A Critique of Azikiwe’s Political Philosophy of Neo-Welfarism

Godwin Okaneme
Department of Philosophy, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract
Most African states after achieving independence were bedeviled by myriads of challenges. Most outstanding of these challenges were the problems of leadership and absence of pragmatic political ideology and underdevelopment. Nigeria as one of the young African states then had its fair share in the directionless governance which much accounted for its political instability. Consequently, the first president of Nigeria, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe who held that the political practice of the traditional African society was a combination of ‘capitalism’, ‘socialism’ and ‘welfarism’ which worked very well for them, advocated that we go back to our roots, adopt the same and update it to suit contemporary African society. The culmination of this was his political philosophy cum ideology for Nigeria which he called “Neo-welfarism” which is a political and economic system that synthesizes the good elements of capitalism, socialism and welfarism in socio-economic relations, illumined by the Nigerian indigenous ethics. This, he recommended as a remedial ideology for Nigeria’s socio-political and economic emancipation. This research sets to attempt a critique of Azikiwe’s “Neo-welfarism”. It showed that despite all objections, Azikiwe’s attempt to harmonize opposing economic doctrines through eclectic-pragmatic method suggests a viable path to economic development as well as political and social integration of the Nigerian state.

Introduction
African nations in general and Nigeria in particular before the advent of the colonial masters to Africa and its subsequent amalgamation into modern states existed as different nations with unique systems of government which is rooted in communalism. However, after the political independence of these African nations, they were confronted with the challenge of charting the way forward. Azikiwe formulated a pragmatic and humanistic political ideology for Nigeria that respects the communalistic character of indigenous communities and simultaneously reckons with contemporary economic situation. This he called “Neo-welfarism”, which is:

An economic system which blends the essential elements of Capitalism, Socialism and Welfarism in a socio-economic matrix, influenced by indigenous Nigerian mores, to enable the state and the private sector to own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange, whilst simultaneously enabling the state to assume responsibility for the social services, in order to benefit
the citizens according to their needs and officially specified minimum standard, without prejudice to participation in any aspect of the social services by voluntary agencies,(Nnamdi Azikiwe (1980:4)

This ideology is espoused in his work titled Ideology for Nigeria: Socialism, Capitalism or Welfarism? Azikiwe was of the view that neither capitalism, socialism, nor welfarism can liberate Africa, from her present quagmire and that it is an undeniable fact that a suitable socio-political philosophy of a people must be strongly rooted in their culture. J.I Omoregbe (2010:162) says:

Azikiwe developed a philosophy of eclecticism which according to him leads to three ‘harmony of opposites’, he examines capitalism, socialism and welfarism critically and found each of them wanting. But none of them is totally bad without some good elements in each of them. He brings together what he considers as the good element in each of them, combines them with the ideals of African traditional society and forms all into what he calls ‘Neo-welfarism’.

The Historical, Educational and Political Background of Nnamdi Azikiwe

Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-1996) was a distinguished Nigerian and West African nationalist and the first president of Nigeria. He was born on Nov. 16, 1904, of Igbo parents in Zungeru, in present Niger state of Northern Nigeria, where his father worked as a clerk in the Nigerian Regiment. Agbafor Igwe (1992:2) captures the circumstances of Azikiwe’s birth this way when he submits that he was born in Zungeru in the present Niger State of Northern Nigeria on November 16, 1904, in conically-shaped grass hut that easily reminds one of the humble birth of the Christian messiah, Jesus Christ.

His education began at Onitsha, his paternal home town, where he commenced his first primary education at the Holy Trinity School of the Roman Catholic Mission in 1912. Agbafor Igwe (1992:6) argues that during this period, the young Nnamdi, as a roving student “changed school as often as his civil servant father was transferred from one place to another”. In 1915, Nnamdi Azikiwe relocated from Onitsha and joined his parents, then resident in Lagos, where he continued his primary education as he was in 1916 enrolled into the Methodist Boys’ High School to continue his primary education shortly after his arrival from Lagos, Igwe (1992:10). Shortly thereafter, he continued his educational career at Onitsha, later moved to Calabar in 1920, and was trained at the Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar. Nnamdi Azikiwe left Hope Waddell, still in 1920 for Wesleyan Boys’ High School, Lagos where he continued his education. While at Wesley Boys High School, in December 1920, he excelled in his studies and won a prize for which he was given a book on the biography of James A. Garfield, a former President of the United States, who rose from grass to grace. The book galvanized him as he became determined to succeed in life. He wrote the civil service entrance examination in 1921, was successful and was employed as a clerk in the Nigerian Treasury in Lagos and worked there from 1921 to 1924.
However he sought and gained admission to Storer College, West Virginia, United States in 1925 where he did his preliminary courses from 1925-1926. He enrolled there for his bachelor’s degree between 1926 and 1927, but later moved on to Howard University, Washington D.C in February, 1928, where he continued his degree programme. However, due to financial challenges, he was unable to complete his undergraduate studies at Howard, which necessitated his application for admission and financial assistance from Lincoln University, Chester County, Pennsylvania. They were granted, and thus Nnamdi Azikiwe bagged a Bachelor of Arts honours degree in Political Science from Lincoln University in June 1930.

