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Ethical Implications of Politics in English Speaking West African Countries: The Need for a Greater Ethical Concern

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ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES: 
THE NEED FOR A GREATER ETHICAL CONCERN

by

Adeyinka Christopher Thompson

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Philosophy

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1991

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ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES: 
The Need for a Greater Ethical Concern

Adeyinka Christopher Thompson, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 1991

This thesis evaluates the ethical implications of policies adopted by politicians in three West African countries: Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The evaluation focuses on the policies African politicians adopt in their bid to solve two problems facing Africa: corruption, and achieving a democracy.

The evaluation relates selected policies of some African politicians to certain ethical theories propounded by various philosophers. Such questions as the respect politicians show for human life or dignity; the way they manipulate people, using them solely as a means to an end; secrecy in government; and whether their policies are meant for the general good or private interest are considered. The conclusion identifies ethical values to be embraced by African politicians.
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Adeyinka Christopher Thompson
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Ethical implications of politics in English speaking West African countries: The need for a greater ethical concern

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Western Michigan University, 1991
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DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most third world countries are experiencing or have at one time experienced serious political problems. All of these countries have their political ideals which they strive to achieve. Some of them are successful in their efforts to approximate their ideals and some are not. Most of the states in Africa belong to the latter category. These states in Africa have therefore had their share of political problems. Two main problems faced by African countries are the realization of a democratic system and governmental corruption. One of the reasons, I believe, why African countries are facing these problems is due to a decline in the concern African politicians have to maintain ethical standards. As would be expected, this decline in ethical standards has affected most of the other institutions in African society. In this thesis, it is my intention to give an ethical analysis of some of the policies African politicians adopt which involve or influence these two main problems. I shall conclude by recommending some ethical values that ought to be embraced by African politicians to help ameliorate the situation.

A large percentage of African states achieved their independence from colonial rule within the last ten or twenty years. Independence, for many of them, did not come easily but only after a revolutionary struggle. Independence brought about a great change in these states, and since then the leaders of these states have been trying, in their own way, to construct political systems which they believe to be suitable for their people. This, of course, has not been easy. The fact that all African states are faced with or have at one time been faced with serious political problems demonstrates this.
A majority of these states has had visions of achieving a democracy. However, their concept of democracy is quite different from that of the western and communist variants. It cannot be described in the terms of either a western liberal-democracy or the democracy formulated by Marx and Lenin. The difference between the democracy of the third world and the other two—i.e. the western and communist variants—will be dealt with in Chapter II. The reasons why there is such a difference and its implications will also be discussed. This discussion will, I hope, bear witness to the fact that African politicians have failed to understand the difference between the western liberal concept and the third world concept. Consequently, their efforts to arbitrarily apply elements of both concepts to their situation have resulted only in chaos. This may be a contributing factor to their problems. Moreover, this discussion will help us understand the extent to which African politicians have strayed from the ideal, that is, a liberal democracy.

Politics constitutes an integral part of our lives, whether we decide to play an active role in it or not. Since ethics and politics go hand in hand, the policies adopted by politicians are sure to influence the ethical orientation of the people affected by these policies. It is my intention, in Chapter III, to discuss the ethical implications of African politics. I shall give examples of different policies adopted by politicians in the various countries. My concern will be with the policies they implement in their bid to either foster their career or bring about revolutionary changes towards a democracy. Some of their policies, we shall see, may be lax and as a result allow corruption to thrive, such as Siaka Stevens' Sierra Leone regime. Some, on the other hand, may be too rash and extreme, such as the coups in Ghana and Liberia. I will evaluate these policies by relating them to various ethical theories propounded by various philosophers. With the help of these theories I shall evaluate the ethicality of these policies.
In Chapter III I will also examine issues and questions such as: the respect politicians show for human life or dignity; the way they manipulate people, using them solely as a means to an end; secrecy in government (whether politicians give their subjects significant choice in the policies they adopt, or in other words, whether they seek informed consent from people); and whether their policies are meant for the general good or private interest.

Knowledge of the atrocities committed by many African governments will, I hope, show that there is a need for a greater ethical awareness not only amongst African politicians but also amongst a great number of the people. Africa being such a large continent, I am constrained by time as well as scope of material to limit my study to just three West African states: Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. I may, however, in my discussions refer to other African states to highlight a point. Be that as it may, I believe that much of what will be discussed here would be applicable in some way to other African states.

Chapter III will be divided into three parts which deal with issues in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia, respectively. In the fourth chapter, or conclusion, I propose the ethical values that should be embraced. Some of the values I shall mention are: collectivity, respect and concern for subjects, and also honest communication and accountability between government officials.
CHAPTER II

AN OVERVIEW OF DEMOCRACY

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, many of the newly-independent African states have had visions of achieving a democracy. Their concept of democracy, as will be seen later, is quite different from that of the western or communist concepts of democracy. An outline of these two latter concepts will help us get a better understanding of the third world concept of democracy. Consequently, I will start this discussion with a delineation of liberal democracy (the western concept) and non-liberal democracy (the communist concept). I shall then proceed to discuss the Third World's (in this case Africa) concept of democracy and its difference from the other two concepts. Proceeding with the discussion, I shall also point out the factors contributing to this difference and also what effect this difference has on the African states' efforts to achieve democracy and modernization. It must, however, be noted that though these concepts of democracy are different, they all share, according to Macpherson, an underlying theme or ultimate goal: "to provide the conditions for the full and free development of the essential human capacities of all the members of the society." ¹

Macpherson gives a vivid description of these various democracies.² Therefore, much of my discussion on democracies will be based on his account. According to Macpherson, the notion of democracy in the western world has gone through some changes. At its inception, democracy was considered to be a "class affair."³ It meant rule by the common people or plebeians. With such a conception of democracy it was the lowest and largest class that had a say in government. This idea of democracy was obviously not too popular amongst the educated and elite.
The cogency of their claim to be democratic lies in the fact that the liberal democracies of today were liberal first and democratic later. This first strong basis of liberalism was necessary for the claims of democracy to be admitted in the present liberal-democracies. In other words, Macpherson says, "before democracy came in the western world there came the society and the politics of choice, the society and politics of competition, the society and politics of the market." In the liberal state both the society and government were organized on a principle of freedom of choice. In this society, the old ideas of belonging to ranks or orders or communities gave way to the idea that man was an individual with freedom to choose and make his own decisions. Individuals were free to make choices about their relations with others, what services to offer and also what to do with their income. This system of free choices was the market economy, and with it came its drawbacks.

With this system of individual choices came a great deal of inequality. As is characteristic of a capitalist market society, some people accumulated capital and some did not. This created a situation of inequality of freedom of choice. The choices of those without much capital were limited. Thus, though all men were free some were more free than others. Despite this drawback the new found freedom was believed to be worthwhile because of the increase in productivity. As a result, the new system of freedom was established which resulted in the creation of the liberal individualist society. Amidst this inequality we may conclude that there was nothing democratic about this society, yet one could say it was liberal. What was needed, according to Macpherson, was a system of government that was non-arbitrary or responsible, a society with "the kind of laws and regulations, and tax structure, that would make the market society work."5. In an effort to achieve this, the present western democratic states established between the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries "a system whereby the government was put in a sort of market situation."6 The government became the supplier of certain political goods. These political goods included not only the regulation of law and order, but also the provision of state services such as defense, education, sanitation, and industrial aid.

Though the question of what was needed to make the liberal society feasible was settled, there still remained another question: How was the demand for a government that was responsive to the people's needs to bring about its supply? How could one structure the government so as to make it responsive to the choices of the governed? The only answer was to institute a system of elections, whereby those in government were subject to periodic elections, with a choice of candidates and parties. To make this political choice work other liberties were needed. There had to be freedom to form political parties and pressure groups, and also freedom of speech and publication. With all these liberties came the creation of what Macpherson calls the liberal state. For him, "Its essence was the system of alternate or multiple parties whereby government could be held responsible to different sections of the class or classes that had a political voice."7 Macpherson however cautions that this responsible party system was still not necessarily democratic. This comes as no surprise because the job of the liberal state was to maintain and promote the liberal society, which cannot be described as a necessarily democratic or equal society.

The market society did later produce pressures for democracy. The move towards a democracy was almost inevitable. Those without a vote realized that they had no say in the political market. Without a say, they had no political purchasing power and without political purchasing power their interests were not consulted. Realizing this, those without a voice began to agitate for a vote for themselves. There was no way their demands could be rejected because the
liberal society had always justified itself as providing equal individual rights and equality of opportunity. This finally brought about the introduction of the democratic franchise into the liberal state. Obviously, democracy did not come easily or quickly. In most of the liberal-democratic states of today it was brought about after years of agitation and organization.

We thus see that democracy came as a later addition to the competitive market society and the liberal state. By the time of its introduction it was no longer opposed to the liberal society and the liberal state. It had undergone a change from being a threat to the liberal state to becoming a fulfillment of the liberal state. It was no longer, in Macpherson's view, "an attempt by the lower class to overthrow the liberal state or the competitive market economy; it was an attempt by the lower class to take their fully and fairly competitive place within those institutions and that system of society." Thus, by adding democracy to the liberal state, provision was made to allow "constitutional channels for popular pressures, pressures to which governments would have had to yield in about the same measure any way, merely to obtain public order and avoid revolution." By admitting the masses into the competitive party system, the liberal state "opened the competitive political system to all individuals who had been created by the competitive market society."

I will now turn my attention from western liberal-democracies to the non-liberal democracies. I shall start the discussion by taking a look at the communist variant and then proceed to the underdeveloped or third world variant. Like the western concept of democracy, the concept of democracy in the non-liberal countries also changed. It had a somewhat similar meaning to the original meaning of democracy discussed earlier, i.e., its being a class affair. Its original meaning of being rule by or in the interest of the formerly oppressed people was the same.
meaning it had for the revolutionary movements of both the present Soviet countries and the newly-independent states of Africa. However, the meaning of democracy, according to Macpherson, has been transformed in the non-liberal countries from "a primarily class concept to a humanistic concept transcending class."11

The communist theory of democracy goes way back to the work of Karl Marx. According to Macpherson, there are two things about it that should be noted.12 First, it was from the start a highly moralistic theory. Though humanity had been unable to realize its full nature, Marx strongly believed that humanity is capable of doing so. According to Marx, man is by nature a creative being. What was needed was the appropriate conditions that would relinquish the human race from its condemnation to compulsive labor. With the advent of capitalism, productivity was increased to such a level that it was no longer necessary for man to be condemned to compulsive labor. Before this change, a relatively oppressive ruling class was needed for man to organize his labor. Fortunately, with man's release from compulsive labor, the ruling class was no longer necessary and the realization of mankind's fully human nature was on the horizon.13 This was Marx's humanistic vision, which brings us to the second thing we must note.

For Marx, the capitalistic society was highly class-divided. Class exploitation was part and parcel of the capitalist system. So, to rid society of such a system in which one class exploited another, capitalism had to go. Only the productive powers developed by capitalism must be kept. This meant that the capitalist state must be overthrown, and the only agent for this would be the exploited working-class, the politically conscious proletariat. In Macpherson's words, Marx argues that they would have to "transform all the power relations of the capitalist system, substituting social ownership and control of production for private capitalist ownership and control."14 Dictatorship of the proletariat would thus replace...
dictatorship of the capitalists. This overthrow was to last as long as was necessary to transform the society from capitalist to socialist. For Marx, this period of proletarian rule was a democracy.

