the participation of its members in the Nigerian Political Science Association. From the 1980s, Abdul Raufu Ayoade Dunmoye and Paul P. Izah supervised many colleagues.[26] Abdul Raufu Mustapha, together with Jibrin Ibrahim and John A. Ayam, led its networking and research.[27]

Limitations of the golden age in African universities[28]

Notwithstanding the achievements of the early post-independence decades, higher education and universities in postcolonial Africa suffered some foundational

[26] Similar achievements were recorded in other parts of the continent. The contributions of Hassan Nafaa and Helmi Shaarawi (Cairo University), Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (University of Kisangani and University of Lubumbashi) and L. Adele Jinadu (University of Zimbabwe and University of Lagos) in the development of Political Science remain indelible. At the University of Dar es Salaam, under the enlightened leadership of Julius K. Nyerere in the 1970s, Claude Ake (later University of Port Harcourt), Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame Ninsin (later University of Ghana), Katabaro Miti (later University of Pretoria), Mahmood Mamdani (later Makerere University and University of Cape Town) and Okwudiba Nnoli (later University of Nigeria) taught a good number of African academics and politicians. Jakaya Kikwete, John Garang, John Magufuli, Mizengo Pinda and Yoweri Museveni are among their past students. Abubakar Momoh, Alarie Tokpa (University of Liberia), Cyril I. Obi, Okechukwu Ibeanu, Sabir Nayed (Arab Research Centre Cairo), Said Adejumobi and Sam G. Egwu are some of the products of members of this generation in the 1990s. From his doctorate in Political Economy and Political Science at the University of Toronto in 1986 until his retirement in 2020, Dunmoye supervised more than forty-five doctoral dissertations in Political Science at Ahmadu Bello University.

[27] Amina Mama (University of Cape Town and University of California Davis), Bolanle Awe (University of Ibadan), Egodi Uchendu (University of Nigeria), Hlonipha Mokoena (University of the Witwatersrand), Rasoarifetra Bako (University of Antananarivo) and Rokhaya Fall (Université Cheikh Anta Diop) are examples of important African women historians and political scientists across the continent. This list is only a representative sample of the whole.

[28] The golden age in the history of universities in Africa was not without its defining problems. This pre-internet period posed particular problems for Africa-based scholars, students and teachers, not only in the colonial period but also in the 1960s–80s – the early post-independence period. Examples include delayed communications and correspondence on overseas collaborations, fellowships and publications; problems with libraries, with relevant chapters and pages of books torn out and entire texts stolen from departmental, faculty and university libraries for examination purposes; and limited facilities and poor demographic distribution of science laboratories for students in biochemistry, medicine, physics and other related courses.

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problems that set the continent backwards. An understanding of the genesis and social origins of African intellectuals (Mafeje 1994) and their relations to politics, power and the state (Khan 1994), together with the global and local conditions for the emergence of African universities (Mazrui 2005), enables an appreciation of their current challenges and prospects for development. Different regional contexts define the limitations and tensions of the universities in postcolonial Africa. An analysis of the successive historical layers that shaped African regions and states is therefore compelling. Ali A. Mazrui (1994) captures campus constraints, political intolerance and the conditions of local economies (internal factors) as well as Western culture and the impact of the world economy (global forces) as major constraints on the universities in postcolonial Africa. Drawing on the political economy of knowledge production as the material basis underlying the marketplace of ideas, Claude Ake (1994) argues that, in Africa, knowledge and science have been commodified. This commodification takes place in a context in which the means of producing and circulating knowledge are controlled by the state rather than by the intellectual. The repressive and violent nature of the state, expressed in the siege mentality of an occupying power across the university campuses, underlies the confrontation between state capital and the academics (*ibid.*: 17–25). In the ongoing context of globalization, the state in Africa functions as an appendage of global capitalism. Under the tutelage and watch of the bilateral development agencies as well as the IMF and the World Bank, the core function of the state is the commercialization and privatization of the investment in public education based on efficiency and equity – returns on capital (*ibid.*). As James H. Mittelman (1994; 2016) points out, the neo-liberalizing impulse that accompanies the austere conditions of globalization requires states across the continent to make compelling trade-offs between their investments in literacy and in research and development. These are the historically chaotic and contradictory conditions in which intellectual labour and the universities in Africa are born.[29] Their changes and development are examined below.