Azikiwe had earlier in 1927 obtained a Certificate in Law from the Lassalle Extension University, Chicago. He also obtained a Certificate in Journalism from Teachers College, Columbia University in 1930. He also obtained two Masters Degrees while in the United States: a Master of Arts degree in Religion and Philosophy from Lincoln University in 1932 and a Master of Science degree in Political science and Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1933; Agbafor Igwe (1992:33). After a brief stint as Instructor of Political Science at Lincoln from 1933 to 1934, he left the shores of United States to his motherland, Africa.

Having returned to Nigeria in 1934, and accepted an offer to edit the African Morning Post, a new daily newspaper in Accra, Ghana, which he quickly made into an important organ of nationalist propaganda. A. E Animalu (1996:19), commenting on the early journalistic career of Zik, submits that he returned to Nigeria at the end of 1934. However, his effort to get a job in Nigeria fainted. For this reason, he promptly moved to Accra, Ghana, where in 1935, he went to work for Mr. A.J Ocansey, proprietor of the Gold coast spectator, as editor of the Accra Africa Morning Post.

In 1937 he returned to Lagos and founded the West African Pilot, which became a fire-eating and aggressive nationalist paper of the highest order. Azikiwe also became directly involved in political movements in his bid to deliver the independence of Nigeria and Africa. Eziuche Ubani (2006:25) succinctly captures this view that Zik’s main important goal was political independence and awakening of consciousness in Africa. In a way there is some truth in saying that Zik had an agenda of liberating Africa, Nigeria and the black race from injustice and oppressive rule of the colonial masters.

In 1937 he joined the Nigerian Youth Movement, leaving it for the Nigerian National Democratic party in 1941. In 1944, on Azikiwe’s initiative, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) was founded to weld the heterogeneous masses of Nigeria into one solid block. Azikiwe was elected the council’s general secretary and in 1946 its president. In this period his major political writings, apart from his newspaper articles, were Political Blue Print of Nigeria and Economic Reconstruction in Nigeria (both 1943).

Between 1947 and 1960, Azikiwe held a number of elected public offices. This is substantiated in Tunde Abdularaheem and Adebayo Olukoshi (1987: 64) in these terms:
Azikiwe was the first secretary general of NCNC and later its national president. He was also an important political focus from whom the Zikists drew part of their philosophical inspiration to sustain their activism. Indeed the Zikists movement was formed in 1946 partly in response to Azikiwe’s appeal to Nigerians to defend him against his colonialist attackers and join him in the propagation of anti-colonial ideal.

Ugochukwu Uba (1989:219) also stated that Dr. Azikiwe was the moving force in NCNC. His impact in the Nigerian’s nationalist movement was felt when he joined the Nigerian Youth Movement on his return from the United States. When he took over the leadership of the NCNC, the party became a force that could not be ignored by the colonial administration and also became the instrument of mobilization.

He was a member of the Nigerian Legislative Council (1947-1951), member of the Western House of Assembly (1952-1953), premier of the Eastern Region (1954-1959), and president of the Nigerian Senate (1959-1960). During these years, he continued to play the single most vigorous role in Nigeria's march towards independence. While he was premier, he expanded educational facilities in the Eastern Region and laid the foundation of the University of Nigeria Nsukka, formally opened in September 1960. On Oct. 1, 1960, Nigeria became independent. Azikiwe was appointed governor general and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became the prime minister. On Oct. 1, 1963, Nigeria became a republic, and Azikiwe was named its first president, a position he held until he was deposed by the military coup of Jan. 15, 1966.

During the Nigerian civil war, Azikiwe at first supported Biafra, but in August 1969, he withdrew his support, canvassing for a united Nigeria giving the reason as cited in Lambert Ejiofor (1989: 270); “I have been strengthened in my faith in one Nigeria as an expression I believe I coined in the Halcyon days before the attainment of our independence as a sovereign state. I believe then, as I believe now, in one Nigeria which is indivisible, indestructible and perpetual, provided adequate security is ensured to all its citizens and inhabitants in their persons and property”. From 1978-1983 Azikiwe led the Nigeria People's Party (NPP); he was the party’s candidate in the presidential elections of 1979 and 1983. He retired from politics in 1986 and became a statesman from then onwards. Azikiwe died in Enugu, Enugu state in eastern Nigeria on May 11, 1996, at a ripe age of 92 years after a protracted illness.

Azikiwe’s Neo-Welfarism as an Ideology for Nigeria

It is the practical application of pragmatic choosing and arranging. He selects the best elements in the universally recognized ideologies of capitalism, socialism and welfarism” Lambert Ejiofor (1989:133). He finds each of them insufficient, reason being that each of them fails to address multifarious human needs holistically. On this, Eze Nwokereke (2005:111) asserts:

Azikiwe suggested that any theory based on the human nature which loses sight of such diversities that human nature encompasses would
invariably be one-sided and inadequate. This is one of the principle grounds for which he considers capitalism, socialism and welfarism inadequate since each focuses on a particular aspect of human nature which excludes others.