Democracy, according to Marx's theory, was to be a class state. By abolishing capitalism the class state would be able to utilize the productive powers of the whole society to provide for the whole society. This class state would, however, not be permanent. It would only be a step towards a classless society, i.e., a state with no opposed classes. The rule of the working class would obviously be democratic because it will be comprised of rule by the majority of the population. Moreover, its purpose would be the humanization of the whole society.

Unfortunately, as we know today, things did not work out exactly as Marx had planned. His theory was most suited for a country with a high productive level and a potential to be industrially advanced. Lenin, who led the Russian revolution in 1917, had his own impressions about the capabilities of the Russian working class. He believed that they were only capable of what he called a trade-union consciousness. As a result, he argued that the proletarian revolution was to be conducted by what he called a vanguard, "a fully class-conscious minority." If and when they were successful in the revolution they could bring the rest of the working-class with them. When the Soviet state started it was one step behind Marx's concept of democracy. Instead of the material and productive basis being present at the time of the revolution, it still had to be created. So, the Soviet state still had to work towards a high-productive classless society and at the same time bridge the gap between the vanguard state and the full proletarian democracy.

The question may now be asked, "Can a vanguard state be called democratic?" Macpherson answers by giving two senses in which democracy can be interpreted: in the narrow sense and in the broader sense. In the narrow sense—
that is, a system of choosing and authorizing governments—a vanguard state cannot be called democratic. In the broad sense, democracy is more than a system of government; it contains an ideal of human equality, an equality such that no one class is able to dominate the other. If there are no other options open to achieve this kind of society but through a vanguard state, then the vanguard state by remaining true to its purpose can be called democratic. Unfortunately, the communist states have claimed to be democratic in both senses. This has made things difficult for them. Their claim to be democratic in the narrow sense would have been easier to believe if they had first claimed to be democratic in the broader sense like the west. By reaching a certain point in their efforts to be democratic in the broader sense, their claim to be democratic in the narrow sense would have been more convincing.

With the above presentation of these two different concepts of democracy, I would now like to turn to the examination of the underdeveloped or Third World concept of democracy. Though I may use the general phrase “Third World,” I am basically referring to Africa.

As mentioned earlier, the notion of democracy that has emerged in the underdeveloped countries is quite different from the other two we previously examined. Macpherson claims that it is newer than the other two, yet, at the same time, it is in some sense older than both. He argues that this is so because it "seems to go directly back to the old notion of democracy, which predates Marx and predates the liberal state, the notion of democracy as rule by and for the oppressed people." He believes that it comes as no surprise that the underdeveloped countries "resorted to a concept of democracy that goes back to a simpler pre-industrial society." He states that the reason for this is because the
underdeveloped countries had a "simpler culture than those who had dominated them."18

According to Macpherson, the leaders of the third world or Africa have consciously selected the elements in both theories (liberal and Marxist) that seem to be applicable to the problem, both current and future of their people. As a result of this, it would be expedient for us to look at what they have rejected and accepted and also why, so as to get a full grasp of the underdeveloped concept.

Macpherson claims that the underdeveloped countries have rejected most of the main features of liberal-democracy.19 This he believes is not surprising because the competitive market society which is the backbone of liberal ideas and the liberal state is not familiar or natural to the peoples of the underdeveloped world. As much as they knew the market society, it was in their view, something foreign that was imposed on them. Their culture was generally not a competitive one. Accumulation of wealth and individual gain were not their higher values. Equality and community (that is, traditionalism) were more highly valued as opposed to inequality and individualism (that is, modernism) respectively. The notion of political competition was also just as foreign to Africa as the notion of economic competition was.

I tend to agree with the above point made by Macpherson. However, I would like to add a word of caution. One must not be led to believe that western liberal-democracy failed to have an impact on African politicians. Admittedly, they rejected many of its main features but I believe that this rejection was only in their minds, not in their actions. The influence of liberal-democracy still lived on. As a result, many African politicians in developing political systems tried to fashion their systems according to the western liberal-concept, and at the same time make it applicable to the African situation. I shall later argue that doing this in an arbitrary
way would only result in chaos and confusion. However, at this juncture, I would like to digress a little bit and take a look at traditional African society and politics, so as to put these claims we are making about traditional African society in a better perspective.

Robert S. Jordan, in his description of pre-colonial constitutionalism, claims that the lives of traditional West African societies were guided by unwritten constitutions. To provide the stability needed for a society's survival, these West African societies relied considerably on their customs and conventions. Since there was a very thin line between the religious and the secular, the actions and security of kings, chiefs and village headmen were guided by the dictates of these customs and conventions. There were two main types of political systems in these traditional societies: centralized kingdoms or chiefdoms and uncentralized communities. Unlike the former, the latter had no single principal focus of authority. Uncentralized communities had communal forms of government, that is, shared or participative government. They were not, according to Jordan, "governed by a hierarchical order of chiefs, but by egalitarian councils." Since customs and conventions play such an important part in West African political systems, an examination of them in more detail would be very useful.

It was a custom in pre-colonial political systems to practice a consensus form of democracy. Whenever a major policy was to be adopted, the representatives of the people had to receive the consent of the people before any decisions were made. Tribal life was, in a sense, classless. Since leaders were only representatives of lineages, villages or clans, it was quite unlikely for them to be alienated from those who put them in positions of authority. Social divisions in traditional society were therefore not determined by differences in economic interests. Also, pre-colonial constitutionalism was based on a system of checks and
balances which ensured that those in positions of power did not misuse their authority. The fact that all the inhabitants of the chiefdom would hear about this misconduct also acted as a check. This helped promote an egalitarian society. According to Jordan, even in centralized governments where the king was the "source of authority, authority was decentralized and delegated to fief-holders whose political relations with the king also gave them power." Endorsing this point, Pearl T. Robinson states that, "although kingship signified centralized political authority, constitutional checks and dual-sex authority arrangements guarded against unlimited power."  

Another way centralized kingdoms put a check on authoritarianism was by giving the people power to remove a chief. For example, among the Akan chiefs were often times destooled. That is, power was taken from the chiefs. All these features in English-speaking West African pre-colonial constitutionalism arose out of one common element which R. Jordan calls "the 'all-inclusive harmony' of tribal life." These societies were dedicated to communal harmony.

With the advent of missionaries and colonialism this communal system was left in complete disarray. The religion of the missionaries stressed individual salvation which obviously clashed with the traditional African's complete identification with his community. Education, being a requirement for advancement in the colonial service, was based on competition and individual initiative instead of traditional ties. Also, with colonialism came a more developed commercial system, in addition to a money economy. "Western trade" in Jordan's opinion, "brought with it the profit motive, which is the basic feature of individualism, and the idea that competition could lead to a more prosperous life."  

With the above historical background it comes as no surprise that many African states rejected the main features of liberal-democracy. Since, for some of
them, traditional society was basically a communal and equal system, the introduction of an individualist and competitive society would obviously be rejected. Thus, in adopting a democratic system these African states would surely reject those elements of liberal-democracy that challenge their traditional society.

Since, in Macpherson's view, African states have rejected most of the main features of liberal-democracy, I would like to continue my discussion by taking a look at the factors he outlines that have deterred or not encouraged progress toward a liberal-democracy after independence. First, the struggle for independence greatly favored the dominance of a single party or mass movement. This was then carried on into the post-independence period as a one party system. The furtherance of this system was even more likely because the people united against foreign rule were not sharply class-divided amongst themselves. Also, seeing that the new underdeveloped nations had to modernize and raise their productivity, achieving this required strong leadership which was provided by the one party system. This, Macpherson notes, does not mean that modernization could not be achieved by a liberal competitive party system, but it is more natural for it to be done by a one party system that has already shown the capacity to rally the support of the people. The people are more likely to support their leader or party in a major task that meets their approval. However, the contrary may happen. If the task ahead is too difficult, it may elicit opposition to the dominant party, which may sometimes hinder the chances of nationhood. This opposition may come from different sections of the population. It may come from those who are not too happy about the drive towards modernization. Or it may come from those who support the general purpose but who reject it because of tribal, religious or language differences. Consequently, they feel reluctant to support the dominant party.
I strongly believe that racial and ethnic differences or tensions are a great deterrent to political and economic progress in contemporary African states. People give support or oppose a cause for the wrong reasons—ethnic affiliation—instead of for the good of the society. Thus, people sometimes refrain from supporting a promising party or candidate just because of ethnic differences. Doing so may unnecessarily deter progress. Also, I mentioned earlier that there was a clash between the two cultures with the introduction of colonialism. The results of this may also hinder progress towards a liberal-democratic society. Robinson captures the nature of this cultural clash in these words:

Christianity and colonial rule brought new conflicts to African society. Although earlier times were far from idyllic, in the past Africans traditionally had had numerous means of dealing with sociopolitical conflict. Because the changing realities of power have blurred the lines of authority, today we find that struggles over who is in charge and what ought to be done can erupt in communal violence or provoke a national crisis.... Most present day conflicts, however, stem from the difficulty of state building, a process which is complicated by the competing claims of authority and new forms of stratification introduced under European hegemony.27

Thus, colonialism and the influences that resulted from it brought about much confusion. Returning to my earlier point, I believe that African leaders caught between their traditional ties and their desire to become westernized at the same time become confused. The arbitrary combination of traditional political systems and western political systems only results in chaos. I therefore advise that a systematic and conscious appraisal of both systems be undertaken; the adoption of those elements that are of value and compatible, would do well for Africa. At the moment, African leaders have only tried to adopt both systems in an irregular manner. African political systems may therefore be described as anything but liberal democracies.

Though the countries of the underdeveloped world cannot claim to be liberal democracies, I would now like to examine the cogency of their claims to be
democratic. Based on the evidence of our earlier discussion of traditional political systems, we can conclude that pre-colonial societies, in their efforts to maintain an egalitarian system of government, were democratic to an extent. To buttress this point I would give a quotation from Jordan's book. He states:

People in pre-colonial Africa were acquainted with the pure type of democracy. As an observer said, 'The African is fully entitled to insist that his method of 'palaver', by which unanimous opinion is arrived at after a long and patient discussion is just as democratic as, if not more democratic than, the counting of heads and making the decision depend on a majority opinion.'

He gives an example of pure democracy from the Asante of Ghana:

All citizens were summoned to the market place to make political decisions. Representative democracy evolved when the community became too large for everyone to share in all governmental decisions. This happened in traditional West African society as in other parts of the world.

Be that as it may, this pure form of democracy may not be still practiced in contemporary African states.

Macpherson asserts that the underdeveloped countries still claim to be democratic and this claim rests on the proposition that there is a general will in these countries which expresses itself mainly through a single party. Can the expression of this will through a single party be called democratic in the strict or narrow sense? He responds to this by saying that three conditions need to be fulfilled before a single party can be called democratic. They are: (1) there must be complete intra-party democracy, (2) party membership must be open, and (3) the price of participation in the party must not be too strenuous a degree of activity than the average person is prepared to contribute. Macpherson further asserts that these conditions seem, on the whole, to be met by the new underdeveloped nations, more than in the communist countries. He justifies his assertion by saying that the vanguard in these new states was generally not separated from the masses as it was in the communist revolutions. In the former, the vanguard was distinguished largely by degree of
political consciousness, whereas in the latter it was separated by class-consciousness. Being only one remove from the mass of the peasantry, the vanguard of the new states is in a better position to represent the general will of the people more fully.

I have some reservations about making such a generalization that underdeveloped countries have a genuine claim to be called democratic. If one becomes more specific, we see that the claim becomes less plausible when referring to some countries in West Africa. All the English-speaking countries in this region have at one time, in Samuel Decalo's opinion, "been governed by military juntas or rocked by attempted coups or power grabs." These coups do not always express the general will of the people. They do not have any say in the choice of their leaders, nor is membership open. Apart from the undemocratic nature of political systems run by an army take over, a lot of the political systems of civilian governments fall short of a democracy. The three conditions for a vanguard to be democratic are hardly ever met. Many a time the leaders claim to have open elections, but they always see to it that only those they want to join the party win. So, strictly speaking, membership to the party is not open nor is the effort that one has to put in to participate reasonable.

Turning our attention now to what the underdeveloped countries have accepted and rejected in the Marxian concept of democracy, we see that the Marxian critical analysis of the capitalist society has been very popular amongst third world states. Macpherson maintains that this attitude has a lot to do with the history of the underdeveloped states. Most of these states had at one time been subjugated by the developed capitalist countries. Thus, when Marx speaks of the dehumanization of man by capitalism he seems to be referring directly to the experience of the third world states. Marx's reference to the "spiriting away of
man's essential nature" would particularly appeal to the countries of Africa. Colonialism took away the culture and identity of the African peoples, thus depriving them of their essential nature. It is no wonder then why Marx's theory was so attractive to the underdeveloped countries. Unfortunately, this is where the attractiveness ends. Marx's theory was primarily written for those countries faced with a serious internal conflict of classes. These underdeveloped countries did not have any class conflicts. They were a people united against an external threat. Their revolutions were therefore national revolutions, not class revolutions. Consequently, three tenets of Marx's theory—(1) that class struggle was a motive force of history, (2) the proposition that the state is primarily an instrument of class domination, and (3) that the political system resulting from an anti-capitalist revolution must also be a class state—failed to appeal to the underdeveloped countries.

So far, I have given an adumbration of liberal and non-liberal democracies. I have examined their claims to be democratic and also how the western liberal and communist concepts of democracy differ from the underdeveloped variant. I may, however, conclude that though they are all different, they all share one underlying theme or ultimate goal: to provide the conditions for the full and free development of the essential human capacities of all the members of the society.

Many of the policies adopted by politicians of underdeveloped countries do not strive to achieve this goal universally, but rather limit it to just a few members of the society. Political decisions seem to have tremendous ethical implications. The policies adopted by the politicians of underdeveloped countries are no exception. Political questions go hand in hand with ethical questions. As W.T. Deininger says:

From a teleological view of politics, how any state is established and managed affects the possible limits to man's moral development. No final separation between ethics and politics can exist.... Ethical and political questions go hand in hand. Like individuals, states are
subject to evaluation according as they do, or do not, encourage the full expression of their citizen's capacities.33

Next, I will take a look at some of the ethical implications of political policies adopted by politicians in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia.
CHAPTER III

AN ETHICAL ANALYSIS OF POLICIES

Ghana

In this section, I intend to first take a look at the events surrounding the 1979 Ghana coup that was plotted by Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, an officer in the Ghana Armed Forces. Following this historical background will be an ethical analysis of the events that took place. I shall examine the question of obtaining informed consent as far as the plans for the coup were concerned. I shall also examine the events that took place in relation to the ethical views of Immanuel Kant and J.S. Mill.

From January 1972 until June 1979 the political history of Ghana took an unprecedented turn in African politics. The people of Ghana ceased to have a say or choice in who they wanted to rule the country. They experienced one military coup after another. No respect was shown for people's personal views as one military regime illegally usurped power from the former government. The constitutional rights of the Ghanaians were totally ignored. Ironically, all the military regimes claimed to be acting in the interest of the masses. Samuel Decalo accurately describes the motives and rationalizations for military coups.1 According to him, there are two schools of thought regarding the causes of military take overs. The first one sees economic, social and political problems and weaknesses as an incentive for armies to usurp power. The second cause, he claims, "relie(s) on organization theory in attributing to African armies certain characteristics of professionalism, nationalism, cohesion and austerity—all impelling
them to move into the political arena to rescue the state from the grip of corrupt, inept, and self-seeking political elites.\textsuperscript{2}

There is no doubt left in one's mind about the "depravity and disgusting greed of the military regimes that ruled Ghana"\textsuperscript{3} between January 1972 to June 1979. However, whatever good intentions the perpetrators of the 1979 coup may have had, they were all overshadowed by the events that took place during the revolution. The 1979 coup is one coup that Ghanaians would never forget. It was different from the other coups because of its radical and extreme nature. Serious questions were raised about the ethicality of their extreme policies. To understand why so many people were shocked by the 1979 coup, we will now take a look at some of the events that occurred during that period.

On June 4, 1979 a new military administration called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) took power in Ghana which resulted in heavy fighting. Ghana, at the time, was under the administration of the supreme military council (SMC) headed by General F. W. K. Akuffo. The leader or chairman of the ten-member council (AFRC) was Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings. Previous to June 4 he had led an unsuccessful uprising against the government on May 15.

Within a few hours of the coup several people were killed. Among them was the Army Commander Major-General N. Odartey-Wellington. The uprising began at 7:30 a.m. when Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings made a broadcast on GBC radio appealing for no resistance from officers in order to prevent bloodshed. He also stated in his broadcast that, "Justice which has been denied to the Ghananian worker, will have to take place. That I promise you. Some of us have suffered far too long."\textsuperscript{4} His aim, in this broadcast to the nation was to describe himself as a humble man dedicated to fighting injustice. "All that we have just done and will do for this country is nothing more than our duty, first and foremost as citizens of this country and
secondly as soldiers." He also added that he hoped to restore the reputation of Ghana's armed forces. This hope was based on the intolerance he had for the fact that senior officers were allowed to get away with the ill-gotten gains that their corruption had brought them. General Akuffo had overthrown the cynical and corrupt regime of General Acheampong. Though General Akuffo, upon seizing power, had talked much about "accountability" and had dismissed many members of the SMC who had lost the public trust, his regime fell well below the expectations of the people. According to a West Africa correspondent "The release from custody of General Acheampong ... finally stretched the credibility gap beyond repair, so far as the young officers were concerned." In the eyes of the young officers he had failed. This failure on Akuffo's part served as an impetus for Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings and his group to take upon themselves the task of "cleansing the nation."

Early on June 5 a broadcast was made by an unidentified person which confirmed the success of the revolution. Further attempts were made to justify their, i.e., the AFRC, actions. The people were reminded of the maladministration of the SMC government and the sunken reputation of the Armed Forces. The speaker then revealed their plans for a house-cleaning exercise. In this exercise, those who had been seconded from the Armed Forces to the civil establishment would be called upon to give an account of their stewardship. The honest ones had nothing to fear, "but if (one's) hands are soiled, then the full rigor of the law will be brought to bear on you." He also assured the people that the AFRC had no intention of clinging to power, but wished to ensure a smooth transition to constitutional rule. As a result, preparations for the upcoming elections were to go on uninterrupted. He concluded his broadcast with words of caution and advice. The AFRC's actions must not be construed as a licence for lawlessness, and that all essential goods
must be sold within the controlled prices. That same day, in the evening, Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings, in a joint broadcast with Captain Boakye Djan, announced some new appointments.

On Thursday, June 7, the AFRC called a conference with all the presidential candidates to work out a programme of mutual cooperation. Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings opened the meeting with a humble speech. In his speech he stressed that the success or failure of the system depended on one thing: "integrity, accountability, a certain degree of honesty." He claimed that most of these values had been lost and that corruption was becoming a part of everyone. "We are accepting (it) as a norm." 

True to his words, Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings allowed the elections to take place two weeks after the coup. (He later handed power over to a civilian government with Limann as president.) The elections were unique not only because of this fact but also because they came two days after the new military leaders had demonstrated the seriousness of their intentions by publicly executing the former head of state (General Akuffo) and the former commander of the border guard. The importance of the elections was, however, dampened by the horrors which Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings allowed to occur. This resulted in mixed feelings about the revolution and the future of Ghana. Before the coup, "execution posts, firing squads and red hoods pulled over men's heads (were) alien to Ghana's way of life.... The executions of former General Acheampong and General Utuka, preceded by only the most sketchy trial, shocked and horrified many." There were some Ghanaians (mostly the young and radical) who spoke happily of washing Ghana clean with the blood of the corrupt and there were others who felt that house cleaning could not be done properly with blood stained hands.
In spite of all these killings there were still pressures for more executions coming from the junior ranks of the Armed Forces. Consequently, on the 26th of June at 9:30 a.m. six more military officers were executed. Once again, these executions brought about different reactions from people inside and outside Ghana. The execution of six more people elicited cheers from the students at the University of Ghana, Legon. On the other hand, "it also caused shock and anger and sent a ripple of revulsion throughout the world, largely because the people executed were familiar names and faces beyond Ghana's borders."10 What made matters worse was the fact that a special decree was set up which made it impossible for those sentenced by the courts to appeal. Ghana's tradition of legality and due process had never before been so completely overturned. To add insult to injury, these shootings were inefficiently done. It was reported that after the first volley, General Afrifa was left shouting for more bullets to end his suffering. People began to question the purpose of all these killings. It may be true that some people would be deterred from corrupt acts in the future, but was the cost of it all worth it? To most people it was an immeasurable cost.

This clean up campaign of Rawlings and his men was, however, not limited to the army only. Civilians were also faced with either execution, imprisonment or public whipping. Those targeted were leading politicians and the market women. During the demolition of the Makola Market (one of Ghana's largest markets) it was reported that a number of people were humiliated and publicly whipped. I must, however, point out that Rawlings should not be blamed for all these atrocities. It is no secret that he appealed to the soldiers in a meeting to stop harassing and molesting innocent civilians.

Though the 1979 coup was a traumatic experience for many people in Ghana, it is reported that, at present, Ghana seems to be heading in a positive
direction. Many people seem to be satisfied with the economic and political changes that Rawlings has implemented. However, before these changes could be implemented, another coup had to take place. At three o’clock in the morning of December 31, 1982 Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings once again took power and became the head of state of Ghana. In all fairness to Rawlings I must concede that he gave Limann (the elected president) and his government the opportunity to prove what they could do to straighten out Ghana. They, however, failed to gain the confidence of the Ghanalan people. Fortunately, there was considerably less blood-shed in this second revolution (Rawlings preferred to call it a revolution and not a coup) as compared to the former coup. Since 1982, Rawlings has been and still is the head of state of Ghana. In a conversation with a Ghanalan, I was told that there is general agreement amongst the people that he is doing well for Ghana.

Now that the events of 1979 are gone and there seems to be a brighter future for Ghana, some questions keep coming to my mind: Were the events of 1979 necessary for Ghana to improve? Was the sacrifice of human life a reasonable cost to pay for future gain? In a nutshell, did the end justify the means? Confronted by these questions, I would now like to engage in an ethical analysis of the 1979 coup.

Before I take a look at any ethical theories, I would first of all examine the implications of the act itself, that is, the 1979 coup. Though there could have been other conditions at that time which may have justified the actions of Rawlings and his men, their actions, by definition, were unethical. A coup is not only unconstitutional but it is also an illegal usurpation of power. Often times, as is the case with the 1979 coup, a coup entails a lot of violence. According to Decalo, “Coupes are at inception conspiracies, of necessity (for reasons of secrecy) they involve only a segment of the officer corps that seizes power in the name of the armed forces.”12
From this definition, we may conclude that not only did the whole army not know of their plans, but also the whole country. As a result, the people of Ghana had no say or control over the events. They were not given the opportunity to give consent or oppose their (i.e., the AFRC) actions. In gross disregard for the personal views of the rest of the population they forcibly imposed themselves on the people of Ghana. Their actions were going to affect not only the personal, but also the social lives of the citizens. As a result, the AFRC ought to have made attempts to obtain informed consent from the people of Ghana by conducting a survey. Informed consent entails two major components: an informational component and a volitional component. In effect, the only way the people of Ghana could have given informed consent to the coup was if they fully understood both the risks and benefits of the uprising and genuinely accepted the intervention. The need for secrecy in a coup, however, precluded the possibility of the people getting enough information to make significant choices. The right to significant choice is very important in any society that claims to be democratic. It not only has social and political value but also "an important element of respect for individuals." A recognition of this respect requires that the AFRC treat the people of Ghana as rational human beings with aims and purposes of their own. They, therefore, ought to have given them a say in the matter. By purporting to act in the name of the whole army, they were, once again, showing disrespect for the rest of the army's capability to make rational decisions. By so doing, the AFRC was acting unethically, which requires some justification.

In defence of the AFRC, one may wish to argue that the publicizing of their intentions would have jeopardized the success of the coup. Also, the AFRC was pretty sure that the majority of the population would agree later that their actions were justified. Such a defense does not warrant an elaborate reply. If they were so
sure that the majority of the population would accede to their actions they should have made their intentions public. With the support of the majority of the population the coup would still have been a success. Secrecy is an important element but not a necessary condition for the success of a coup. Thus, by failing to obtain informed consent from the people, the AFRC violated their right to be treated as rational human beings, which is unethical.

I would now like to take a look at what Kant and Mill have to say in relation to the 1979 coup. By so doing, I hope to substantiate my point that the actions of the AFRC were unethical.

Kant maintains that the highest good, that is, a good without qualification, is a good will. Only a good will is good in all respects. That is to say it is an absolute and unconditional good. It is good in itself. A good will manifests itself in our acting for the sake of duty. Paton states three propositions that Kant makes about duty. They are: (1) "A human action is morally good, not because it is done from immediate inclination—still less because it is done from self interest—but because it is done for the sake of duty;" (2) "an action done from duty has its moral worth, not from the results it attains or seeks to attain, but from a formal principle or maxim—the principle of doing one’s duty whatever that duty may be;" and (3) which follows from the first two states: "Duty is the necessity to act out of reverence for the law."

In his broadcast at 7:30 a.m. Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings claimed that "all (they) have just done and will do for this country is nothing more than (their) duty." Based on the first two propositions stated above, it appears that the actions of Rawlings and his men were morally good. I am pretty sure that Rawlings would contend that he was not acting out of self interest (in line with the first proposition) but for the sake of duty. Also, according to the second proposition, his actions do not necessarily have to bring about good results. As can be seen from the quotation,
Rawlings believed that he was doing his duty, and it appears that he was concerned about results also. What matters is the fact that one is doing his duty whatever that duty may be. Thus, it seems that (based on Kant's formulation of a morally good act) Rawlings and his men have some claim to acting morally. Unfortunately, I do not think that Rawlings, in his use of the word "duty", was thinking about it in the special way that Kant does. The mere use of the word "duty" does not demonstrate this special conception of the word duty. This difference in conception is revealed when we look at the third proposition: "Duty is the necessity to act out of reverence for the law." For Kant, this is no ordinary law. It must be a law valid for all rational beings, and one which is independent of their particular desires. It must be a universal law that ought to be obeyed for its own sake. This law Kant calls a categorical imperative. We may express this in the formula: "act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." 20

By punishing those who had squandered the government's money, Rawlings was willing, according to Kant, to allow the universalization of the maxim: "if anyone is guilty of corruption he or she must face full retribution." Could this become a universal law? I think so. It does not lead to a self-contradiction as Kant's example of making false promises. 21 In this example, Kant postulates a man who is driven to borrowing money because of need. This man is aware of the fact that he cannot pay the money back, but he realizes that he will be unable to get the loan unless he makes the firm promise to pay back. If he decides to make a false promise to return the money he will be acting on the maxim: "whenever I need money, I will borrow it and promise to pay back, with no intention of doing so." Now, such a maxim will prove to be beneficial and compatible with his own future welfare. However, if such a maxim is universalized it becomes inconsistent and would naturally contradict
itself. If everyone made promises with no intention to keep them, it would make promising and the very purpose of promising itself impossible, because people will not believe they are being promised anything. In the case we are looking at, we do not see such an inconsistency or contradiction. Universalizing the above maxim of Rawlings’ actions does not lead to such an inconsistency. It only means that the person acting on such a maxim must be prepared to adhere to it impartially.

I do not, however, endorse the extreme punishment that Rawlings carried out—that is, the executions. Rawlings himself seemed prepared to universalize the principle on which he was acting. In his December 31 speech he claimed that he is “prepared at this moment to face a firing squad if what (he is trying) to do for the second time in (his) life does not meet the approval of the Ghanaians.” By this statement he was making it clear that he was prepared to abide by the principle “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Kant further maintains that the ends adopted by rational beings are only relative. Their value is therefore limited to special characteristics in the subject. Thus they cannot provide universal principles that are valid for all rational beings. Only “something whose existence has in itself an absolute value, something which (is) an end in itself,” can be a ground for determinate laws. Man is this something that exists as an end in himself. Man, “must in all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be viewed at the same time as an end.” Being persons, rational beings must not be treated merely as a means. Consequently, a limit is placed on all arbitrary treatment of them. They must be objects of reverence or respect. Rational beings are therefore the ground of the categorical imperative. Thus, we have the second formulation of Kant’s categorical imperative: “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity whether
in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end. 25

It is in this second formulation that the actions of the AFRC depart from the commands of Kant’s categorical imperative. First, Rawlings and his men used the innocent citizens of Ghana solely as a means toward their end. The strategies they adopted resulted in a lot of suffering and humiliation for the innocent, for example, the whipping of the market women. It is quite certain that there must have been innocent people in the market. Blaming the market women for Ghana’s economic problems was uncalled for. Fred M. Hayward criticizes the military’s methods of dealing with basic problems. He says that “there is the tendency for the military to see issues in far too simplistic terms.” To illustrate this he cites the destruction of the market as one of the methods adopted by the military regime of Rawlings to solve Ghana’s economic problems. This shortsightedness on the AFRC’s part is one of the reasons why they are guilty of using the innocent merely as a means toward their end. Also, we may rightfully assume that Rawlings had personal reasons—political ambition—for spearheading the coup. This is revealed by the fact that he plotted another coup and declared himself president of Ghana. He thus used the innocent solely as a means toward his personal ambitions.

The second reason why the actions of the AFRC depart from the commands of Kant’s categorical imperative is the extreme punishment which they meted out to those found guilty of corruption, that is, the executions. They had no right to take someone’s life. They could easily have put them in jail instead of killing them. According to James Rachels, Kant believes that punishment should be governed by two principles. First, punishment should be meted out only when it is deserved and for no other reason. He quotes Kant as saying:

Juridical punishment can never be administered merely as a means for promoting another good either with regard to the criminal himself
or to civil society, but must in all cases be imposed only because the individual on whom it is inflicted has committed a crime.28

As I mentioned above, some innocent people had to suffer as a result of the actions of the AFRC. As can be seen from the above quotation, Kant would obviously be opposed to such actions because he believes that only those deserving punishment must be punished. By punishing the innocent, they were used merely as a means which, according to Kant, is not morally permissible.

One may wish to argue that in every revolution some sacrifices have to be made. Sometimes the righteous have to suffer for or with the wicked. The people found guilty of corruption used the rest of the nation as a means toward their ends and therefore deserve punishment. The few innocent people that had to suffer were worth the sacrifice when one considers the need to punish the guilty. My response is this. Though Kant believes that the guilty must be punished, I am sure that he will not accede to adopting whatever means to punish them whatever the cost. Also, with regard to the executions I doubt very much that he would, in this case, endorse such a means of punishment. Though several people may have died as a result of their (i.e., the guilty) actions--lack of enough drugs in hospitals--this does not give the AFRC the right to take their lives. Two wrongs do not make a right. One does not take an unethical act to justify another unethical act.

One may wish to point out here that Kant endorses capital punishment and if I am prepared to conduct my ethical analysis in relation to him, I must be prepared to accept the executions. This point can be admitted only if it can be proven that there is a direct relation between the actions of those found guilty of corruption and the deaths caused by lack of funds. My reason for saying this can be seen in Kant's second principle that governs punishment. Kant endorses capital punishment because he stresses the importance of punishing the criminal according to the crime he commits. In stating Kant's second principle, Rachels writes: "Kant says it is..."
important to punish a criminal proportionately to the seriousness of his crime. Small punishments may suffice for small crimes, but big punishments are necessary in response to big crimes.29

This second principle inevitably leads one to conclude that Kant endorses capital punishment; for in response to murder, only death is a sufficient and just punishment. His reason for such a view is revealed by the fact that he believes we must always treat someone as an "end-in-himself," which means treating him as a rational being. Because man has the capacity to be rational, Kant claims that he must be held responsible for his actions. Rachels gives a vivid explanation of the logic behind Kant's reasoning:

When a rational being decides to treat people in a certain way, he decrees that in his judgment this is the way people are to be treated. Thus if we treat him the same way in return, we are doing nothing more than treating him as he has decided people are to be treated. If he treats others badly, and we treat him badly, we are complying with his own decision.... We are allowing him to decide how he is to be treated--and so we are, in a perfectly clear sense, respecting his judgment, by allowing it to control our treatment of him. Thus Kant says of the criminal, "His own deed draws the punishment upon himself."30

In the case we are examining, I see no way the executions can be justified by Kant's reasoning except if a direct connection can be established between the actions of the guilty and the deaths caused by lack of funds. In my opinion, a deserving punishment would have been imprisonment.

Thus, we may conclude that though the actions of Rawlings and his men may meet the requirement of Kant's first formulation (i.e., becoming a universalized rule that all those found guilty of corruption must be punished) they fail to meet the requirement of his second formulation. They used the innocent solely as a means toward their end and by so doing they violated Kant's two principles governing punishment. Though they were doing something that would benefit society, I still find the AFRC guilty of using the innocent merely as a means because personal
ambitions were also a motivation for the coup. Moreover, they denied the people of Ghana their right to autonomy. Further, I do not think that Kant would agree that the executions were a deserving punishment for the crimes they committed—corruption. Kant believed that these two rules were equivalent and any action which was found to be in violation of either of them was morally impermissible. We may therefore safely conclude that Kant would be opposed to some of the actions of the AFRC on the grounds that some of them were, in his opinion, morally impermissible.

Unlike Kant's theory which is a non-consequentialist theory, the theory of John Stuart Mill directs our attention to the consequences of our actions. Mill, the nineteenth century utilitarian, contends that "all actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure." In other words, we must always strive to achieve "the greatest good for the greatest number." According to Mill's theory, "pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends, and that all desirable things ... are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as a means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain." This theory requires that the actions of an agent should not further his own happiness but that of others. In a choice between his own happiness and that of others, "utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator."

I will now examine the actions of Rawlings and his men from a utilitarian perspective. It is an undisputed fact that the changes Rawlings was trying to implement were for the general good of the nation. Before the 1979 coup, only a small section of the population was benefitting from the bribery and corruption that was rife in Ghana. A majority of the population lived in poverty and did not know
where the next meal was going to come from. In his inaugural speech Rawlings stated that: "justice, which has been denied to the Ghanaian worker, will have to take place. That I promise you. Some of us have suffered too long." His aim was to fight injustice and to redeem the Ghanaian masses from their suffering. As mentioned earlier, Mill's theory unlike Kant's focuses our attention on the consequences. Therefore, for us to know if Rawlings' actions were good or right in relation to utilitarianism, we have to look at the results of his coup. As we read earlier, he was temporarily able to get the people to sell the essential commodities at the control prices and also punish those who were guilty of corruption. Unfortunately, this taste of the "good life" was only short lived. After the elections and the civilian government took control, things began to slip back to what they were like before. He justified his second revolution by the fact that there was no improvement. Up to this moment that I write, he is still in control of the Ghanaian government and his popularity is increasing because things are improving. Looking at the coup from the long term perspective, one may be led to hastily conclude that his actions were, according to utilitarianism, right because he is now able to produce the results he promised to achieve by his actions.

Reaching such a conclusion, I may say, is not only hasty but may also be erroneous. Rawlings' aim was to seek retribution for the crimes committed by the corrupt. According to Rachels, Bentham was opposed to the idea of retribution because "it advocated the infliction of suffering without any compensating gain in happiness." For him, all punishment was mischief and an evil. As a result of this view, Bentham claimed that the only way retribution can become permissible is if "it promises to exclude some greater evil" or if it will produce good results. Utilitarianism, therefore, stresses the minimization of pain and the increase of pleasure or happiness. As a result, the least possible pain should be caused to
achieve the greatest pleasure. This fact raises questions in my mind about Rawlings' coup. Were there other alternatives to all the executions and terror that was caused? Could not the same result have been achieved by less harsh methods? I am inclined to believe that imprisonment would have been a better alternative for a utilitarian. First, the executions may have caused a lot of terror in the population and outweighed the good result. Secondly, taking one's life would not solve the situation. It may, on the short term, deter people from acts of corruption, but in the long term it fails to have an effect. Ghanaians are known to be great gamblers and risk takers, so it is possible that someone may take the risk to steal money in the hope of not being caught. Putting the culprits to serve their country fruitfully and at the same time serving a jail sentence would have been more humane and to the benefit of the general population.

I am aware that someone might contend this view by pointing out two facts. First, according to Rachels, there is no evidence of anything in the basic idea of utilitarianism that limits punishment to the guilty or to the deserved amount. For a utilitarian, punishment only becomes useful if it secures the general welfare of a society. As a result, a utilitarian may find him or herself in a situation where securing the general welfare will require punishing the innocent. In the same way, a utilitarian may be faced with a situation where excessive punishment will secure the general welfare. "A greater punishment might have a greater deterrent effect." By stressing the least required pain to achieve the greatest result, the utilitarian does not rule out the possibility of the pain still being excessive and undeserved. Secondly, one may point out that there was no other advisable alternative for Rawlings. If he had put the members of the deposed government in prison, there was always the possibility of them escaping and regaining power. Under such a threat, Rawlings and his men could not perform their task properly.
If the above contention is true, I am willing to accept that a utilitarian, in light of no better alternatives, will conclude that in the long run Rawlings' actions were justified.

Unfortunately, when we look at the short term consequences, the actions of the AFRC fail to measure up to the standards of the utilitarian principle. First and foremost, though Rawlings and some of his men may have had good intentions there were some men who took advantage of the power they had to exploit innocent citizens. We cannot blame Rawlings for this because, in every revolution, it is expected that there would be some people who do not seek the general good but their own self interest. Thus, we see that, on the short term, the actions of the AFRC failed to meet the requirements of a good act from a utilitarian perspective. This is due to two reasons: (1) there were some members who acted in their own interest and not in the interest of the whole population, and (2) they failed to produce good results for the greatest number.

In conclusion, I have been able to reveal that from a Kantian perspective, the actions of the AFRC failed to meet the requirement of a morally permissible act. Though the actions of Rawlings and his men may have met the requirement of Kant's first formulation, they failed to meet the requirement of his second formulation. A Kantian would oppose their actions on two grounds. First, they used the people solely as a means toward their end. Secondly, if a direct connection could not be established between the actions of the guilty and the deaths caused, they may have been guilty of violating Kant's two principles governing punishment, i.e., limiting punishment to the guilty and the deserved amount. Since, for Kant, both formulations were equivalent, a violation of one meant that the action was disqualified from being a morally permissible act. Also, it was revealed that, in the long run, the actions of the AFRC would appear to be justified to a utilitarian if no
better alternatives were available to achieve the same good results. However, in the short term a utilitarian would have found their actions to be wanting. This is so because the pain that was caused outweighed the good results.

Sierra Leone

My intention, in this section, is to discuss secrecy in West African politics, the way politicians manipulate people for their personal gain and the possibility of paternalistic behavior in such governments. Material for this discussion will be drawn from the events that took place in Sierra Leone towards the end of Siaka Stevens' regime. However, before I delve into this discussion I will first give a narration of the events that occurred during that period.

Under the presidency of Siaka Stevens, the multi-party system of government was changed to a one-party constitution in June 1978. Under Stevens' regime, the economy of Sierra Leone started its gradual but steady decline. As the economy deteriorated, corruption and lack of discipline became a serious problem for Sierra Leone. As the downward trend continued, it became increasingly "evident that the Stevens government was fast losing the support of the people and even card carrying party members had become disillusioned with the kind of political sycophancy which prevailed."38

The people on the street were the ones who felt the severe pinch of the worsening economic situation. Essential commodities were hoarded, profiteering and political waywardness became the order of the day. Politicians and those in positions of responsibility embezzled government funds without having any second thoughts. Public officers were mainly interested in lining their pockets instead of putting the welfare of the country first. In a nutshell, the whole system of checks and balances had been broken down, so people had no fear of being held
accountable for their misdeeds. "In the middle of this situation it also became clear
that there was almost a total lack of political will and Stevens himself could no longer
effectively carry on."39

During a three day convention, Siaka Stevens, who had ruled this small state
for seventeen years, gave a final notice that he would not stand for re-election when
his extended term of office expired at the end of 1985. Before he made this
announcement questions about who would succeed Stevens had already been
raised. Now that Stevens had publicly announced his resignation, the need for an
answer to this question became more pressing. At this time, there were five known
aspirants for the office of president: Mr. S. I. Koroma (first vice-president), Francis
Minah (second vice-president), Mr. Sheka Kanu, Mr. A. B. Kamara, and Major-
General Joseph Saidu Momoh. Of the five aspirants, Major-General Momoh was the
most ideal, not only because he was the president’s personal choice, but also
because, at the time, he commanded the respect of most of the people in Sierra
Leone. Of the other four, Koroma was the strongest opposer of Momoh, and the
most likely to put up a fight.40

Gradually, each aspirant was eliminated. Kanu lost his parliamentary seat
and Kamara was demoted. Minah, who once strongly felt that he was being
groomed by Stevens for the presidency, suddenly had a change of heart and
decided to postpone his ambition to the presidency for the time being in the interest
of peace. Meanwhile, President Stevens tried to persuade Koroma to drop his
ambitions and opposition to Momoh. The sad thing about all this political
maneuvering was that it took place at the parliamentary level and the people of
Sierra Leone were left out.

Before we take a look at what happened next I would like us to take a look at
the reasons why Stevens chose Momoh, and not his long-time ally Koroma, to
succeed him. "Stevens himself had sought to answer the question in efforts to calm ruffled political leaders by explaining that his first vice-president would not be able to carry the burden of the presidency because of his ill health."41 Admitting the difficulty of exercising his power on a comrade, Stevens claimed that he had to do what he had done because "it is the security of the state that counts."42 One must not be fooled by Stevens' claim to be acting in the interest of the State. If anything, he was acting in his own interest. Apart from the fact that Stevens had ruined the economy, he could not appoint Koroma because he could no longer trust him. His greatest fear was that Koroma, if given power, would put him "before a commission of inquiry to account for his seventeen unbroken years of stewardship to Sierra Leone."43 Momoh was therefore the ideal choice because he was the kind of person who would protect Stevens once he decided to step down from power. This then was Stevens' main consideration for the choice of Momoh.

Realizing that his security depended on Momoh becoming president, Stevens set out to make sure he became president. Almost a week before the National delegates conference, Koroma vowed to fight to the finish. He met President Stevens at the state house on July 31 and bluntly told him he was determined to challenge Momoh for the leadership. He felt he had been "betrayed" and "did not care" who the president supported. In parliament the next day, his efforts to challenge Momoh were hindered when parliament hurriedly amended sections of the constitution, effectively clearing the way for Momoh to contest the presidential elections. Previously, the 1978 constitution had barred members of the armed forces from contesting legislative and presidential elections. The amendment gave the right to any appointed Member of Parliament (M.P.) who had sat in parliament for at least seven years to contest political elections. Momoh was an appointed MP and had been in parliament for eleven years.44
Top level meetings were held to persuade Koroma to change his mind about challenging Momoh. Three days before the National Delegates Conference he was finally persuaded by a top party delegation. He later informed Stevens about his change of heart. Instead of informing the nation and other party officials about Koroma's change of heart, Stevens instructed Koroma to nominate Momoh at the National Delegates Convention. This move was to give the people the impression that there was total party support for Momoh. At the end of the convention (August 14), with Stevens in total control of the events, Momoh was elected party leader and secretary-general. What we have seen is a case where a man who has been given extensive powers, decides what is best for three to four million people.

How something like this was allowed to happen in a country which claims to be democratic can only be understood when one examines the political structure at that time. The constitution of Sierra Leone originally made provision for a democracy. Under Stevens' regime, it was gradually changed to the point that the only provision it made was for a dictatorship. The people of Sierra Leone had been robbed of their rights for so long that they just wanted a change. Any change was welcome. As a result, when Siaka Stevens, without their consent, set the political stage for Momoh to become president, there was no opposition.

Nomination of the presidential candidate took place on September 20, 1985 and as was expected Major-General Momoh was the only candidate to have filed nomination papers. The elections took place on October 1 of that same year. Sierra Leoneans critical of Stevens' regime believe that the election campaign and subsequent elections were all done for formality's sake, that is, to give the people of Sierra Leone the impression that they had a choice in who was their leader. With this political change came high expectations. The people of Sierra Leone had hopes
that Momoh would abandon the policies of the corrupt and undisciplined Stevens regime. The nation anxiously waited and watched, only to be disappointed. As of now, Momoh's regime makes Stevens' regime look like paradise. Under Momoh's regime, bribery, corruption and lack of discipline have reached a level never seen before in Sierra Leone. Politicians and businessmen who benefit from the system ride around in luxury cars while the poor man on the street has to worry where his next meal is going to come from.

At this juncture, I would like to recall the conditions stated in Chapter I that need to be fulfilled in order for a single party to be called democratic. They are (1) there must be complete intra-party democracy, (2) party membership must be open, and (3) the price of participation in the party must not be more strenuous a degree of activity than the average person is prepared to contribute. Based on what we have just read, we may conclude that by no stretch of the imagination does the political system in Sierra Leone fulfill these conditions. Although a one-party system, the constitution of Sierra Leone falls short of a democracy because (1) the members within the party (for example Koroma) have not much of a say or choice about what goes on (they all tried to do whatever Siaka Stevens commanded); (2) though not mentioned above, it can be inferred that party membership was not open---only those who found favor with Siaka Stevens "won" their elections; (3) from (2) we may conclude that the third condition was not fulfilled. Not everyone would like to go through the process of currying favor just to join the party.

Having an undemocratic constitution is just the tip of the iceberg. If there was a political code of ethics, politics in Sierra Leone would violate almost all of the items in the code. With a constitution that gives so much power to one person (who by all means was unethical), a lot of ethically questionable things were allowed to go on in
Sierra Leone. First, there was not enough information transmitted to the people. Most of the decisions were made at the parliamentary level. Even within the parliament there were some people who were left out. Secrecy seemed to be the source of power for Stevens' regime. Due to the secrecy that was maintained much resulted—for example, corruption and the changing of the constitution—without the population's knowledge. Sisela Bok quotes Jeremy Bentham as saying: "secrecy, being an instrument of conspiracy ought never to be the system of regular government."47 She also quotes Woodrow Wilson: "Everybody knows that corruption thrives in secret places, and avoids public places, and we believe it a fair presumption that secrecy means impropriety."48 The truth of this statement as far as Sierra Leone is concerned cannot be understated. Bok believes "that a guarantee of public access to government information is indispensable in the long run for any democratic society."49 According to Bok, when the public is guaranteed access to information their perception of what they have a right to expect is altered. Also, the hesitation that public officials experience about what information to disclose is reduced. Bok says "it works against the inevitable tendency of government secrecy to spread and to invite abuses.... Otherwise, if officials make public only what they want citizens to know, then publicity becomes a sham and accountability meaningless."50 She therefore advises all "societies that prize citizen access to government decision ... to reject an official secrets act, or any other law that places the presumption in favor of secrecy."51 I cannot agree more with what Bok says. If Sierra Leoneans were aware of this advice and took heed much of what is going on there now would have been avoided.

With so much secrecy in the Sierra Leonean government the essential element, information, for one to obtain informed consent was absent. Since the people of Sierra Leone were not aware of what went on for Momoh to emerge as
the sole presidential candidate, their right to meaningful participation was not acknowledged, that is, they were not given significant choice. The importance of significant choice can be seen in a quotation of Thomas Nilsen, "The ethical touchstone is the degree of free, informed, rational and critical choice—significant choice."52 Although some of the members of parliament (for example, Koroma) were not happy about Stevens' decision to make Momoh president, they could not voice out their opinion for fear of losing their seat. Respect for one's opinion was therefore ignored. This was unethical.

Second, Siaka Stevens manipulated and used almost anyone he could for his own private interest. Koroma helped Siaka Stevens to establish the one-party system and also helped him secure his position as president. However, when it was time to hand power over to his vice-president he decided to bypass him and give power to the army leader. He also used the party members who helped him change the constitution allowing Momoh to run for the presidential elections. Little did they know that they were helping Stevens secure for himself a safe retirement. As mentioned earlier, Stevens had fears that his vice-president would, if given power, put him before a commission of inquiry to account for his stewardship to Sierra Leone. Stevens saw in Momoh an answer to his fears. He became useful as a source of protection. Thus, he also used Momoh. By being so corrupt, it could be said that he also used the people of Sierra Leone. Money that could have been used to improve their standard of living went into his pocket and the pockets of those who benefitted from the system. Also, the system of government was supposed to be rule by or in the interest of the people. Instead, it was rule by and in the interest of Siaka Stevens. By using the government of the people of Sierra Leone to safeguard his own interest, he used them.
All the above examples of how Siaka Stevens used people really go against Kant's categorical imperative, that is, one should not use someone solely as a means toward an end. According to Kant's view, the above cited actions of Stevens would have been unethical. However, one may wish to argue in Stevens' defense by adopting the egoistic perspective. Pritchard and Jaksa state that "egoistic theories focus on what is good or bad for oneself. The egoist view is that one should seek to maximize good consequences and minimize bad consequences for oneself." By definition, we may conclude that Stevens was acting as an egoist, in a similar situation, would act. In an egoist's view, Stevens was doing the right thing. I beg to differ on this view. I would say that he was a very lucky egoist but not a rational one. The risks were too great. Anything could have happened. It is possible that the people of Sierra Leone could have seen through his pretensions and revolted, which may have resulted in his death. Moreover, I do not think that the egoist theory is viable especially in a situation like this. When one considers the amount of responsibility that one has to shoulder as the leader of a country, self-interest should not be a primary consideration. By opting to become the head of state it means that you are prepared to act in the interests of the people. Their interest then becomes your own interest. I am pretty sure Siaka Stevens won the elections because he pledged to act in the interests of the people. He must have been elected because his promises seemed to accord with the interests of the people. By not acting in their interest, he failed to fulfill his promises to the people, which is also unethical.

In the above statements I have shown that Stevens was acting as an egoist, in a similar situation, might act. I would now like to show that in some respects—by deciding what was best for the people of Sierra Leone—Stevens acted in a paternalistic way.
Joan C. Callahan, in her article "Academic Paternalism," discusses the problem-generating features of paternalism. Though her discussion focuses on paternalism in the University, I would like to adapt some of what she says to my discussion. She defines paternalism as a relationship where one party acts on the presumption that he or she knows what is best for the other party. Such a relationship, according to Bok, is unethical. Though the position of head of state comes with certain responsibilities, for example, ruling in the interest of one's citizens, I believe that it is very possible for a politician to abuse this privilege to such an extreme that it borders on paternalism. A democratic system of government makes provision for people to participate in their government. Ideally, they are supposed to have input not only in who should rule them but also, to an extent, in major decisions. When a head of state takes it upon himself to make sole decisions about very important issues that the people ought to have a say in and not give them an opportunity to participate in the decision process, I believe that he is acting in a paternalistic way. I think that the imposing of a head of state on the people of Sierra Leone by Siaka Stevens was a case of paternalistic treatment. Callahan states that the problem of paternalism arises in two major ways (she talks of students but I am replacing "students" with citizens): (1) "When policies, decisions, or behaviors involve an interference with the liberty of (citizens) for their own good; and (2) when policies, decisions, or behaviors toward (citizens) involve treating (citizens) in patronizing or other ways which fail to recognize their (ability to make responsible and rational decisions)." According to her, the first kind of paternalism has moral problems because it vitiates the right of an adult to make self-regarding choices. She concludes, "there is a general presumption against such interference in a free society; and when the interference is for the sake of benefitting an adult interferee, that presumption is very strong indeed."
As we saw from Callahan’s statement, paternalism arises when patronizing decisions are made that fail to recognize an adult individual’s ability to make rational decisions. By imposing a head of state on the people of Sierra Leone, Stevens failed to recognize the ability of the adult population to rationally choose a leader. He did not give Koroma the opportunity to make the decision that his health would not permit him to rule properly nor did he give the people of Sierra Leone the opportunity to decide who was going to be their presidential candidate(s). Instead, he singularly decided that it would be in the interest of Sierra Leone to have Momoh as president, and started to rally support for him. Such behavior, I believe, was paternalistic and unethical.

Though I had earlier accused Stevens of egoistic behavior, I believe that on the one hand, some of his actions appear to be egoistic and on the other hand some of them appear to be paternalistic. By seeking his own interest instead of the interest of the Sierra Leone population his actions appear to be egoistic. He was to benefit the most if Momoh became president. As of now, Sierra Leone does not seem to have gained anything from Momoh’s rule. On the other hand Stevens may be accused of paternalistic behavior because he interfered with their (that is, the people of Sierra Leone) liberty by failing to recognize their ability to make rational decisions and did not allow them to participate in the decision process. According to Stevens, his interference was for the good of the Sierra Leonean population. Whether his reasons for making Momoh president were motivated by self interest or were truly meant for the good of the Sierra Leonean population I cannot tell. What I know is this. Whether Stevens’ actions were paternalistic or egoistic, both ways of behaving, I believe, are ethically questionable.

I may be accused of being too critical of Stevens’ policies. A lot of people believe that politics and dirty hands go together. Politicians are often faced with
decisions they would not make in their normal lives. Opting to do something unethical does not mean that the politician would do the same if he were leaving a regular life. Sometimes there is a moral justification for a particular political act, a justification which outweighs the moral reasons against it. I totally agree with this last point, but I would like to add that when faced with such a dilemma, a rational politician should base his decision on the principle of utility—which action would bring about the greatest good or lesser evil.\textsuperscript{58} Citizens tend to have more confidence in a ruler who safeguards the interest of the majority. If the majority of the population receives good results from a ruler there will be less cause to complain. On the other hand, if the ruler only seeks the interest of himself and a small minority the people will be dissatisfied and have less confidence and trust in him. In Siaka Stevens’ case I see no such ethical dilemma. The only decision he had to make was to either do the right thing, that is, allowing the democratic system to work, or to manipulate people and the system to his advantage. He opted for the latter and tried to justify his actions by claiming to act in the interests of the nation. For me, this is no justification because his choice produced less good for almost everyone except himself. In other words, the moral reasons for allowing the democratic system to work far out-weighed the moral reasons against it. Unfortunately, Siaka Stevens, being the egoist that he was, decided against it to the detriment of Sierra Leone, but all to his benefit.

Liberia

In this last section, it is my intention to address the question of human rights in West African politics. My paradigm country will be Liberia. The discussion will be centered around what Locke and Hobbes have to say about natural rights, culminating in a discussion of instrumental versus intrinsic values. For me to do this, it
is once again imperative that I give the necessary historical background of politics in Liberia. As a result, I will start this section with a historical background, focusing only on some of the events that took place prior to and after the overthrow of president Samuel Doe.

On December 24, 1989, a rebel group entered Liberia through Nimba county in its attempt to overthrow the government of President Samuel Doe. By the time of this rebellion Doe had been in power for almost ten years. He had illegitimately usurped power from President Tolbert, whom he assassinated. A statement made by the Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia (ACDL) describes Doe’s government as an “illegitimate” government that has thwarted the democratic process in Liberia and lacked a respect for the rule of law.59

At the start of the rebellion, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was Charles Taylor. By May 14, 1990, there were indications that the rebel movement had split into two factions—Charles Taylor’s group and Prince Johnson’s group. While Taylor’s group controlled Nimba county and much of the north, it appeared that insurgents loyal to Johnson, a former soldier who helped train the rebels in Libya, were nearer the capital. In a press conference, Taylor accused the government troops (loyal to Doe) of having killed between six and seven thousand people since the uprising began. He claimed, “we’ve killed four thousand soldiers, another three to four thousand have run away.”60

Now that Taylor and his men were but a few hours away from the capital, efforts were made to settle things peacefully. President Doe’s vow to fight to the last man raised fears of another possible massacre of innocent civilians, should Taylor attempt to take Monrovia. Unfortunately, the rebels turned down the offer to sit down at a negotiating table with President Doe until a number of conditions were met: the NPFL wanted President Doe and his entire cabinet to resign and be tried in a court of
'competent jurisdiction'; to account for 125 school children that were believed to have been murdered by the government; to surrender all military, para military and security forces to the NPFL. As was expected, Doe refused to accept these conditions. He even dismissed American suggestions that he go into exile to prevent a blood bath in the capital. A stalemate in the negotiation process therefore ensued. The attack on Monrovia and the imminent blood bath became inevitable.

Further attempts to sit and talk in Freetown on how to achieve a cease fire also failed. Although the rebels were now believed to be 200 yards from the heavily fortified presidential palace, Doe still refused to leave. He adamantly refused to resign. Many people came to believe that there was very little difference between the power hungry Taylor and the politically decadent Doe. A statement released by the Liberian Professionals says this of Doe’s regime:

The misuse of state resources has progressed alongside an arrogant contempt for minimal standards of human rights. State terror, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture, secret and public executions and the willful destruction of private property, wrongful dismissals, wanton raiding and raping have been systematically organized to thoroughly intimidate and demoralize the populace.

Meanwhile, a dissident faction of the NPFL led by Johnson continued to pose a new problem for rebel forces. Taylor claimed that his forces frequently faced ambushes from this dissident group. It was reported that Johnson refused peace moves from Taylor, refusing talks with a delegation that was sent. The story of the Liberian conflict had now become that of “three spent military dwarfs” (Johnson, Taylor and Doe), whose thirst for power had left too many suffering too much for too long. With the split within the NPFL, the focus had shifted from Doe and when he would make his shameful exit to who would win the internal power struggle within the NPFL.
To illustrate the amount of ruthless killing that was going on, it was reported that on the 30th of July a cold blooded massacre took place of at least 500 women and children seeking refuge in a Monrovia church by Samuel Doe’s forces.64 Hundreds of thousands of citizens were forced to take refuge in neighboring countries as a result of the fighting. A West Africa correspondent in Monrovia claimed that a review of the crisis explains why Taylor wanted Doe out of power at any cost regardless of the consequences. One was for personal revenge. Also, there was the realization that Taylor did not appear as sincere as he claimed to be. This view was shared by most exiled Liberian politicians. "To them, the war (was) business as usual for Taylor as he (was) alleged to be shipping produce out of the country and dealing in gold and diamonds."65 This may explain why Taylor adamantly refused to accept a peace plan. Johnson and Doe, on the other hand, had long ago agreed (during the second round of talks in Freetown) to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peace plan.

Due to the failure of the peace talks an ECOWAS peace keeping force was set up. It was comprised of forces mainly from Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea, Gambia and Sierra Leone. Guinea was the only Francophone country in favor of the military intervention. This difference in opinion later resulted in a rift between the Francophone and Anglophone countries. The main purpose of the force was to ensure that there was a cease fire, especially from Taylor and his men. This force, unfortunately, was unable to prevent the rebels from killing Doe. Like so many of the acts of violence that characterized the nine-month civil war in Liberia, the circumstances surrounding Samuel Doe’s removal were nothing short of bizarre. What surprised many people was the fact that he was captured at the headquarters of the peacekeeping force in downtown Monrovia. It was reported that he was shot in both legs and dragged to the rebel leader, Johnson’s, camp on September 10. All
his body guards were killed and he was later killed after being tortured in the rebel camp.

One would think that after Doe’s death all the fighting and killing would stop. Instead, the civil war took a different turn. The two rebel factions started fighting each other. Taylor refused to accept the interim government set up by ECOWAS and pronounced himself president of Liberia. By so doing, he proved beyond doubt that he was against the democratic process, and after personal gain—power. As the fighting continued, more lives were lost as one faction retaliated for the deaths caused by the other faction. Moreover, the peace keeping force ended up doing precisely what observers feared before the troops were deployed: fighting in alliance with one rebel faction against another. Johnson got support from the Ecowas force because he favored paving the way toward a democracy.

Although the ECOWAS force was able to push Taylor’s army out of the city center, the fighting continued because Taylor still had a majority of the Liberian territory under his control. As the war continued hundreds of people risked their lives to escape the war. A West Africa correspondent reports that:

Dehydrated and starved they (boarded) ships of the Ecowas peace keeping force to endure further privations on a journey without food or water. Others, mainly women and children (fled) by foot travelling hundreds of mile across the Liberian border, where if the they (could) avoid being raped or killed, they finally escaped into neighboring countries.66

The extent of these horrors resulted in Africa Watch (a Washington-based human rights group) writing a report to the U.N. Secretary General urging him to do something to alleviate the plight of the civilians. The title of the report was “Liberia: A Human Rights Disaster.” They blamed all parties of the conflict for these horrors. It read: “All parties to the conflict have committed grave abuses of human rights against civilians, violating the humanitarian standards governing non-international armed conflict.”67 The most depressing thing about all this is that the abuse of
human rights did not start with the war. It goes way back to Doe's regime. The U.S. Department of State, in its 1989 country-by-country report on human rights, indicted Liberia for "extensive human rights violation in 1989." Among many accusations too numerous to mention now, the report accused Liberia of ignoring the constitutional rights of suspects.

Knowledge of all these atrocities makes one wonder what happened to the humanity of the perpetrators. Was Taylor's political ambition more important than the basic human rights of the population? In the wake of some of the killings, why didn't one of the factions make a serious resolve to put an end to it? Granted that Taylor refused to stop fighting, but I believe it takes two to make a fight. If the other factions did not retaliate he would have stopped if he had no one to fight. Personal interest took precedence over general good. This raises serious ethical questions which I would like to take a look at now.

The ethical issues that were raised in the first two discussions are, in many ways, applicable to our present discussion. However, the gross disregard for human rights in the Liberian situation requires an analysis of the abuse of human rights.

First, I would like to take a look at the doctrine of natural rights that Locke and Hobbes postulate. In Macpherson's discussion of natural rights in Hobbes, we read that according to Hobbes, the right of Nature "is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything, which in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means there unto." Since man is by nature contentious "it followeth, that in such a condition, every man has a right to everything; even to one another's body." From such a doctrine of natural rights one cannot help but get a picture of a dog eat dog world. In such a world where every man has a right to all things, we see that rights are of no use and it would be
better if no man had any right to anything. Rights are of no use when somebody
stronger than oneself has an equal right to the same thing. To redeem his doctrine
from this flaw, Hobbes deduces this equality of right from man’s innate compulsion
to preserve his life or motion. Thus, this right entails not only the right to these things
necessary to preserve one’s life but also an equal right to life itself. According to
Macpherson, Hobbes says: “Since every man hath a right to preserve himself, he
must also be allowed a right to use all the means, and do all the actions, without
which he cannot preserve himself.” However, Hobbes was smart enough to
realize that such a system of equal natural rights would not work. Each man
possessing infinite rights is tantamount to having zero rights. He therefore
maintained, in Macpherson’s words, that “reasonable men must give up the right to
everything in order to get effective rights against each other, guaranteed by a
sovereign power.”

If these conditions existed in Liberia, things would have been somewhat
better. If the Liberian people had given up their right to everything in order to receive
equal rights guaranteed by Doe, life would have been much better than what it was.
Unfortunately, under Doe’s regime, all that existed was the supreme power or
dictatorship. The rights of the people were constantly violated. They had no
freedom of speech and could hardly afford the essential goods to preserve their
lives. They lived in constant fear of being arrested, humiliated or killed, for saying the
wrong thing. During the civil war things became worse. What we see is a few men
trying to assert their right to rule at the expense of the rest of the population. Many
people ceased to have the basic right to preserve their lives. A lot of innocent
people were killed. The people lost all sense of the concept of justice. The Liberian
situation lends credence to David Hume’s words that justice becomes redundant or
useless in conditions of extreme hooliganism or public war. The Liberian
population was also deprived of the means to preserve their lives. This statement can be readily demonstrated. The country’s supply of utilities was shut off and there was also a shortage of food. To say that this was a violation of the people’s rights is unquestionable, let alone to argue whether it was unethical or not.

Like Hobbes, Locke (according to Macpherson) also talks of man’s right “to make use of those things, that were necessary or useful to his being.” Man has a right both to preserve his life and also to the means available to do so. Locke, like Hobbes, also deduces man’s right to life and to the means of life “from the need or ‘strong desire’ every man has ‘of preserving his life and being.’” However, Locke’s deduction differs from Hobbes’ in that he deduces man’s right to life and to the means of life from the intention of the creator, unlike Hobbes who deduces it directly from the fact of desire.

According to Macpherson, Locke also talks of man’s right to freedom: It is a right of “freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.” From this right follows the right to execute the Law of Nature, which includes “two distinct rights, the one of punishing the crime for restraint ... the other of taking reparation.” Although both doctrines (i.e., of Locke and Hobbes) of the right to freedom are similar, in that, they are deduced from the need for self-preservation and from the similarity of species—“organic or mechanical sameness of beings”—there is still a great difference. For Hobbes, every man has a natural right to everything, whereas for Locke this natural right to freedom “is limited by the Law of Nature, which teaches that ‘no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions.’”

Macpherson also refers to Locke’s right to property. “For Locke, property in a thing is a right to exclude others from it, to use, enjoy, consume or exchange it.”
He further states that this "right to property is deduced from (a) the right of self-preservation and (b) the property in or right to, one's own person—'the labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his.'"81 This right to property is, however, not unlimited; it is limited by the fact that one must leave enough for others because we all have an equal right to subsistence.82 There is, however, one exception to this rule. Man's natural right to property can become unlimited when man gives consent (which he is naturally capable of doing) to the use of money. This extended property right is established by means of the utilitarian argument to productivity. If productivity can be increased by allocating more land to a person it then becomes justified because those who are left without land are able to enjoy a higher standard of living than they would have if the land were appropriated equally.

As mentioned earlier, most of the Liberian populace were deprived not only of the means to preserve their lives but also of the right to life. They were also deprived of their right of freedom to order their actions, and to dispose of their possessions as they thought fit. During the rebellion, people could not go outside freely for fear of being arrested or killed. Their freedom was dependent upon the will of the fighting factions. As stated above, the right to execute the law of nature includes two distinct rights: (1) of punishing the crime for restraint; and (2) taking reparation. Neither of these rights pertains to the Liberian situation. One may argue that the rebels were trying to punish Doe for the crimes and abuses he perpetrated against the Liberian nation, and to subsequently gain reparation. This may initially have been the case, but we later see that they were guilty of the same crime. Their fight for freedom resulted in greater captivity and suffering for the Liberian nation.

With regard to their right to property we also see that this right was vitiated. We learned earlier that some people had to leave their homes to seek refuge in
neighboring countries. Also, stores were looted and sometimes people were forced to give up their property to the soldiers. These goods may have been essential to the owners' survival, and by being deprived of them they were being deprived of their right to self-preservation. A limit is placed on Locke's right to property because one is required to leave enough for others. In the Liberian context, this was not the case because those that had power tried to get as much property as possible leaving hardly anything for others. Although his doctrine allows one to have an extended right to property, we see that this does not serve to make their actions excusable. For Locke, this extended right to property is only established when it is based on the utilitarian argument of productivity. In the Liberian situation there is no evidence whatsoever of utilitarian concerns. The premier concern of the rebels was private interest, that is, what would help them achieve their end--power.

Macpherson claims that their (i.e., Locke and Hobbes) concept of natural rights is inadequate as far as a twentieth century concept of human rights is concerned. This is so because "neither concept satisfies the minimum requirements of a now acceptable theory of human rights."83 For a concept of human rights to be acceptable in the twentieth century it must, according to him, meet at least two requirements. "First, the rights must be in some effective sense equal,"84 that is, "equal access to the means of 'convenient' living.... Secondly, the rights must be...rights of recipience as well as rights of action."85 For Macpherson, Hobbes' natural rights meet the first requirement but not the second. His natural rights are indisputably equal but, unfortunately they are not rights of recipience. On the other hand, Locke's natural rights "do not meet the first requirement and only appear to meet the second."86 This is so because they are very "unequal and, although stated as rights of recipience, are not really so."87 Locke's natural rights
are very unequal because they only require that one leave enough for others. Leaving enough for others does not mean that everyone has an equal share. Moreover, as Locke says, it is possible for man’s right to property to become unlimited by means of the utilitarian argument.

The above statements, if anything, only add to the sad picture that is presented by the Liberian situation. If the conditions in Liberia failed to measure up to the standards of Locke and Hobbes’ natural rights, which by a twentieth century concept of human rights are inadequate, the possibility of them coming close to meet the requirements of today’s human rights is made impossible.

Pointing out all the ethical issues that are raised by the Liberian situation will be endless. As I see it, it boils down to a conflict in values: intrinsic values versus instrumental values. To have intrinsic or inherent worth is to value something in and of itself, for example, humanity. To have instrumental worth is to value something not in itself but as a means to something else, for example, money. Because human dignity has intrinsic value we must not treat human beings solely as a means toward an end. (Respect for human dignity is an important element in Kant’s categorical imperative.) Most of what the rebels were fighting for only had instrumental worth—power, money and recognition. On the other hand, the lives that were lost in the process of trying to get these instrumental values had intrinsic value. This means that they valued things of instrumental worth—money, power—over things of intrinsic worth—human beings. This, to which any rational person would agree, is unethical. If the rebels valued things of intrinsic worth more, all these killings and abuses of human rights would not have occurred.
CONCLUSION

Through an analysis of ethical issues in West African politics we have been able to identify some of the problems facing West African countries. First and foremost is the problem of achieving a democracy in these countries and second is corruption. In Chapter II, we learned that the concept of democracy in Third World nations is quite different from that of the western and communist concepts. We also learned that elements in traditional African society do not prove to be compatible with some of the characteristics of a liberal society. As a result, there is a prevalence of non-liberal political systems in many African countries. Although non-liberal, most of these political systems could still be called democratic if certain conditions are met (as mentioned on pp. 16-17). From our ethical discussions, it can be clearly seen that none of these conditions is met in the countries we reviewed.

Achieving a democracy seems to be an underlying problem for West African countries, because if a democratic system is realized, it will pave the way to solving other problems like corruption. However, before a democracy can be realized I suggested that African politicians must first work out a compromise between their traditional ties and the influence of western liberal society. Their failure to do this may be a contributing factor to their unsuccessful attempts to institute a democratic system in their countries. Many of them fail to realize that the Third World concept of democracy is quite different from the western concept. They therefore attempt to adopt a democratic system fashioned by the western liberal system. This only results in chaos and confusion. In traditional African society, the accumulation of wealth and individual gain were not highly valued. Rather, equality and community seemed to be some of their higher values. On the other hand,
western liberal society encouraged competitiveness, inequality and individual gain. An arbitrary combination of these two conflicting systems would obviously result in chaos. As we saw in the above three cases, their political systems were based on the western system of democracy. In these countries there was a lot of confusion about who was in charge and who had authority to make decisions. The African value of respect for elders, the people, and the community was disregarded by politicians in their attempt to achieve a democracy. They failed to realize that this value was not opposed to a democracy but compatible with it. I therefore suggest that a systematic and conscious appraisal of the two systems be undertaken, to adopt those elements that are of value and compatible in both. For example, most Africans, I am sure, will agree with me when I say that our traditional values of respect for elders, the community and leaders must still be maintained. Community or collectivity is the key idea. These values helped instill in children the values necessary to prepare them for future leadership. If these values are not maintained, Africa will one day face the problems faced by the west—such as drugs and a high crime rate. The western liberal society is very competitive and individualistic. This breeds permissiveness, greed and hypocrisy with people only thinking about "number one." Africa has enough problems to deal with. Adding these would only make matters worse. So, this is one aspect of Western liberal society that can be done away with. Although most African countries are already facing these problems, a reinforcement of the above traditional values will help to curb them. However, there are pluses in the western liberal system, for example, accountability, economic progress and the pursuance of science and technology. These can be incorporated into the African system without any serious conflict with the aforementioned traditional values. You can still have progress without competition. Working together as one community makes for even faster progress.
Another factor that contributes to the difficulty of achieving a democratic system in Africa is tribalism or ethnic rivalry. An effort must be made to temper the extent to which ethnic affiliation influences political decisions. The African peoples must begin to look beyond a person's ethnic affiliation and concentrate on the human aspect. Ethnic rivalry had much to do with the Liberian civil war. Human dignity goes beyond the ethnic group that one belongs to. For one to concentrate only on the ethnic affiliation of a person would be ethically questionable. You would be using the person solely as a means toward an end, that is, to foster one's ethnic group or deter another ethnic group.

I mentioned earlier that the realization of democratic societies in Africa would pave the way toward solving other political problems, e.g., corruption. I say this because with a democracy comes freedom of speech, accountability and non-stagnation. If a politician is corrupt, people would not be afraid to speak up against him or her and they could remove the individual from office easily.

So far, I have identified the absence of a democratic system as an underlying problem in African politics and also corruption as a consequence. However, I believe that the source of all these problems is either a lack of ethical awareness or a gross disregard for ethics amongst many Africans in general and amongst politicians in particular. Hence, I would like to suggest a few ethical values that ought to be inculcated amongst African politicians. Though a Utilitarian and a Kantian do not agree on many issues, I believe that adherents to both schools of thought will not have a serious problem conceding to the values I am about to suggest. Before I engage in this ethical prescription I would like to point out some of the roots of corruption as highlighted by a commission of inquiry into corruption in the Ghanaian society. A recommendation made by the commission was for "a strong moral crusade." This, I hope, will lend support to my claim that there is an absence
of ethical standards. My source for this material will be drawn from the West Africa magazine, ("Matchet's Diary" 18 June, 1979. P.1063.)

Although the report only addresses corruption in Ghana, I believe that much of what it states is true for many African countries. According to the report, "any attempt to understand the phenomena of bribery and corruption requires 'analyses of the social factors that undermine the moral climate in which people conduct their affairs."1 Although the law is relatively clear, "how far people are prepared to abide by the law is affected by the moral posture of the society as a whole."2 The report identifies the traditional value of kinship as a source of corruption. It reads, "although the principle of being your brother's keeper is a good one, the corollary that your brother must keep you can be a major source of corruption. More importantly, the changes imposed through exposure to world cultures--this is a problem throughout the developing world--has caused a 'crisis in moral values and moral direction.'3

Another dominant factor is "the ineffective system of social and administrative control." The modern bureaucratic system has rules but 'no reasonable measures are taken to implement them effectively.'4 The report further cautions that corruption, if allowed to persist over a long period of time, develops powerful patrons and beneficiaries. Thus, it becomes impossible to clean up the system without stepping on the toes of powerful and prominent citizens. The commission reported that the Ghanaian custom (also a custom in many African countries) of gift giving is also a "fruitful source of corruption."5 Insignificant, and openly given presents to chiefs, although innocent, can be easily transformed into substantial gifts given in secret to prominent persons in key positions.

The high cost of election campaigns was also identified as one of the root causes of corruption. The report also blames the "unconscious conspiracy from party supporters to demand from politicians a style of life well beyond their means."6
An analysis of the Ghanaian desire for success was also made by the commission. Often, people assume that the successful have had some mystical aid or witchcraft helping them. As a result of this, the commission concluded that "if people are conditioned to believe that success is seldom achieved with clean hands, but at the same time, they are under pressure to succeed in business or in their normal avocations, they are not likely to be scrupulous or squeamish about their methods."7

The commission came to the conclusion that "corruption is a deadly virus that is eating its way into the body politic. If it is not checked and brought under control it will seriously undermine the effectiveness of the present or any future government of Ghana."8 It therefore recommended that "a strong moral crusade based on both precept and example" be initiated.9 In the words of the West Africa correspondent reporting on the commission: "It also had detailed recommendations for a code of discipline for public officers and trustees, more effective rules regarding presents to public servants, electoral expenses and government contracts, a 'free, fearless and fair minded press' and some detailed legal reforms."10

From the above, we see that a complete reorientation of the African's perception of politics and its purpose must be achieved or is required. As it is now, a lot of Africans see politics as a means to gain wealth and prestige for oneself and one's own. Also, those who are not politicians believe that by doing favors for politicians they can get what they want. The development of an altruistic perspective towards politics is therefore needed by politicians. The sooner African politicians adopt the virtue of others before self the better and more ethical African politics will become. Consideration of the general good above private interest will help curb some of the temptations to look after one's own and to break the law.
Most gifts that are given to politicians are given in the hope that something will be done in the interest of the donor. Thus, if one is working for the general good there will be no need to accept these gifts unless they are gifts to show appreciation for something already done and not before something is done. The same thing applies to election campaigns. If a politician in a democratic system has the interest of the general good, there will be no need to accept a lot of donations to finance one’s election campaign. There will be no need to spend so much money to cajole people into voting for someone. The majority of the people will vote for the politician who has the interest of the majority.

Consideration for the general good is, I believe, a very important virtue in politics. This is so because a politician with such a view point will not need to do many of the unethical things that one mainly concerned with a personal interest will have to do. For example, there will be no need for so much unnecessary secrecy in government if the government is working for the general good. Moreover, a politician’s job is to serve the people, not serve himself.

In keeping with the moral crusade suggested earlier, other ethical values to be inculcated by African politicians are: there must be greater concern for human life and dignity (as we saw in the Ghanaian and Liberian examples, where there was gross disregard); politicians must try not to manipulate people nor use them solely as a means to an end (Siaka Stevens in Sierra Leone did the direct opposite); secrecy in government must be averted and politicians should make every effort to obtain informed consent from their people (all of the politicians in the countries we looked at failed to abide by this principle).

Concluding therefore, I propose that African politicians, in their bid to develop their countries (both economically and politically) must first strive to develop a greater ethical awareness amongst themselves and the people; and
then work out a democratic system suitable for their people and country. These changes, I believe, would be their first step in a positive direction.
CHAPTER II: An Overview of Democracy


4. Ibid., 6.

5. Ibid., 8.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 9.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 12.

12. Ibid., 13.

13. Ibid., 14.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 16.


17. Ibid., 24

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 65.
22. Ibid., 66.
24. Jordan, 68.
25. Ibid., 71.
27. Robinson, 133.
28. Jordan, 44.
29. Ibid.
30. Macpherson, 27.
32. Macpherson, 30.

CHAPTER III: An Ethical Analysis Of Political Policies.

Ghana

1. Decalo, 3.
2. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 18.
17. Ibid., 20.
18. Ibid., 21.
21. Ibid., 89.
22. "Not a Coup... A Revolution," 70.
23. Kant, 95.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 96.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 123.
32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 45.


35. Rachels, 117.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 121.

Sierra Leone


39. Ibid.


42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.


45. Ibid.


48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 179.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Jaksa and Pritchard, 41.

53. Kant, 96.


55. Callahan, 106.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Mill, 36.

Liberia

64. Ibid.
70. Ibid., 226.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 227.
74. Macpherson, Democratic Theory, 229.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 230.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
CHAPTER IV: Conclusion


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.
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