In the immediate post-independence period, universities in Africa took off as relatively autonomous institutions. They were administered by university councils and conducted their own affairs. This experience was, however, short-lived. A wave of arbitrary control interrupted the independent and smooth running of the postcolonial universities. This became the defining problem of the late 1960s and 1970s. It later crystalized into repressive state control. Depending on the specific political regimes of the individual states – civil democratic or military – a number of state-imposed regulations were deployed that reduced the universities' day-to-day administration to a branch of the civil services, akin to ordinary state parastatals. Nigeria was most hard hit by this experience. At the University of Ibadan, University of Ife and the University of Lagos, intrusive political involvement by federal politicians and state officials created ethno-linguistic divisions. They later generated unprecedented hostility and rancour. Tim Livsey (2017: 157–60) has chronicled the major episodes of government assaults against the five first-generation universities in Nigeria. These led to the breakdown of university governance and also underlay destructive political rivalries.

[29] Here, I conceive of and theorize colonialism as an important phase in the globalization process.

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This shock was amplified by the emergence of a political class in power that neither acknowledged the institutional and material needs of academics nor appreciated their particular intellectual requirements. Its understanding of universities did not transcend merely producing the manpower needed for indigenizing the civil service.[30] As emergent national governments disputed the relevance of research for change and development across the regions, basic critical research was considered irrelevant to development. Soon, senior university academics and government officials became torn apart in mutual suspicion and supremacist battles. The former insisted on quality and standards; the latter privileged relevance, which it defined narrowly in terms of applied knowledge obtained from the life sciences. This split was worsened by the African governing class's preference for and reliance on foreign mentors who had little appreciation of African conditions for inspiration and salvation. Julius K. Nyerere distanced himself from Tanzanian intellectuals and embraced Fabian socialists. Kenneth Kaunda worked with John Hatch. Kwame Nkrumah surrounded himself with George Padmore and W. E. B. Du Bois. Other regimes across the continent were advised by a host of international mentors from across Europe and North America.

Outside the universities themselves, the second problem of the early post-independence universities in Africa was the tense nature of the relationship between gown and town. Throughout the regions, this was a major problem. There was no common basis for collaboration between intellectuals and the politicians or between state officials and the universities. Animosity underlay their exclusivist engagement. The early postcolonial intellectuals accused and denigrated the national politicians for collaborating with colonial officials and for replacing them, instead of transforming the state. With time, this extended into a major centrifugal problem, which impeded political integration in the new states. As Claude Ake (1967: 17–35) puts it, in Africa, Latin America and South Asia, these states were plunged into disarray by the confrontations of special interests. These included conflicts based on the weight of imperial diplomacy; bitterness against politicians who had enriched themselves at the expense of the people; disenchantment with the revolution and its leaders, who could not translate 'the development slogan' and other abstract notions of democratic rights into concrete economic benefits and material improvements; and the inability of the new governments to cope with the rising demands from their populations for rapid economic and social development. To these were added 'the suspicion between the professional politicians and their alienated intellectuals whose oppositionalism spilled over to the post-colonial regime' (*ibid.*: 19). In India, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, the new politicians described their forerunners and intellectuals as pitiful victims of colonial indoctrination who must be re-socialized and transformed to better appreciate their national culture and history (*ibid.*).

[30] Armed dictators and the military all over Africa held the universities in the lowest esteem. Few of these regimes had any record of national developmental projects that required the deployment of specialized skills from the universities. In the 1990s, Mobutu Sese Seko described the universities in Zaire as the least developed sector of his national economy. Thandika Mkandawire (2015: 64) recalls an old tale about Idi Amin not understanding the need to order new books when there were already several books in the libraries. Beyond repression and suspicion, no efforts were made by those in power either to accommodate the intelligentsia as collaborators in nation building or to understand the universities on their own terms. Exceptions were the initiatives by opportunistic academics for offers from the state.

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Drawing on Ghana from Nkrumah through the Acheampong to the Rawlings era, George P. Hagan (1994) shows that gown and town relationships have been problematic throughout the country's postcolonial existence. As we see in Nigeria and other states beyond the old Gold Coast, the same underlying hostility has permeated all the postcolonial regimes examined across the continent. This has manifested under different guises. Opposing claims by academics and the rulers in respect of academic freedom underlie the uneasy relationships marked by mutual distrust, recrimination and violent confrontation. In Ghana, Nkrumah perceived the 'gown' as a cover for unsavoury anti-establishment interests, and saw academic freedom as a subterfuge for political opposition. This was confirmed when the universities became the stronghold of outlawed overt societal opposition. Notwithstanding the role of academics, professionals and students against the openly repressive military regime of Ignatius Kutu Acheampong (1972–78), the new government led by Jerry J. Rawlings (1979) maintained strained relations with academia. The noted presence of academics and former students in Rawlings' government, who spearheaded the protests against Acheampong, did not make much difference (Hagan 1994: 39–58).

Other attempts at undermining academic freedom have been noted throughout the continent. Under the guise of charismatic legitimation (Ake 1966), post-independence developmentalism (Young 2004) and the avowed management of political order (Huntington 1968) as legitimizing imperatives, the early post-independence African leaders appropriated the role of the philosopher king. The exigency of giving up the politics of critical dissent and democratic governance was justified in the name of allowing charismatic statesmen a free hand in tightly mobilizing scarce resources for national development in 'hard states'. The repressive politics that followed was built into personalized attempts at co-opting, crushing or reducing intellectual labour to the will and beliefs of the leaders. As Thandika Mkandawire (2015: 62–3) recounts, the struggle to appropriate intellectual hegemony played out in the construction of various intellectual frameworks whose articulation and relevance did not significantly transcend the idiosyncratic attributes and other sartorial symbols of the individual leaders. Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa*; Kenneth Kaunda's humanism; Kwame Nkrumah's Nkrumahism; Mobutu Sese Seko's authenticity; and Nnamdi Azikiwe's irredentism and Zikism are examples of such bogus ideological constructs.

The impact of this continued hostility and tension between the state and the universities has been devastating for the postcolonial research environment and for teaching infrastructures in Africa. This has worsened from the 1980s to the present, due to the pattern of chronic underfunding that goes hand in hand with endemic, systematic neglect. The details in individual states and regional realities vary. It is therefore difficult to compare these states, much less to generalize. In comparative global perspectives, South Africa lags behind South Korea in terms of its overall investment in higher education. Its funding is, however, higher than in all the states of North Africa and West Africa.[31] These differences translate into regional

[31] I underline two points here: one, South Africa has the highest investment in higher education and universities in Africa; and two, when placed on a comparative international scale – for example, vis-à-vis the member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – this investment is much lower than that in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. On the expansion of tertiary and university education in South Africa,

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asymmetries of a double nature: first, a global asymmetry in the overall quality of research funding; and second, domestic asymmetries that speak to the existence of multiple layers of inequality and unevenness within the continent.

Intractable economic crises and repressive state control were the problems of the 1980s, a period that was also marred by entrenched military rule. These issues made the 1980s Africa's adjustment decade. In response to their ailing economic conditions, most states on the continent introduced one form of adjustment reform or another. Between the 1980s and the 1990s, 241 adjustment programmes were put in place by thirty-six states in Africa in collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank. Cameroon, Cape Verde, Djibouti and Swaziland were the only exceptions (Adejumobi 1996: 418). Previously, in the 1960s, African states had recorded economic prosperity and stability. Inadequate funding was not a problem for the universities in Africa during this period. Later, due to corruption and profligate spending as well as poor economic planning, the worsening fortunes of the world economy in the 1970s were recycled in Africa. As Africa's commodity prices crashed, national earnings in foreign exchange dropped. The reduction in economic activities was followed by heightened problems in the continent's balance of payments. On an unprecedented scale, from 1976 to 1990, the prices of Africa's export commodities fell to their lowest ebb for fifty years. The average growth rate of the gross domestic product (GDP) in sub-Saharan Africa, which had been 5.9 per cent between 1965 and 1973, decreased to 2.5 per cent in 1973–80. The agricultural growth rate fell from 2.2 per cent in 1965–73 to 0.3 per cent in 1973–80. Manufacturing production fell from 10.01 per cent in 1960–73 to 8.01 per cent in 1973–80 (Adejumobi 1996: 418). Exports dropped from 15.01 per cent in 1960–70 to 0.2 per cent in 1973–80 (Ake 1988: 488). These results were worsened by the soaring external debt of these states. By 1990, Africa's total foreign debt reached US$272 billion, more than twice the figure in 1980. For sub-Saharan Africa, external debt in 1980 was US$56 billion; this tripled to US$161 billion in 1990 (Ake 1988: 488).[32]

Higher education and universities in Africa were severely hit by the adjustments imposed by SAPs. From budget cuts to foreign loans, the World Bank's solutions conflicted with the educational needs of the people. States' dependence on these international institutions led to conditions being imposed on them. As noted in Ghana (Hagan 1994), Nigeria (Bako 1994) and Senegal (Diouf 1994), these generated stiff resistance from organized labour in and outside the universities. ASUU's role in leading such resistance in Nigeria is recounted below.

To sum up, from the 1990s, there has been a noted demographic expansion in student populations across Africa. This has been followed by a chaotic decline in states' capacity to cope with demands for increased funding. These realities coincided with the entry of globally influenced, market-driven policies relating to higher education that restricted the perceptions of the advantages of higher education strictly to its economic benefits and framed the effectiveness and quality of

which I claim is the highest throughout Africa, see the 2019 statistics on post-school education and training in South Africa on the Department of Higher Education and Training website (<https://www.dhet.gov.za>, accessed 21 July 2023). On the comparative annual public expenditure per student in educational institutions by South Africa in relation to national wealth compared with Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Indonesia, South Korea and other OECD states, see OECD (2021a; 2021b; 2021c).

[32] On Africa's economic crisis and its connection to structural adjustment, see van de Walle (2001).

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institutions within these parameters. This situation has had many consequences. As the material conditions of African scholars continued to decline, the expectations of (1) asserting their autonomy from the state in determining their research agendas, interests and teaching objectives; (2) constructing an African identity for autochthonous development; and (3) transforming states for the purpose of establishing an enduring democratic order have been disappointed. Cross-disciplinary research within Africa has declined. Local publishing institutions that once complemented cross-border communities in the early post-independence period have been heavily undermined. Locally implanted systems of knowledge valorization have also been abandoned.[33]

African universities and resistance politics

Despite the repressive character of the states in Africa, the universities are of the highest order of importance to economic and socio-political development. The struggles to preserve them and secure their future have led to fierce resistance from organized labour across these institutions. I highlight ASUU's current experience to illustrate the contrasting pressures generated by the opposing dialectics of oppression by the state and organized resistance by academics in Africa.

ASUU and the FGN are at loggerheads. Historical grievances have gone to their heads. The two sides are at variance and are operating as adversarial negotiators. Rather than attempting conciliation, the two groups are digging into their respective trenches. They are relating as enemies working towards contradictory and opposing ends. ASUU strikes began in the late 1970s but were rarely embarked upon in the 1980s and 1990s; they were the option of last resort. However, they have now become predictable festivals in the history of university education in Nigeria. It is difficult to imagine an end or a lasting resolution to their underlying causes. ASUU continues to raise compelling issues regarding the material bases of higher education and Nigerian society at large. Between 1999 and 2023, 1,315 work days were lost to ASUU strikes. In response, the FGN either glosses over the issues, pays lip service to them, or at best offers solutions that merely scratch the surface, just to get the union to call off or at least suspend its strike action and get back to work. ASUU and the state repeatedly enter into agreements. Endless promises are made by the FGN. Memoranda of agreement and memoranda of understanding are signed by education ministers and government spokespersons. Parents, students, the media and other stakeholders look towards the termination of strike action. They also mistaken the periodic ending of such strikes for the end of the problems that underlie them. For ASUU, agreements that do not address, add up or tackle the real issues and root causes of the problems, merely offering occasional palliatives to deep-seated crises, only create greater problems in the future. This happens all the time, with university teachers demanding autonomy as well as improved facilities and funding, and the FGN simultaneously claiming the right of control and complaining about financial constraints. This is my account of how industrial strike action by university academics, initially begun in 1978 by NAUT in condemnation of the government imposition of a nationwide

[33] A major exception to this limitation is CODESRIA, which continues to advance cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research on Africa.

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increase in school fees – following the 'Ali Must Go' incident – have festered and lingered over time. Today, under ASUU, such strikes have become unavoidable annual or biennial festivals. They continue to be a setback to the economy and the polity.

In June 2022, the FGN inaugurated a committee headed by Emeritus Professor Nimi Briggs to negotiate with ASUU and reach a workable agreement on the disputed issues as presented by the union. This committee was also required to review the report submitted by a renegotiation committee set up on 7 March 2022 by the Buhari administration to review the 2009 FGN–ASUU agreement. The report of the Nimi Briggs committee was presented to the Honourable Minister of Education Mallam Adamu Adamu as well as to the Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment Chris N. Ngige in July 2022. ASUU described the report as an acceptable product of collective bargaining. The FGN, however, reneged on its commitment to implement its recommendations and state officials dismissed the report as unworkable. The report was not signed by the president. In his reaction to its recommendations, President Muhammadu Buhari advised his ministers to appreciate Nigeria's dire economic situation. He warned against signing any unimplementable agreement with ASUU or with any other union. In August 2022, the FGN announced the constitution of another committee to renegotiate the Nimi Briggs committee report and the 2009 FGN–ASUU agreement in line with current national realities. This makes a total of three committees constituted in 2022 alone by the Buhari administration to look into ASUU's demands and review FGN–ASUU agreements. The newly constituted fourteen-man committee comprised pro-chancellors and vice chancellors of Nigerian public universities among other stakeholders. It was chaired by the Minister of Education Mallam Adamu Adamu. This infuriated ASUU. It also resulted in the indefinite extension of its strike.

On Friday 9 September 2022, the FGN filed a suit against ASUU at the National Industrial Court (NIC) Abuja.[34] The government requested the highest industrial court to order ASUU to call off its seven-month strike and return to work immediately while negotiations continued with its representatives. ASUU claimed that the FGN's record of insincerity, non-committal and disregard of agreements and negotiations since 1992, and in the last five years, was unconvincing. It insisted on the signing and implementation of the agreement and report of the Nimi Briggs committee as well as the payment of all outstanding academic allowances, including seven months of salaries covering the entire duration of the strike. The union presented these assurances as the conditions to be met by the FGN before calling off its most recent strike.

Listed for mention on Monday 12 September 2022 at the NIC, the suit was postponed to Friday 16 September 2022. At the resumed sitting, the FGN's counsel, James U. K. Igwe, requested the court to direct ASUU to resume work pending the determination of the case. However, the defendant, ASUU's counsel Femi Falana, opposed the request. He claimed that it would amount to a predetermination of the substantive, unheard suit. The presiding judge, Justice P. I. Hamman, agreed with Falana. He said that the strike was the substantive issue for determination and

[34] See suit number NICN/ABJ/270/2022; Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and Federal Ministry of Education versus Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Abuja, National Industrial Court, Friday 9 September 2022. The NIC is located in and sits at 11, New Bussa Close, Area 3, Garki, Abuja.

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therefore could not be resolved before its hearing. Strangely, on Wednesday 21 September 2022, the same court, the NIC, ordered ASUU to call off its strike and continue negotiations with the representatives of the FGN. In their rejection of this verdict, the leadership of the National Association of Nigerian Students condemned the court's partisanship and decried its ruling as a compromised, perverted judgment.

On Friday 23 September 2022, through Falana, ASUU filed a notice of motion at the court of appeal in the Abuja judicial division. It secured an order granting the union leave to appeal against the interlocutory ruling of the NIC. It secured an order staying execution of the NIC order delivered by Hamman in suit number NICN/ABJ/270/2022 between the FGN and the Federal Ministry of Education and ASUU on Wednesday 21 September 2022 pending the hearing and determination of the substantive appeal.[35] Despite the appeals and pressure from concerned citizens, parents, religious institutions, students and other stakeholders nationwide on the need for the FGN to enter into dialogue with ASUU, on Friday 23 September 2022 the FGN announced its intention to deregister ASUU. It argued that the urgency of the matter was not amenable to the endless back-and-forth judicial process that ASUU was wont to pursue. Showing utter disregard for the ongoing court process, on Friday 23 September 2022, through the NUC, the FGN instructed the chairs of councils, pro-chancellors and vice chancellors of all federal universities in Nigeria to reopen the universities and allow students to resume lectures and all other academic activities. ASUU, on the other hand, insisted on pursuing its case at the court of appeal and ultimately at Nigeria's Supreme Court. The union's target was the tireless implementation of the recommendations of the report of the 2022 Nimi Briggs committee.

On Friday 7 October 2022, the court of appeal enjoined ASUU to call off its eight-month strike as a condition for pursuing its ongoing case against the FGN in the appellant court. Accordingly, in order to retain its status as a law-abiding union, ASUU suspended its strike.[36] In a press statement dated Thursday 13 October 2022, ASUU's national president, Emmanuel Osodeke, announced the resumption of academic activities from 12.01 a.m. on 14 October 2022.[37] Also, following the intervention of the speaker of the House of Assembly, Femi Gbajabiamila, and other members of the House of Assembly's Committee on Education, all of whom liaised between Mallam Adamu Adamu, Chris N. Ngige and Muhammadu Buhari, the government made a number of commitments and promises to the union. The FGN dropped its grandstanding rhetoric and the two Ministers – for Education and for Labour and Employment – also toned down their political sloganeering. On these bases, academic activities resumed in all the public universities in Nigeria from Monday 17 October 2022. Despite this calling off of the strike, the FGN did not honour its declared promises. ASUU's position was that, far from being called off, the strike had only been suspended in honour of the mediation by the speaker of the House of Assembly as well

[35] See suit number NICN/ABJ/270/2022; motion and appeal number CA/ABJ/PRE/R8A/CV/99SMI/2022, Between Academic Staff Union of Universities (Appellant) and Federal Government of Nigeria & 1 Or. (Respondent).

[36] The eight-month strike action that began on Monday 14 February 2022 ended on Friday 14 October 2022.

[37] 'ASUU suspends its strike action', press release from Emmanuel Osodeke, ASUU National Secretariat, 13 October 2022.

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as in obedience to the court of appeal. It might be resumed in another couple of months if the FGN did not live up to its promises. In addition, ASUU's case in the court of appeal was still ongoing.

While the strike lasted, the FGN implemented a 'no work no pay' policy against the striking university teachers. This was followed through by the government. Furthermore, given that the strike was only suspended on 14 October 2022, the FGN argued that the university lecturers in Nigeria's public universities had worked only from 16 to 31 October. Accordingly, on 3 November, the government paid only half-month salaries to teachers nationwide. This action, together with government's refusal to pay the backlog of salaries for the seven-month period of the just-concluded strike, infuriated the teachers and informed their resort to other, subtle protest actions. For example, the local branch of ASUU at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi decided that the 2021–22 academic session would be abolished. This meant that no efforts would be made to follow up or teach students at the university whatever they ought to have learned during the eight-month strike period. ASUU at Gombe State University resolved that the results of the students' examinations would not be released to the university for processing. ASUU members at the University of Jos decided to stay at home until after the payment of their withheld salaries by the FGN. There was a nationwide consensus among the university teachers that they were not morally obliged to work for the months they were not paid by the government. Their agenda was to explore all the options available either to get the government to pay the pending backlog of salaries or to ignore the students.

Conclusion

Struggles for academic freedom and university autonomy in Africa display a characteristic element of self-contradiction. An urge to assert the independence of intellectuals and scholars from the autocratic diktats of governments conflicts fundamentally with their simultaneous dependence on the state in Africa for 100 per cent of their funding. This contradiction is expressed in the unions' opposition to governments' intention to charge high tuition fees as the only sustainable means of funding the public universities and paying university teachers globally competitive wages. ASUU's experience is illustrative of the broader struggles in the life of African universities. In Algeria, Ghana, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, academic unions continue to champion academic freedom and tuition-free education at the same time as they remain anguished by the backwardness of public universities and their material conditions.[38] The declining quality of faculties, poor infrastructure and poor

[38] Sadly, Nigerian academics are unimpressive in terms of the quality of alternative independent funding they generate for their research. After attaining tenure, performance evaluation reports (PERs) are not written. This is especially the case after full professorship. From graduate assistants to full professors, Nigerian academics are not subjected to PERs, and there is no institutional drive for achieving good results in the Research Excellence Framework. Beyond the NUC accreditation and other local scoring standards, no institutional efforts are made by these public Nigerian universities to compete at the highest levels in the world – not even by the first-generation universities or the premier university. Appointment seeking, consultancy cultures and political jobbing in and outside the university have become the ends and means of Nigerian academics – from Ibadan to Zaria – hence the dwindling fortunes of Nigeria's public universities.

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remuneration are the illustrations of this crisis. Putting a price on university education is a complex and puzzling subject. Given the diminished priority accorded to university education by many African governments, the source of the highest proportion of funding, this situation has degenerated.

The postcolonial dimensions of the crisis in Africa's education sector began in the mid-1980s. Beyond the economic crisis suffered by the populations and the impact of the macro-economic stabilization policies imposed on them, the current context is worsened by the ongoing crisis in the political economy of African states. Politics and states in twenty-first-century Africa are increasingly dominated by conservative, counterproductive elites with a marginal commitment to development. As noted, the high costs of governance, low human capital development indices,[39] poor social service delivery systems, and the imposition of excruciating taxes are some of the indications of distressed social contracts with citizens. Sixty years after independence, Africa's governing classes are now negotiating on a global stage their next forms of aid and debts.[40] In the twenty-first century, the destruction, sabotage and threats against African economies by Africans are on the rise. The agenda for African governments to create youth-based wealth and transform their demographic advantages into regional strengths for future-oriented development is considered threatening by governing elites. In Nigeria, the hallmark of the national agenda is to forestall and frustrate and strategically undermine the productive development of the potential of the youth. Hence the resolution to keep them poor through their programmed impoverishment. In a context where more than 75 per cent of Africa's population is below thirty-five years of age, these practices pose huge demographic problems.[41] Africa's governance crisis and societal failings thus have huge boomerang impacts for its higher education. The crisis in Nigeria's public universities illustrates the underlying red flags. The conclusion in some quarters, therefore, is that the future of higher education and university education in Africa belongs to the private universities.

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[39] Nigeria's record is disheartening. According to the World Bank's *World Public Expenditure Review Report* (2022), to meet Nigeria's expanding infrastructure needs, the country requires US$3 trillion by 2050. According to this report, at the current rate, it will take 300 years to provide the minimum level of infrastructure needed for Nigeria's development.

[40] According to the country's Debt Management Office, Nigeria spends 96 per cent of its revenue on servicing foreign debts. Its debt to revenue ratio rose from 83.2 per cent in 2021 to 96.3 per cent in 2022. See 'Nigeria spends over 99% revenue to service debts as inflation bites harder', *Guardian Daily Newspaper*, 18 July 2023.

[41] In 2023, Africa had an average life expectancy of 63.0 years, a population density of 49 people per square kilometre, an urban population of 44.7 per cent, and a median age of 18.8 years. On age distributions and regional and other specific state details relating to Africa's demographic profile, see 'Demographics of Africa: statistics and facts' at <https://www.statista.com/topics/7928/demographics-of-africa/#topicOverview> and 'Africa demographics' at <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/demographics-of-africa/> (both accessed 31 July 2023) and UN (2022).

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