Hence, Azikiwe rejected certain aspects of capitalism, socialism and welfarism. In the rejection of welfarism, Azikiwe expressed his dissatisfaction with certain things or principles about it in these terms, as cited in Sam Mbakwe (1989:242),

In view of my previous experience in this respect, I am of the considered opinion that, other things being equal it could be most embarrassing; if not suicidal to plunge into the pool of welfarism without taking note that it is frailty of human beings to seek to reap where they have not sown. Any social service office which is free is bound to be inundated with dropouts, idlers, adventures, spivs and their collaborators, apart from the genuine sector of the population concerned.

In like manner, Lambert Ejiofor (1989:129) forcefully argues that Zik in rejection of socialism maintains; the pattern of nationalism thrives, political chieftains learn unchallenged and they together make the road to socialism barbarian and confused. Even the more Marxian socialism promotes totalitarianism, polarization, clannishness, name-calling such as Marxist, Leninist, Trotskyist, Stalinist, Titoist.

Lambert Ejiofor (1989:133) further argues that Azikiwe went against any ideology which went against the African approval of the ownership of private property and encouraged private enterprise. ‘Why’, Azikiwe asked; “should we swallow wholesale any doctrine which purport to indoctrinate us with ideas which are definitely contradictory to our own philosophy of life’?"

With the assumption that what Nigeria needs is an ideological re-orientation and not ideological imposition, Azikiwe held that the traditional Africans were democratic in their institutions while economically, they were ‘welfarists’, they shared things together. For him, “no human society can thrive without an ideology of its own rooted in its past and therefore Nigeria should not be an exception” (Azikiwe 1980: x), but should have ideology rooted in its past. For Ideological problems could be seen as a result of self-alienation from Africa’s root. Hence, Azikiwe (1980:127) explains that his thesis was based on the proposition that Nigeria has ideologies, particularly in the fields of politics, sociology, economics, jurisprudence, philosophy and religion, among many other disciplines. Therefore, reorientation is all that is necessary to adapt them to contemporary concepts and criteria.

Thus, he argued, that the political system of the traditional African society was rooted in an ideology which is not devoid of ‘capitalism’, ‘socialism’ and ‘welfarism’ and it worked very well for them. “All we need to do is to go back to our roots, adopt this system of combining capitalism with socialism and update it to suit contemporary African society”, Omorogbe (2010:165). He extolled the spirit of solidarity of our ancestors which
in spite of their heterogeneous languages and cultures sustained them and enabled them to survive. He therefore advocated for a midway house between socialism and capitalism that is inspired by our indigenous mores. He made this clear in his lecture titled “Tribalism, instrument of National Unity”, delivered at the university of Nigeria Nsukka on May 15, 1964. (http://www.blackpast.org/1964-nnamdi-azikiwe-tribalism-pragmatic-instrument-national-unity)

My point is that our ancestors, in spite of their heterogeneous languages and cultures, have bequeathed to us a legacy of political and economic ideologies which sustained them and enabled them to survive. Now that we are confronted with welfare system, such evidence of humanitarianism problems of co-existence and we are ensconced in a wilderness of alien ideologies, which are making a terrific impact on our ways of life, the obvious move is for us, like a seaman who has drifted from salt to fresh water, without knowing it, to cast down our bucket where we are and draw fresh water to assuage our thirst. Yes, we must dig deep from our roots to discover this secret of successful co-existence.

Azikiwe, saw that none of them was totally bad, therefore held that there was the need for the eclectic-pragmatic harmonization of these systems by combining what he believes to be the good elements in each of them. As cited in A. E Animalu (1996:91), Zik sums up:

My aim is to blend what I consider to be the best in each ideology and adapt them to what is adaptable to our indigenous ideologies and therefore produce a harmony of opposites or rather a new system in the light of our experience and reason to make it work successfully. Thus without blowing a flute, I have exposed the incompatibility of these incompatibles.

The outcome of this eclectic harmonization of opposites is what he calls Neo-welfarism. Zik’s “Neo-welfarism” as an ideology is therefore a synthesis of the good elements of the three dominant forces; capitalism, socialism and welfarism that define human interactions in the world, grounded on the Nigeria’s indigenous mores. He, Azikiwe (1980: 127) says:

After making a critical analysis of modern ideologies and ruminating on the various facets of this intractable problem of ideological reorientation, I have come to conclusion that we should adapt modern ideologies of alien extraction, whether in the extreme right or center or extreme left, to the indigenous ideologies, which had enabled our forebears to conquer the elements, which had influenced the environment now geographically identified as Nigeria. Call it what you will. I suggest NEO-WELFARISM
This he defined as:

an economic system which blends the essential elements of Capitalism, Socialism and Welfarism in a socio-economic matrix, influenced by indigenous Nigerian mores, to enable the state and the private sector to own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange, whilst simultaneously enabling the state to assume responsibility for the social services, in order to benefit the citizens according to their needs and officially specified minimum standard, without prejudice to participation in any aspect of the social services by voluntary agencies. (Azikiwe 1980: 4).

On the definition of Neo-welfarism, Eze Nwokereke (2002:107) avers that Neo-welfarism by definition is an economic cum political philosophy that seeks to blend the best elements in capitalism, socialism, welfarism and indigenous ideologies through the eclectic pragmatic approach that will ensure an abundant and happy society.

The objective of neo-welfarism can therefore be seen from both economic and political dimensions. According to Zik (Azikiwe 1980: 128),

The aim will be to crystallize an abundant society, organized on the basis of the economies of abundance, as proposed to an affluent society, organized on the basis of the economics of scarcity. Such as a neo-welfarist society would eschew and effectively control factors which could breed cornering of the market, monopoly, inflation, profiteering and the enthronement of artificial scarcity as the cornerstone of the economic system.

Furthermore, in an ingenuous show of his wealth of experience in the Nigeria’s political service as a legislator and head of state respectively, he formulated this ideology to bring a practical purpose of political emancipation for Nigeria, he says, Azikiwe (1980: 129):

I present neo-welfarism as an ideology which should accelerate the emancipation of Nigeria from the manacles of muddle and drift, which conspired to form part of the remote causes of military intervention in Nigeria Government and politics. In brief, the aims and objectives of neo-welfarism in Nigeria are to restore democracy, building a new political leviathan where there will be political freedom, economic security and social equality.

Perhaps, Prof Elo Amucheazi (1997:79) captures the best interpretation of Zik’s political objective in Zik’s ideology for Nigeria which for him is the entrenchment of true and enduring democratic governance for the country. In his words:

Perhaps, one of the greatest achievements of Dr. Azikiwe is the successful planting of democratic culture in this country. From the start of his political career, Azikiwe sought and fought to build a Nigeria on the platform of well accepted principles of dialogue,
mass education and mass participation in political process, freedom of expression and assembly and rule of law

Ikechukwu A Kanu (2010:186) in his view argues that Azikiwe in his neo-welfarism aims at ushering in a new dawn for Nigeria. He adds that Azikiwe began his political philosophy with a critical examination of the credibility and workability of capitalism, socialism and welfarism. From his critical analysis, he envisions the possibility of making good out of the best of these three political systems to forge a new system for Nigeria. In the same vein, Agbafor Igwe (1992:258) argued that “Neo-Welfarism is formulated to tackle the problems of lack of appreciable development and ideological confusion which beset the new state”. The Neo-welfarism as portrayed by Azikiwe (1980:127) is also believed to promote the idea of material prosperity for Nigerians according to the resources of each individual. And being motivated by the philosophy of live and let live;

Neo-welfarism will recognize the profit motive as an incentive to the development of individual initiative; but it will not condone an official attitude of laissez faire for the exploitations of human beings by their kind. Rather, it would stimulate the assumption by the state of specific responsibilities so as to insulate citizens from bogeys of hunger, disease, ignorance, fear and want.

Commenting on Zik’s political philosophy, Michael S O Olisa (1989:88), agrees that It is safe to state that on the basis of its very nature, Zik’s political philosophy of liberal democracy is characterized by pragmatism, gradualism, inclusiveness (in its capacity to accommodate elements of other philosophies), humanism, and welfarism. Azikiwe argues that this ideology is a vernal and dynamic interpretation of welfarism and its synchronization into a social matrix of the best elements in the universally recognized ideologies of capitalism, socialism and welfarism. Suffice it to say that, neo-welfarism embraces belief in private enterprise, reinforced by state participation in the private sector and state collaboration in management technology for competently and efficiently administering on a profitable basis statutory corporations and parastatal commercial enterprises, including government-owned, government controlled and government-sponsored companies.

Thus the principle of capitalism, socialism and welfarism would be harmonized in socio-economic mold comprising elements of a mixed economy, a planned economy, and an indigenous rationalized economy. Such a neo-welfarist society would eschew and effectively control factors which could breed cornering of the market, monopoly, inflation, profiteering and the enthronement of artificial scarcity as cornerstone of the economic system.

He argued that the ideology reorientation postulated would give a more humanistic and realistic expression to an open door policy, within reasonable limits for free enterprise, based on unrestricted but regulated competition, under the paraphernalia of a welfare system, whose objective should be well-being of all Nigerians and those who live within its borders. It should facilitate the establishment of a state machinery to enable our people
share the wealth of the Nigerian nation, geared towards the fostering of individual prosperity and collective welfare.

Similarly, he argues, that Nigeria should co-operate with the advanced and developed nations in exploiting our human potentialities and natural resources to mutual advantage, with the goal of our people eventually but gradually attaining ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, in the interest of the greatest good for the greatest number of Nigerians, without prejudice to the co-existence of other world ideologies which are adaptable to the needs and idiosyncrasies of peculiar situations but applicable to their historical circumstances. Also in his lecture titled “Tribalism, instrument of National Unity”, delivered at the university of Nigeria Nsukka on may 15, 1964, he made his mind known; “I am a realist but I can dream dreams as well. I have a deep and abiding faith in pragmatism as a safe and useful philosophy to guide the individuals of any nation to accomplish their aims Reason, experience, and practice demonstrates the verdict of history, if we bear in mind the experiences of older countries in Europe, America and Asia.” For the avoidance of doubt, he confessed, that the raison “d’etre” of the ideology of neo-welfarism is to clarify the confusion which seems to have beclouded the thinking of Nigerians on the ideology best suited for them at this stage of her history.

A Critique of Azikiwe’s Neo-Welfarism

This section will critically, holistically and philosophically examine the pros and cons of Azikiwe’s ideology of Neo-welfarism. A critique of Neo-welfarism in this research will take the form of an acknowledgement and analyses of the good elements of Zik’s famed theory. It will also look at the limitations, weaknesses and possible dangers inherent in the wholesale application of such ideology in the governance of the country by any government in power either now or in the foreseeable future.

The strengths of Neo-Welfarism

Neo-welfarism is basically targeted at restoring an authentic democracy and accelerating an economic and political emancipation of Nigeria, as its major objective, Azikiwe (1980:129). This depicts the ideology as being all-encompassing as it is almost a universal truism that the political and economic life of a man determine other things about his existence just as Karl Marx argued that the economy is the substructure upon which lies the super structure of other forms of social consciousness, Omoregbe (2010:118). Hence, these basic aims of Neo-welfarism have tentacles which extend to encapsulate other areas of endeavours to offer a lot of benefits to Nigeria, humanity and beyond.

Eclectic Pragmatism Aims at Achieving the Practical End

Zik’s method is quite commendable. This is simply because it not only incorporates good ideas from different systems; it also aims at achieving the practical end to serve the humanity. Azikiwe (1980:111) sees eclectic pragmatism as “a term used in philosophy to
identity a composite system of thought which incorporate ideas selected from other systems.”

This method is important because its essence is the refusal to follow blindly one set of formulae and convention, it rather recognizes and selects all other sources in those elements which are good so far as they are practicable and useful. Eze Nwokereke commends Neo-welfarism because its incorporation of the good elements of different systems while it discards its bad aspects, all to serve to humankind. According to him; “Neo-welfarism will avoid capitalist non-challant attitude towards social injustice, and socialist degradation of human beings who are reduced to thoughtless, purposeless non-entities made to function as puppets of the constituted authority.” Nwokereke (2002:109)

Furthermore, what is in fact the most commendable factor about neo-welfarism and its eclectic-pragmatism method is that practical result for the good of many is of its concern not just a mere theoretical speculation. To this extent we can say that Azikiwe’s theory is utilitarian since he cares about the greater good of the greater number of people. He says that “What we need as a cure is a system of philosophy which works to the advantage of many and not that which speculates to the disadvantages of many.” Azikiwe (1980:116) Agbafor Igwe (1992:258) opines that “In particular Neo-welfarism is formulated to tackle the problems of lack of appreciable development and ideological confusion which beset the new states.”

Neo-welfarism thus shuns useless speculations about socio-political matters. It rather emphasizes the real, practical and useful. The question is: what does Neo-welfarism offer to Nigerian democracy through its method of eclectic pragmatism? Zik has argued that the usefulness of any ideology lies in its ability to liberate. As cited in Ikechukwu Kanu (2010:182), Zik buttresses that “The usefulness of any concept, idea or theory, lies in its implications for the practical solutions to the problems of society. In this sense, pragmatism requires that man’s efforts and intelligence should be geared towards the liberation of man and the satisfaction of his needs in society”.

In conformity with Zik, Agbafor Igwe (1992:131) argues that eclectic pragmatism is most suitable in dealing with African problems, in particular in view of the variegated traumatic experiences which precipitated them. Those experiences were engendered by European colonization of Africa which brought in its wake, economic, political, cultural and even spiritual denudation of the continent Nigeria is not an exception in this colonial mess. Apart from being the appropriate method for overcoming the colonial mess, eclectic pragmatism is equally the best method of dealing with certain persistent problems which include tribalism, frequent coup d’état, religious strives and recurrent question of an effective developmental ideology.

Eclectic pragmatism can lead to a realistic solution to each of these problems such as tribalism, political instability and religious intolerance. Agbafor Igwe (1992:132) opines that Zik’s contention is that tribalism is not incompatible with national unity as many people seem to think. Azikiwe maintains that tribal feelings can be harnessed into a strong instrument for national unity if only the eclectic and pragmatic approach is adopted. On Zik, Ikechukwu Kanu (2010:184) says that “Tribalism, he observes, is a reality, but proposes that even in the midst of tribalism, national unity can be a reality. How the reality of
tribalism can be adapted to the unreality of national unity to make national unity a reality is one of the basic concerns of Zik.”

The effect will deepen Nigeria’s democracy. To harness tribal feeling for national unity and progress requires recognition that tribalism is a reality and national unity can be a reality if the strong feeling towards the tribe is eclectically and pragmatically channeled towards the nation. To realize this, Azikiwe exegetes as cited in Agbafor Igwe (1992:132):

Every nation in the world is made up of tribes; every tribe is an aggregation of clans. Every clan is an aggregation of villages or cantons. Every village or cantons is an aggregation of families. Every family is composed of individuals. Now an individual’s duty is first to himself, second to his immediate family and extended family, then to his village, clan, and tribe and last to the nation.

From Azikiwe’s perspective, tribalism which many people would regard as evil can be turned around to serve national ends and advance the country’s democracy through eclectic pragmatism. Since tribe aggregate into a nation, the only way of replacing tribal loyalty with national loyalty is for the state to provide strong inducements such as were never provided by the tribe. These will come in form of economic, social and political security to be guaranteed by the state. With this, and given the proper educational curriculum, individuals would begin to see that they have more to gain by paying greater allegiance to the nation than to the tribe. Strong feeling for the tribe would be replaced with a stronger feeling for the nation hence, the realization of national unity, national stability and an authentic democracy.

Another salient issue in Nigeria’s democracy is the problem of religious fanaticism and intolerance. The question to consider is how Neo-welfarism and its eclectic pragmatic method can solve the problem of religious intolerance affecting Nigeria’s democracy. The basis of this is the assumption that the principles of eclectic pragmatism are such as to discourage fixed attitudes which constitute the root causes of intolerance and strife. The eclectic pragmatism approach invites adherents of opposing religions to open their hearts and ears to their counterparts so as to appreciate their points of view.

By reasoning with one another and adopting an attitude of “tolerant skepticism”, a better understanding might be achieved among apparently opposing religious adherents. Eclectic entails that adherents of different religions should maintain an open mind, reason with one another and avoid condemning one another without a fair hearing. The cultivation of broad mindedness, which is an important requirement of eclectic pragmatism, could enable the adherents of various religions to differentiate between the spiritual essence of most religions and their doctrinal-cum-cultural aspects. They might discover that their disagreement stemmed from the latter and not from the former. Agbafor Igwe (1992: 142) observes that when religious is discovered to be a matter of intellectual and cultural conflict, the eclectic – pragmatic approach of sifting and harmonizing the good elements in each culture would remove such conflict.
Besides, the tolerant skepticism which eclectic-pragmatism implies is the obviously banal recognition that no matter how contrary one’s view is to another each might still have something of value to offer which, when synthesized would become more adequate than each of the separate contributing views. Therefore what the adherents of each religion need to show is the practicability and usefulness of their religious doctrines as factors which speak in favour of their religion rather than seeking to convert people from other religious beliefs and persuasions by sheer and brute force. The winner in the positive outcome of this is Nigeria’s democracy.

**Alternative to the Most Antagonistic Economic Doctrines**

Another major point that scores high the ideology of Neo-welfarism is that it constitutes an alternative to the two most antagonistic economic doctrines in the contemporary world- capitalism and socialism. More so, it blends the good elements in both capitalism and socialism. In so doing, it would serve as a veritable ideology that would diffuse the tension in the contemporary world as a result of a dogmatic adherence each. In line with this Joseph Omoregbe (2010:166) says that Neo-welfarism will avoid the social injustice of capitalism. It will avoid the socialist evil of degrading human dignity through excessive control reducing human being to non-entity by the state authorities.

The beauty of the ideology is its realistic nature. This is because it acknowledges that various socio-political theories more or less complement one another rather than being totally exclusive. Each tries to narrow the nature and goal of human life from its own perspective. But Zik suggested that none of them embodies the demands of human nature completely but an aspect of human nature, Eze Nwokereke (2005:111). The harmonization of the various elements in each ideology is valuable to the quest for a better understanding of human nature and the goal of life. Neo-welfarism is praise-worthy because it is a dynamic political philosophy which is anti-dogmatic and anti-absolute. For this reason, it ignores the extremism of capitalism, socialism and welfarism. Both capitalism and socialism tend to promote the altruistic tendencies in man respectively. Neo-welfarism recognizes these tendencies and therefore envisages a new political order that harmonizes the demands of the human nature.

Since the inception of the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria in 1999 till date, the governments both past and present has not come up with a clear-cut political ideology, it is always trials and errors or one type of extremism or the other. Neo-welfarism presents a veritable alternative to Nigeria’s fledgling democracy. Bearing in mind that Nigeria is such a divergent nation with people of different ideologies which by summation either has socialist or capitalist or welfarist inclinations, both government and the citizens should be allowed to participate in the free market, while at the same time, government takes up the responsibility of monitoring the individual’s extreme tendencies, at the same time, provide the minimum standard to better the lives of citizens which shall include provision of basic amenities that enhance human existence and wellness like electricity, water supply, schools etc. These are the advocacies of neo-welfarism which if properly harnessed will take Nigeria to the next level in her quest for critical development. This is because the capitalist ideology, as well as socialism and welfarism will be blended together.
as a single system. Adoption of Neo-welfarism for Nigeria will mean a lot for her. As Omoregbe (2010:166) puts it;

Its aim will be to have abundance of goods. The state will participate in the private sector enterprise by sponsoring companies. It will adopt the policy of free enterprises and regulated competition. It will be a democratic state, with individual liberty and equality before the law, there shall be checks and balances in the state in order to ensure stability.

Azikiwe’s ideology envisages a Nigerian democracy that will be an ideal of an abundant society that will provide the abundant necessities to the citizens. According to Azikiwe (1980:124); “We can try a system which should guarantee abundance to enable the individual and the collective component of our society to have abundant food, abundant shelter, abundant clothing, abundant necessities of life and abundant amenities within a reasonable cost and within the reach of the many.”

**Humane and indigenous root of neo-welfarism**

Neo-welfarism becomes interesting if assessed from the humanistic point of view. It aspires to the establishment of a humane society where there can be abundance and where the state would guarantee for every citizen a reasonable minimum standard of living. Furthermore, the neo-welfarist state as envisaged would ensure that man’s exploitation and dehumanization by his kind is brought to a minimum if not totally eradicated.

We may not detach the humanistic nature of Neo-welfarism as envisaged from the fact that it is rooted in “the Nigeria’s indigenous mores”, Azikiwe (1980:4) which is communalistic and of concerns and care for fellow man. This is a major substance in Neo-welfarism worthy of acknowledgement. This is so because Azikiwe is of the considered view that the political system of traditional Africa was a harmony of capitalism and socialism which was very successful; Omoregbe (2010: 167). For him any Nigerian ideology should take cognizance of this. Thus in line with this view, Omoregbe (2010:165-166) asserts:

Our ancestors had a political ideology and we should go back to it. Politically they were welfarist, they shared things together. They had land in common; they were their brother’s keepers. There were no cases of some people being extremely poor in the same society. It was a blend of capitalism and socialism and it avoided the evils of capitalism. That is the system we need in Africa we should adopt it and modernize it as ‘neo-welfarism’.

This is further captured in Omoregbe 1990 as cited in Eze Nwokereke (2002:106-107); “Now that we are confronted with problems of co-existence and are ensconced in a wilderness of alien ideologies, which are making a terrific impact on our ways of life… we must dig deep from our roots to discover this secret of successful co-existence”.

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130
Implicit from the above is that neo-welfarism offers us a revolutionary ideal of human equality, human dignity, love and respect for one another which is inherent in the traditional Nigerian ethics. It further means that in neo-welfarist state as envisaged that the government shall not be above the law. The fundamental human rights shall be respected and guaranteed.

The above expression implies a lot to Nigeria’s democracy. The unnecessarily expensive nature of the inverted democracy which the country is operating presently reflects the acute crises of moral values, indigenous ethics and communal character in the ruling class and in the general population. St. Augustine of Hippo, the great and celebrated African philosopher and theologian, suggested that without morality, governments are nothing but a gang of robbers. Clearly such negative portraiture is at variance with the iconoclastic ideas of Nnamdi Azikiwe who worked hard to formulate a pragmatic political ideology for the Nigerian state that reflects the communalistic character of indigenous communities and simultaneously reckons with contemporary economic situation. Nigerian democracy must extol probity, accountability, morality, brotherly love, humanistic ideals and ethics. These time-honored virtues occupy a prominent position in Azikiwe’s proposal for the neo-welfarist state, because he envisaged a democratic society in which liberty and equality before the law are all but guaranteed, Azikiwe (1980:131-132). Such a state as Nigeria should assume the responsibility of freeing the citizens from hunger, disease, ignorance, fear and want. Neo-welfarism in its humanistic nature further recommends for Nigerian democracy that no person shall be arraigned in court for committing an alleged offence unless a case has been stated to the person to answer; Azikiwe (1980:143). It also proposes that no person shall be ostracized in Nigeria since it is a debaucher of human dignity. In neo-welfarism for Nigeria, everybody shall not be a judge unto one’s own case and at the same time, nobody shall be ostracized.

The beauty of Neo-welfarism is caped on its emphasis on the fundamental rights of individuals which it warns must not be tampered with. Such rights include right to life, right to freedom of speech and expressions among others; Azikiwe (1980:14). These are the basic ingredients that beautify democracy which neo-welfarism can infuse into Nigeria’s democratic culture.

The Weaknesses of “Neo-welfarism”

At this juncture, it is necessary to examine the weaknesses of neo-welfarism. Although neo-welfarism as an envisaged ideology has a lot to offer to humanity and Nigerian democracy if properly applied to daily life and business of governance, it is still not without some inherent and uncritical elements. It is therefore worthwhile to toe the line of caution and meticulousness if the ideology is to be applied to serve the much desired purpose. Consequently, we deem it fit as well as worthwhile to identify and critically analyze some of the objections against neo-welfarism.

Azikiwe failed to make a distinction between mixed economy and Neo-welfarism
Azikiwe having presented “Neo-welfarism” as an economic system which emerged from a synthesis of three of the major economic systems which include capitalism, socialism and welfarism, it appears that the pendulum is swinging in the direction of the mixed economic system. This is why we believe that Azikiwe should have drawn a boundary line between his ideology and mixed economy for clarity sake. This becomes necessary since “private and public ownership of the means of production and exchange encouraged by mixed economic system is what Azikiwe claims would obtain in the Neo-welfarist economy”; Agbafor Igwe (1992:251). For this reason, many will naturally be disposed to see Neo-welfarism as a “mixed economy” which Azikiwe defined as An economic system in which some factors in the means of production, distribution and exchange are privately or publicly owned and it includes an economic system which allows individuals, statutory bodies or parastatal organisations to own, sponsor, control or manage any aspect of the economy as a giving or profitable concern; Azikiwe (1980:4).

Although, it can be argued that both neo-welfarism and mixed economy share certain things in common, it is noteworthy that they are not the same but Azikiwe presents Neo-welfarism in such a way that many can dismiss it “as a mere neologism for mixed economy”; Agbafor Igwe (1992:251). Agbafor Igwe admits that both Neo-welfarism and mixed economy have certain things in common since “mixed economy purports to retain economic doctrine”. However, he emphasizes on the difference between them in these terms; when we recall that there is no specific demand on the state operating the mixed economic system to be welfarist, and that it is mandatory for the Neo-welfarist state to ensure the welfare of all citizens through appropriate legislations and practices, then the difference between them is made clearer; (Ibid.252).

This is why we believe that Zik should have been more specific and direct. If “Neo-welfarism” is to be adopted as the political and economic ideal in the Nigerian democratic principle, it must be clearly defined and understood in such a way that its meaning is not lost in ambiguity. The welfare programmes which neo-welfarism sets out to achieve, must remain enshrined in the nation’s constitution and its implementation must be sacrosanct.

**Impossibility of a realistic synthesis of capitalism and socialism**
Another major fault in Azikiwe’s neo-welfarism was his attempt to reconcile two opposing and contradictory ideologies. He says that “ideology does not modify but blend opposite views”; Azikiwe (1980:111). Joseph I. Omoregbe criticized Azikiwe on the basis of founding “a via media or an eclectic harmony between capitalism and socialism as found in Neo-welfarism and claimed that there is no via media between capitalism and socialism any more than there is a via media between injustice and justice, egoism and altruism or vice and virtue”; Nwokereke (2002:120).

Contrary to what Azikiwe thought, Omoregbe argued that welfarism was not a political system different from capitalism and socialism but rather “an adulterated socialism characterized by capitalist egoism” (Ibid). In the same manner Agbafor Igwe argued that Zik did not explain the difference between “Neo-welfarism and the mixed economic system”;Agbafor Igwe(1992:251). However even though the so-called harmony of
ideologies by Nnamdi Azikiwe may not be a practically realizable project, it is worthy of note that Nigeria’s democracy can still imbibe certain good elements in capitalism, socialism or welfarism.

Non Specification of Good Elements that should be harmonized

Another major objection that ultimately challenges the reliability of the theory of Neo-welfarism is its inherent failure to stipulate the particular or specific elements in each of capitalism, socialism and welfarism that should be pragmatically harmonized atop the indigenous African economic system. It is quite obvious that Azikiwe adduced arguments against each of the economic system but he remained neutral minded about them without asserting which one he rejects or accepts in part or in whole. Agbafor Igwe (1992:249) thus argues that the non-specification of the good elements of the various systems which the neo-welfarism has incorporated makes this ideology almost fluid and vacuous. It makes the neo-welfarism an amorphous ideology. It is thus a name without a precise content.

He went further to assert that even though Azikiwe claims that the Neo-welfarist state would operate an economic system which has the ingredients of the adjudged good elements of different economic doctrines, and which allows private and public ownership of the means of production, he failed to say the extent to which the individuals and the public would go in acquiring productive means such that the profit motive and individual initiative would be encouraged and at the same time the state would not condone the expatiation of man.

Summary

In this research work, we have seen the efforts of the first president of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to solve the ideological and administrative problems bedeviling the Nigerian nation and her polity. With Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, “gradually, the emphasis shifted from blaming Nigeria’s woes to an inward search for the causes of the problems and possible solutions”; Nwokereke (2002:106).

In this regard, Zik came up with his Neo-welfarism as we have discussed. Zik made frantic and critical efforts to formulate a pragmatic ideology, not without the indigenous influence, not relying on a particular existing ideology but extracted from each of socialism, capitalism and welfarism, which are three major forces that define human interaction in the world, of course only the good elements of each. In this regard, Lawrence O Ugwuanyi (2013:60) argues that while Zik advocated the need for Africans to go back to their foundation, he applied the gains of modernity in its Western orientation to advance African State. In his words; Zik held that Africans must go beyond primordial elements of our lives in order to meet the demands of the sophistication of the social organization of modernity. Indeed he applied the gains of modernity in its Western orientation to articulate his attempt to promote the birth of African state.

Neo-welfarism as an ideology was propounded on the background of the effect of neo-colonialism which Azikiwe observed to be “the greatest obstacle to human freedom and universal happiness”. According to Nnamdi Azikiwe, colonialism was supported by a brute force. But unlike colonialism, neo-colonialism according to Azikiwe is grounded on
A Critique of Azikiwe’s Political Philosophy of Neo-Welfarism

liberalism and communism which are two dominant ideologies in the contemporary world whose economic doctrines are capitalism and socialism respectively. It is actually what came to replace colonialism. Agbafor Igwe (1992:265) puts it this way; “Neo-colonialism has not come to replace colonialism as a policy of domination and exploitation of industrially and technology less developed countries by the nations which are highly developed in industries and technology.”

In the process of this new mode of exploitation and documentation, the poorer countries get poorer, while the richer countries get richer. