

## The Science of Politics: Relevance to African Social Systems

Mahmudat Olawunmi Muhibbu-Din

*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Maiduguri,  
Borno State P.O. Box 1069, Nigeria*

*Contact: +234 805 431 7471, E-mail: ajoocurrent@yahoo.com*

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**ABSTRACT** The paper examines the debate on science of politics and its relevance to African social formations. The scientific approach as applied in the natural science experiments is not replicable in the study of social phenomena. A scientific study of social phenomenon is limited and not generalizable like the pure sciences such as mathematics or engineering. This work examines the theoretical debate around the possibility or otherwise of a universally valid social science, the tyranny of Western social sciences and African social reality, and the imperative of developing independent African scholarship responsive to local social realities. Historical and explorative qualitative research design is used. Findings show statistical approach and comparative methods have made significant contribution to the scientific study of social reality. Nevertheless, the nature of what is studied is rooted in cultural peculiarities, and cannot be universal. Western social science theories are Eurocentric and teleological. African scholarship needs socially relevant theories for advancing precepts, theories with cultural imprint relevant to local social realities.

### INTRODUCTION

Politics refers to the activities and behaviours of individuals and groups as these relate to the public realm. Weber views it as 'the operation of organised power or state' (Oyovbaire 1983: 240). A systematic study and analysis in order to predict state behaviour is the main concern of the discipline of political science. Ojo points out that the objects of political science are the state primarily, and the character, structures, and values. Since inception, the syllabi, pedagogy, and research in political science are structured on Western epistemology. The colonial and post-colonial African states are shaped by the West in planning, policy, concepts, models, and ideological worldviews. Challenge to Western hegemony in knowledge production and reproduction is largely limited. Ojo (1983: 56) attributes this to the failure of the trained and expert scholars to articulate and play worthy roles as advisers, social critics, and social engineers in the gigantic task of development and modernisation of Africa.

The 'bourgeois scholarship' has ramifications in theory and practice for the discipline of political science. This raises fundamental questions as regards the relevance of political science to African polity. What can political science do for one? As events unfold following political independence, there is the widening gap between the developed and the developing countries. Western social science has failed to reproduce the same phenomenal development as it

brought to the advanced world. Colonialism and all its trappings create a dichotomy in social worlds of Africa. Peter Eke categorised this as the "moral" and "amoral public." There is the increasing alienation of the elite from the masses, between urban bourgeois and proletariat on the one hand, and rural peasantry on the other hand. Poverty, corruption, and other social malaise are widespread and political science could provide neither a useful explanation nor solutions to address societal ills.

This poses serious challenge for the relevance or utility of Western social science in Africa. More importantly, the East developed not necessarily threading the Western growth trajectory. Western models of development have suffered increasing legitimacy following incessant financial crises, especially the catastrophic 2007-2008 financial crisis eroding gains of growth and development over decades. Non-Western centres of growth and prosperity spread, and relative decline of the West as the global hegemon attest to this emerging realities.

### Objectives

This work examines the theoretical debate around the possibility or otherwise of a universally valid social science, the tyranny of Western social sciences and African social reality, the imperative of developing independent African scholarship responsive to their social realities, and the way forward.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is historical and explorative qualitative research design is used. Data collection is secondary and content analysis adopted.

## OBSERVATIONS

Western knowledge claim to universal truth and ethnocentrism raises fundamental questions about epistemology in the social sciences. African scholars' pursuit of sources of western knowledge as the ideal for their society may not achieve social transformation with the bourgeoisie social science. However, a radical view of dominant knowledge, its applicability to developing social formations, and its limitations need critical review. If Africa is to develop, it must transcend the received theory, precepts, knowledge to develop its independent philosophy, and analyse its social formation from indigenous perspectives, precepts, and theory capable of grasping local knowledge production and solve society problems. A rigorous pursuit of the scientific methodology in the study of social phenomenon is constrained given socio-cultural milieu and other intervening factors that may limit generalisations and universality. More importantly, it is difficult or impossible to gauge human behaviour like experimental specimen under a specific laboratory condition as obtained in the natural sciences. Human behaviour is unpredictable and findings of social research do not easily lend themselves to generalisation or universality. Locally relevant knowledge and ideas indigenous to Africa social systems, responsive to social milieu and promotes cultural values and principles will advance African development than importing or borrowing ideas developed to solve specific problems in western society as the only possible path to growth and development.

## Theoretical Debate

The debate in political science has centred on the possibility of evolving a genuine science of politics. This implies a systematic application to political science principles evolved from natural sciences with the express aim of developing explanatory systems that transcend spatio-temporal parameter. Two contending schools of thoughts have explicated this possibility, namely the Nomothetic and the Idiographic schools of thought.

The Nomothetic school proffered that with the application of scientific methodology to the investigation of social phenomenon and political science is leeway to empiricism that provides a basis for "genuine natural science of individuals in a society differing in degrees and not in kind from well-established natural sciences" (Bassey 2000: 18). A scientific study of politics involves the use of the scientific method. It involves the use of available information to form law or generalisations and construct theories with explanatory and predictive powers about life. Emphasis is on scientific techniques, verification of findings for validity, quantification for accuracy of measurement and data collection. Systematisation in knowledge production as theory and practice interlaced (Isaak 1985: 29-30; Anifowose 1999: 12). However, some contest the application of the scientific method to the study of politics. According to Isaak (1985), these categories of scholars stick to the political philosophy that emphasizes the normative approach, prescription, as well as recommendation. The group of scholars believe that politics cannot be studied like physics.

This buttresses the Idiographic school argues, "The core of all social sciences is the acceptance of a rigid dichotomy between fact and value, and since this rigid distinction is not tenable, the whole of social sciences collapses." Thus, a perspective, "which attempts a naturalistic interpretation of the social sciences is basically emasculated as it begs, what constitute knowledge of society and politics, how this knowledge can affect the ways in which one shape their lives, and what is and what ought to be the relation of theory to practice" (Bassey 2000: 18).

The political scientists confront huge obstacles in the scientific study of politics. There are no broadly accepted categories for classifying political events as well as daunting to eliminate researchers bias in social research. The scientific procedure of systematisation, generalisation, and objectivity in the study of politics are severely constrained. Similarly, unlike in the natural sciences, human behaviour is unpredictable and cannot be subject to laboratory experiment as in the natural sciences. The field for the study of human behaviour is the society, and with many intervening variables. Thus, emphasis in political science has been *what ought to be*. This approach is more normative, and deals with history, constitution, law and legal systems (Anifowose 1999: 12-13).

The behavioural movement was at the forefront of the quest for science of politics and their key assumptions include that certain uniformities in political behaviour stated as generalisations or theories and which are capable of explaining and predicting political phenomena (Isaak 1985: 42; Anifowose 1999: 12; Enemu 1999: 20). Behaviouralism entails scientific study of politics, empirical method, and individual behaviour as a unit of analysis (Ray 2004: 6; Isaak 1985: 43-44). In addition, Behaviouralism involves inter-subjectivism, which subject scientific findings to probing by other scientists. This necessitates a unit of observation-behaviour (Isaak 1985: 44).

This is a research-then-theory strategy, which is widely accepted as an ideal strategy, called the deductive method. Bassey (2000: 20) criticises that this method has not contributed in significant ways to advance social science. It is theory-informed practice and vice versa. Research-theory approach has its limitations, as it is a one-way traffic approach, and may not be generally applicable in all research settings.

The possibilities of generating scientific theories in the social sciences constitute a major debate between divergent schools. The idiographic scholars cited a plethora of reasons why this ambition of behavioural scholar is based on a "fallacious inference from spurious premises, incomplete factorial system, measurement error, complexity of social phenomena and cultural determinacy" (Bassey 2000: 20). They argue that the quest for a naturalistic interpretation rests upon a 'native epistemology' and that what count, as true knowledge must be conversant with the culture and endogenous to the society.

Social scientists assume that there is a realm of objective facts. Facts considered as the foundation and touchstone for all higher theories. A more sophisticated understanding of epistemology, they contend has conclusively shown the inadequacy of such a 'naive view'. What one calls facts or observations are themselves 'theory laden' and shaped by one's theoretical and conceptual schemes, and knowledge production hinged on cultural imprints of origin. However, this does not render knowledge less universally valid. Importantly, the principles of objectivity and rationality are fundamental in value free truth (Harding 1997). Thus, "there are no un-interpreted or brute facts that are simply out there, unaffected by our theoretical and conceptual schemes" (Bassey 2000: 20-21). Harding

notes (1994: 5) that "observations are necessarily theory-laden; our beliefs are not immune from revision. Scientific processes, micro and macro, are not transparent. Their culturally local features contribute to and sometimes constitute our descriptive and explanations of nature's order". Harding (1994: 1) observes that the universality claim of science has been "misstated" and too "broadly stated." She adds that modern sciences used regional resources to constitute their goals, problematic hypotheses, concepts, models, metaphors, research designs and technologies, favoured languages, selection and interpretation of data, the institutional structures necessary to do such sciences, then dissemination patterns, technologies, meanings and consequences, are cognitive technical cores, not just their consequences, are locally constituted (Harding 1994: 2 in Harding 1997).

Modern science is both universal and culturally local. This condition described as universal ethnoscience (Harding 1994: 11 in Harding 1997: 37). The assumptions have generated reactions and criticism about Western ethnoscience. Its universality claim is implausible because of its cultural bias, particularities, and distinctiveness (Harding 1992: 311). Western cultural biases renders it claims to value free or universality null and void (Harding 1992: 314, 1997). Because of its distinctive enculturation with Western meanings, values and goals, and its historic and continuing symbiotic relation to Western expansion, Western science internally generates irrationality, ethnocentric "subjectivity and special interests that have been intruded into other cultures" (Harding 1992: 314-315).

Real knowledge is not the exclusive preserve of any culture. Epistemological standpoint is rooted in a specific local system, and such an epistemological approach negates scientific processes of objectivity, rationality, and cannot be universal (Harding 1997: 37-38). Thus, a behaviourist explains that science of politics in the form of law, statements (explanatory systems) are possible "if and only if spatio-temporal parameters are treated as residual of variables potentially contributing to the explanation." They add, "the relativistic assumptions underlie the model of inquiry in social science, provide only a necessary but not sufficient reason why a science of politics modelled on nature or experimental sciences is not tenable" (Bassey 2000: 21). Regardless of the range of social diversity, that naturalistic interpretation (in terms

of general theories) is possible, if the phenomena treated as components of social system, or what appears to be a pervasive property of social reality. Adam Przeworski and Henry Tenue (1970) state that the fundamental limitations against the nomothetic approach in explaining social reality is their limited applicability to social phenomenon, as they are never universal. Social milieu or cultural legacies of point of knowledge production harm cultural specificities of other social systems (Bassey 2000: 21).

The debate about the ideal of 'science of politics', modelled on natural science involves 'conceptual confusion and logical fallacies'. Przeworski and Tenue (1970: 2) assert that social phenomenon do not occur in a vacuum but are composed of mutually interacting and interdependent structures and elements in a particular geographical environment. The patterns of interaction, when stable, constitute a systemic order. Anifowose (1999: 13-14) illuminates there exists no experimental procedure that can guide the political leader. A science of politics as applied in the natural sciences is impossible in the social sciences. The laboratory environment, the defined or specific specimen is not achievable in the social settings. The field of life is the laboratory for the social scientist and human behaviour is largely unpredictable. Political science according to Lasswell, "Has not the axiomatic quality of mathematics equations. . . . the variables are human beings whose uniqueness prevents reduction to law in the scientific sense of that much abused word" (Anifowose 1999: 14). Citing Lipson, Anifowose (1999: 14) further "The word "science" in the title "political science" can be misleading" if one equates it with the 'science' in the physical science. The application of scientific principles in discovering the truth, know the facts with certain degree of precisions, establish correlation, and cause and effects can satisfy meeting the scientific criteria. A natural scientific experimental method of inquiry is severely constrained in the social sciences. In terms of it science, "what political science aspires to do is the mastery of the objectivity of inter-subjectivities, that is an absolute knowledge of the constellation of forces which determine, and are in turn determined, by human action" (William 2004: 399).

Despite the advocacy for the 'science of politics' in the 1950s and 1960s, the results have been far less than satisfactory and the rationalisation for this disparity has been less convincing. The consequences of the post-behavioural revolt have called for the

re-assessment of the original commitment to the positivistic conception of the scientific method and result in the emergence of far more diverse approaches to political inquiry' (Ayeni-Akeke 2008; Isaak 1985). Experimental methods can rarely be used in political science for practical and ethical impediments. Statistical and comparative methods have played essential logical functions of controlled investigation in the political and social sciences (Bassey 2000: 25; Lijphart 1971: 682-693). The history of inquiry in natural science reveals that no single fixed kind of intellectual product as classical positivism would have one believe that can be designated as appropriate and necessary to achieve understanding of any given phenomena (Bassey 2000: 28-29).

### Western Social Sciences and African Social Reality

In social sciences in Africa today, it is possible to identify two methodological schools namely, bourgeois and non-bourgeois methodologies (Metuge 1983: 49). The bourgeois emphasises on positivism and empiricism in order to achieve objectivity and precision. Quoting Scot Geer story, Awa (1983: 27) cited the statement of an American sociologist *interalia*, "Social science must be value free, and it cannot be tied to the chariot of any given ideology or national goal. If it is, it becomes not science but apologetics." Scientific method of enquiry and interpretation of social reality have precedence to be objective.

Metuge posits the non-bourgeois employ dialectical materialism as a method of analysis and understanding phenomenon. He states further, that four categories of intellectual are identified in African universities. The first, in Metuge's classification are African scholars conscious of their ideological persuasion yet they deny this fact and challenge others of particular ideological tendency. Typical of this group of African scholars is the application of bourgeois methodology in their research and teaching. They are contented with the African conditions and are unwilling to embark on its transformation (Metuge 1983: 51-52). These group of scholars are keen on maintaining the status quo, and are more concerned how to make it work rather than transform it.

The second group of lecturers are those not conscious of their ideology, yet they are inclined to



a particular ideological perspective. Some members of this group of scholars challenge the prevailing social order while others do not. This slight difference notwithstanding, neither of this group of scholars is interested in changing the present state of the African condition. Their ultimate goal is their professional accomplishment. Metuge notes 'careerists' that they are careless about altering prevailing social conditions in the continent. The satisfaction they derive in their job endorses the systemic order, and no need to change it. From their research and teaching methodologies, theoretical dispositions in analysing social phenomena, and tacit support for prevailing conditions, Metuge groups these lecturers as those with 'bourgeois mentality' (Metuge 1983: 52).

The third group's research methodologies and policy recommendations are better guided in classifying them. This group of lecturers are best understood not by the ideological disposition they profess but their research work and the implication for altering or preserving the status quo. More often than not, their policy recommendations contradict theoretical formulations and data in their research. These groups of scholars depend on what suit best their interest. The variegated nature of this group is such that they permit their classification into two sub-categories as academic professionals, and others as bourgeois aspirants. They are all passengers in the academic field. Metuge (1983: 53) calls them "intellectual opportunists."

The last group are professionals who identify with an ideological persuasion, are conscious of it and do not hide it. They are dialectical materialists by both research and practice. They analyse the systemic order and bring forth the inherent contradiction in it and the necessity of transforming it to free the continent from the shackles of imperialism and exploitation. They are "preoccupied with distinguishing appearances from realities, symptoms from diseases, and forms from substances." This group of scholars explicate the depth of exploitation and domination of the continent and the implication for ordinary people. Their bourgeois colleagues accused these scholars of being 'rhetorical and ideological'. Metuge argued, "bourgeois science gave rise to bourgeois ideology in the same way that dialectical materialism gave rise to the ideology of proletariat, and that each ideology in turn serves its own science" (Metuge 1983: 53).

The Marxist Political Economy (MPE) created by non-bourgeoisie scholars or radical African

political scientists was not only critical of the Western political science and their hegemonic projects in Africa, but also, lambaste political leaders failure and their decline into personal rule, authoritarianism and dictatorship. They stimulated intellectual debates across ideological divides among scholars in the continent. These African scholars mobilised within and across the African continent, social forces against imperialism, and its collaborators (Adele 2004: 415).

Although, the behavioural revolution, and the attendant hegemony in knowledge production, cultural imperialism shaped the subject matter of African political science. The behavioural revolution undermines the normative political philosophy or what ought to be an aspect of politics over the process or empirical models and methodological approaches such as system theory. The consequences of this development especially in Anglophone Africa have been the neglect of African political philosophy in particular and political philosophy in general (Adele 2004: 414). The relegation of African political theory and the triumph of orthodox modernisation paradigm in the study of African political science have been subject to criticism by the radical approaches of Marxist political economy. MPE faults the modernisation theory on social realities and the manifestations for societies, the dichotomy between the haves and have-nots, the capitalist and the proletariats. Intellectual domination of the bourgeoisie political economy distorted the correct reading of the historical past, and labelled Africans as politically backward attributed to culture, informal economy, and race, ethnic, or primordial elements. The Eurocentric explanations and ethnocentrism are teleological. The MPE faults the assumptions of the Bourgeoisie Political Economy but locate the sources of backwardness in the exploitation, imperialism, colonialism, and pillage of the developing economies.

## DISCUSSION

The collapse of the bipolar wall and the integration of communist nations into global capitalism witnessed the triumph of the neoliberal ideology. This presumptuously accelerates the bourgeois ideology. Western institutions' research agenda and funding propagate Western ideas and ideals. African social researchers rely on Western knowledge and resources for research

and practice. Africans depend on conceived models, ideas, theories, and paradigm supply by Western social science. Layele (1991: 14) observes, despite the abundant literature their proponents in the field cannot boast of any serious contribution to the science, which the rest of the world rushes to borrow. Concepts, models, paradigms, and theories of their studies borrowed from Western literature and all they do is “to fuss around the applicability of these readymade products of Western knowledge to our society.” The experts have failed to fathom the validity of the hypotheses on which these theories or concepts relied, and just assume their rationality as evangelical truths, and in most cases, ignorant of these hypotheses and lack knowledge of their practical implications (Layele 1991). According to Harding (1994: 7), “modern science has produced systematic knowledge, it also produces systematic ignorance.” Western science supports knowledge production and practices that deepen inequality and social polarisation. More importantly, imposition of Western models through international financial agencies is not only imperialistic but renders development pathologically missed in the Third World (Shiva 1989 in Harding 1992: 314).

The distinctive patterns of knowledge and ignorance characteristic of modern sciences are in significant part products of both the needs of and resources provided by European expansion. The cognitive successes of modern sciences are importantly due to, and in their representations of nature bear the distinctive historical marks of European expansion (Harding 1997: 47).

European expansion facilitated Western knowledge hegemony. They control knowledge production, and science problem solving enhances their interests. Thus the benefit of scientific advances in any field of human endeavour was unevenly distributed privileging the haves (West) and the cost is shouldered by the less privileged in the south and third world (Harding 1997: 47).

In additions, modern science claims that value neutrality is false and a pretence espousing specific cultural value. “Claims for modern sciences” (value-neutral, internally achieved) universality and objectivity are “a politics of disvaluing local concerns and knowledge and legitimating outside experts” (Harding 1997: 48). Layele notes this places Africa scholars in an ‘international division

of labour’ in knowledge production. Africans’ responsibility is to provide the raw data for empirical studies that serves Western knowledge interests. The condition aggravated by what Harding refers to as African weak educational institutions and resources, confines African scholars to suppliers of empirical data to research agenda and theory by Western scholars. Also,

*The more you are conversant with such products, the more knowledgeable you are. Our writings are replete with lengthy quotations and references from the Western literatures at buttressing any argument we try to make. The gamut of intellectual materials is nothing but a compendium of the basic principles represented as universally valid and acceptable without adequate attention to the functioning of the institutions (Layele 1991: 15-16).*

The critical problem is that the principle taught could not explain the failure of the system. Knowledge production does not have any bearing with peculiarities of the environment much less problem solving oriented. Complacency with Western research agenda blindfolds the African researchers to the weak institutions and dysfunction in the social system. Layele (1991: 15) points out the limitation in African intellectual resources to understand the analytical frameworks constraints, and the description and explanation effectiveness. This remained unseparated from the facts that those who control knowledge production have hegemony on the concepts, framework for analysis, and language among others. More importantly, they raise serious problems about relevance of African scholarship and calls for the need to subvert intellectual imperialism of Western scholars and the task of African researchers to evolve its own explanatory and prescriptive potentials, which is impossible without evolving its own theory (Layele 1991: 15).

The bourgeois intellectuals are not interested in changing the social reality but keen on perpetuating it by employing scientific methodologies and utilise theories that muddle the understanding of African reality. Onimode (1988) posits that the dominant orthodox paradigm of conception of reality is incongruous with observable reality. Bourgeois ideology props imperialism and foists an irrelevant capitalist model of development and growth strategies in Africa (Bassey 2000: 33-34). Africa’s hapless dependence on bourgeois social science is a consequence of persistent colonial

mentality in scientific endeavours, and foreign intellectual domination in teaching, curricula, publication, and research funding. Preferences of the imperialists shape teaching and research rather than the social, economic, and political priorities, needs, aspirations and goals of poor societies. This is an additional source of praxiological failure of bourgeois social science in Africa (Bassey 2000: 34). Its fundamental aim is to perpetuate the neo-colonial character of African states. They are interested in consolidating class domination and exploitation in Africa. Western institutions continue to be source of policy guide, and adviser and expatriates meddle in development projects (Metuge 1983: 54; Ake 1996). Ake (1979: 99-100) construe Western social science as imperialism because Third World countries continue to be a source of profit to the advanced capitalist economy and capitalist rationality requires control over sources of income. Ake adds, "Western scholarship is an important tool for controlling third world perceptions of their world and eventually third world behaviour." Ake (1979: 70) observes, "The main interest of political science is the establishment and maintenance of domination of the few over the many." Politics is the domination of many by the few and the central problem of political science is maintaining the existence and effectiveness of political system, the instrument of domination (Ake 1979: 72).

From Western paradigms, models, concepts and perspectives, the institutional framework, culture of the people perceived as retrogressive, "problematic rather than the process of development itself... By failing to question the development process and the development goal, the development paradigm undermines the scientific value of the concept of development and produces only tautologies and circularities" (Ake 1996: 15). Development is a self-driven enterprise that requires confidence and knowledge of who the people are, where they are coming from and where they are going (Ake 1996: 16).

The revolutionary African political scientists are concerned with how to turn Political Science into an instrument for the abolition of domination and exploitation in Africa (Metuge 1983: 54). This type of political science depends on the kind of Africa one wants. Metuge (1983: 54) notes if one wants to keep the countries as neo-colonies and to perpetuate exploitation and domination then one should teach

and encourage bourgeois political science. If on the other hand, one wants to change African countries from neo-colonies to independent and self-reliant nations, if one wants to abolish class domination and exploitation in Africa, then one cannot teach bourgeois political science for its poverty in changing reality have been amply demonstrated both theoretically and empirically. To change the reality of Africa, one must employ the dialectical materialism in teaching Political Science (Metuge 1983: 54). Nonetheless, Ojo (1983: 60) warns against indoctrination. Advancing socialism as the only viable ideology for Africa may be problematic. "The very limitation of its tool and the fact that it deals with real world of fallible and perverse human beings, cannot prescribe authoritatively and with certainty ethical goals for society." No social science can be value neutral. Ojo (1983: 59) suggests evolving an African political science. Nevertheless, Western scholars have questioned this narrow vision and offered new insights that African Political Scientists have adumbrated and now wish to expropriate as 'distinctive' African Political Science.

The intellectual acuity of great philosophers of the past influenced their thinking and explanations of social reality. Industrial revolution and the attendant capitalism influenced epistemology standpoint that favours modernisation theorisation of social systems. Colonial experiences in African nations are the aftermath of the capitalist development. The postcolonial social realities for developing nations like Africa have far more reaching impact.

Globalisation and its attendant revolution in information communication technology, winners and losers dichotomy, rich and poor segregation, more significantly the consequences of the financial crisis on developed and developing regions necessitate evolution of African political science and social science relevant to the emerging social realities. Gradual shift towards artificial intelligence and technological advancement among nations, emerging powers all dictate the important of looking inward, develop theories relevance to the social systems rather than copying or imitating social systems, models, paradigms developed and or successful elsewhere. An indigenous social science more germane to the historical, cultural, ethical, and moral principles and useful for social progress is a desideratum.

African political science is bound by two identities at the local and the international domain. The context, identity, subject matter, methodology, its practice and priority of its scholars influenced by endogenous mix of cultural and historical, national and regional fixations, mediated as well as exogenous factors of globalisation or transnational nature of knowledge industry. Evolution of a distinct African political science, embedded in its specificities and peculiarities, enable scholars to develop an independent and self-governing branch of knowledge capable of contributing to global political science, with a niche, in universal epistemological growth (Adele 2004: 409-410).

Nonetheless, as a discipline, apart from specificities and peculiarities of social phenomenon, certain questions are fundamental to the operational dynamics of state. Contextual factors, cultural and historical influences are endemic and inseparable from social contextual analysis, yet, increasingly interdependent nature of the world nations more so in the era of globalisation, intensify critical questions relevant to the governing of transnational relations, multilateral ties and international peaceful co-existence and stability (Adele 2004).

The vital role of political science to respond to changes in society or the world gives its essence. The example given is that of globalisation breaking barriers along world order, territories, and regions, cultural, economic, and social barriers. Thus it is important for evolution of a discipline that cut across different disciplines or inter-disciplinary, to respond to the multitude of problems. Thus, African political science needs to develop a multi-disciplinary approach to address societal malaise (William 2004: 400). Epistemology built on ethical principles aimed to liberate and salvage the polity from patrimonialism or neo-patrimonialism and probable collapse or ruin in the system (William 2004: 405-406).

### CONCLUSION

The debates on the science of politics and its importance for the evolution of a universally value free science is interrogated. Nomothetic school explanation of science of politics is constrained and hampered by cultural specificities of knowledge production. Scientific principles of rationality and objectivity rooted in conceptual schemes, precepts, and institution, language of those who control knowledge production undermines universality. The

Idiographic School emphasises that the science of politics is impossible, as human behaviour cannot be subjected to fixation or rigidity of the laboratory environment and the intervening variables. Natural scientific experimental procedure is severely limited in the social sciences.

Western social science's claims to universality, objectivity, and rationality have been criticised. Apart from its ethnocentrism, the local context of knowledge production influences its concepts, theory, and language. Western expansionism cannot be dissociated from its hegemony in knowledge production and is not culturally neutral. Thus, science of politics is constrained by social milieu within which it occurs. More critically, epistemology imbued with exogenous values and local peculiarities have failed to transform African polity.

Western epistemology dominated social science research and knowledge dissemination. African scholars are uncritical and extol the West path of development and growth. This ensures the bourgeois scholarship domination and the utility of political science to Africa polity is questionable. The Asian model of development emphasises or reiterates the indigenous values and cultural imprints on development, growth, and modernisation.

African political science is important in developing an epistemology that explains worldview from the African social context. The society is the laboratory of the social scientists. Thus evolving an African political science is necessary for liberation and progress of the social science in Africa. African dependence on bourgeoisie ideology has a critical link with neo-colonialism and inability of the continent to develop. Research agenda, curricula and teachings, as well as the political, economic, and social priorities of society shaped by bourgeoisie preferences are less relevant to African transformation.

Until African scholars develop social science theories relevant to African social reality, Political Science and the Social Science in general will remain within the epistemology of Western imperialism. The ever-evolving universal realities dictate that Africans develop a social science that explains social reality from African worldview.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative for African scholars to overcome the intellectual laziness that makes one embrace the principles of Western knowledge as universal and



valid. It is important to question the assumption on which principles of Western science stand. Through such intellectual rigor, new assumption, new concepts, models, and theories will emerge that are not only relevant to the problems but also assist in reviewing Western social science. Western social scientists have better funding and better access to resources for research, and publishing outlets. Many research programmes in African institutions flow from the research priorities of Western funders and dominant policy institutions. It is imperative for African government to rediscover African philosophy of governance, in setting agenda for growth, development, and pedagogy. This stresses the urgency for African states to invest heavily in research and development to advance epistemology rooted in African cultural characteristics. African philosophy will translate into moral values and principles as well as it checks and balances and prioritisation of African-centeredness will underpin African development. Thus, decolonisation of social science remains a major challenge for social science in Africa. This necessitates the interrogation and critique of exogenous paradigms and the exploration of new paradigms rooted in scientific principles of objectivity, rationality, and validity for the purpose of knowledge production relevant for positive social transformation.

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