

Rereading the Concept of Power in the African Context

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Abstract

Homosacer begins with a statement 'Modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question'. Aristotle had claimed that man is a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence. Agamben says " I begin to understand the figure of Homosacer after I read Foucault's text on biopolitics". Agamben's analysis of biopower is related to sovereignty. Foucault on the contrary shows how a sovereign model was replaced by disciplinary model of power. Agamben sees a light integration of both sovereign power and biopower.

Keywords : Homosacer, biopower, capitalism, control

Agamben was born as an Italian in 1942 and he studied at University of Rome in Law and philosophy. He took doctorate on political thought and was influenced by Walter Benjamin and Heidegger. He did research at Bibliotheque Nationale de France. He was the editor of Italian edition of Benjamin's works. It was Benjamin who introduced him to the abstract style of writing. Agamben made classical distinction between Bios and Zoe. Bios is the life of the citizen, the way of living proper to an individual or group whereas Zoe is the simple fact of

living common to all living beings, that is natural life or bare life which is excluded from sovereignty. Zoe is common to animals, men, Gods whereas Bios is used to describe a kind of qualified life for a particular way of life. Aristotle also makes differentiation with respect to bios and Zoe. There is a shift that exist from sovereign power to bio power. Biopower is the power of a political entity to control and regulate lives of populace.

Foucault's notion of 'Biopower' was first used in his lecture at college deFrance. It is the technology of power that allows for the control of populations. It is the control over human bodies through disciplinary institutions. It is imposed from outside whose source remains elusive. Modern power is encoded into social practices and human behaviours. It is an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and thereby controlling populations. In 2000, he came up with Homosacer book series. Homosacer literally refers to sacred man. In Roman law, it is someone who was banned, may be killed, but not sacrificed in a religious ritual. Agamben says that life can't be brought under the rule of law, man is born to life, bare life, as bare life is always inside of and outside of the law. Homosacer series talks about pressing contemporary issues of sovereignty, violence and trauma. Homosacer : sovereign power and bare life, state of exception, stasis : civilwar as a political paradigm, use of bodies, Opus Dei : an archaeology of duty etc belong to the series. In nineties, Agamben's philosophy made a shift from metaphysics, language and aesthetics to politics.

Poverty started with the early formation of society and is stratified between the slaves and slave owners, feudal lords and serfs, capitalist and the working class. The division between the privileged and the deprived exists in the society and it is yet an unresolved social problem. The unequal distribution of resources, corrupt governmental institutions, limited

access to opportunities is responsible for it. Problems of social, economic and political conflicts, insecurity and instability, infant mortality, maternal mortality, migration and immigration, illiteracy are to a large extent related to poverty. The measurement of poverty is complex and it is based on analytical framework. Nigeria has the highest rate of extreme poverty in the world, about 86.9 million. Report from the United Nations International Children Emergency fund shows that about 10.5 million of the country's children are not in school. Lack of education, corruption and the unstable political environment is observed to be a root cause of poverty in Nigeria.

The war against boko haram has destroyed the livelihood of citizens and the rampaging Fulani-herdsmen menace has destroyed farmlands. Shelter, water and proper sanitation facilities are lacking at some parts. They are deprived of nutrition, good food, education and housing facilities. This line of demarcation that the Nigerians face is increasing. Nigeria is rich in natural resources including crude oil and Nigeria operates a federal system of democratically elected governments. Corruption has been a major challenge and a high rate of unemployment, low wages, poor working conditions, lack of adequate funding and management capacity constitute difficulty. Deprivation in health services and lack of maternal education is related to increase of child mortality. The national policy, law, ministerial decrees or directives in this area include Child Rights Act 2003, orphans and vulnerable children: National plan of Action 2006 - 2010 and National Child Policy 2007. It is very important to strengthen the existing institutional mechanism. Programmes must be created to enhance the protection of children and to prevent children from child labour, child trafficking, drug abuse and sexual abuse. The intensity of armed conflicts in the continent is

on the rise and the sources of conflict are many. Africa as a whole has begun to make progress, but progress is impeded by conflicts in many parts.

The promotion of human security and protection is necessary to ensure global peace and prosperity. The conflicts and instability are increasing destruction to civilians, armies and to the ethnic groups as well. 30 wars have been fought in Africa since 1970 resulting in many war related deaths worldwide. In 1885, the colonial powers partitioned Africa into territories. The framework of colonial laws had been designed to exploit local divisions and later political monopolies lead to corruption, nepotism and the abuse of power. Colonialism has created distortions in the political economy of Africa. External efforts to undermine African governments has happened during the time of cold war. They use early warning mechanisms for prevention of conflicts, diplomatic efforts and peace keeping humanitarian intervention is required at times of crisis. When violence erupts, genuine effort is required to exhaust political options and appointment of special commissions is necessary. Special mediators help to look into areas of dispute and to recommend practical solutions. Peace making and diplomatic efforts in National as well as International level helps to resolve conflicts. It may include facilitating dialogue, promoting National reconciliation and it helps for the progress. Organization of African unity has a pivotal role in ensuring cooperation and harmony. Supporting regional and subregional initiatives is both necessary and desirable and it helps to tackle conflicts before the escalator beyond the control. Political and humanitarian mechanisms could be used to respond to crisis. International organizations and the governmental forces also intervene in such humanitarian situations as well. In times of armed conflict, targeting children for attack and abducting them is a serious crime. Special attention

must be paid to the needs of children and the safety of refugees is a matter of international concern. Extreme poverty in times of conflict makes the situation even more problematic

In Homosacer, he developed the notion of bio power inspired by Michael Foucault. Agamben says about his indebtedness to Foucault. Deladunantaye calls Foucault the single most decisive influence on Agamben's works. Form of life is a term first used by Ludwig Wittgenstein in philosophical investigations and he traces the concept genealogically. He identifies the state of exception as a modern institution, it is in the legal theory of Carl Schmitt. It was the period when Jews suffered in the camps, prisoners were tortured and abused and their rights were denied. Agamben stressed on the concept of state of exception. Detention camps in Guantanamo bay or at Abu ghraib prison in Iraq, all of them were denied rights and were put on trial. Horror of Holocaust and increasing dilemma in concentration camps are evidently portrayed by Agamben. Agamben also speaks of apparatus, apparatus as an instrument of exercising sovereign law and power. It is a mechanism of subjectification, where individual becomes a subject of the state. We are moulded by the state to act in a certain way, we are shaped by the cultural codes that state imposes upon, everything around becomes an apparatus, be it writing, be it literature. The apparatus of state or power controls life. We are becoming submissive within the political system with in bios. Power is exercised over us, over our bodies; sovereignty over life and death. Triumph of capitalism, in a world where money is the ideology, human condition, and the atrocities it faces day by day is on the rise and by stripping the individuals of all rights, state has become omniscient and omnipotent.

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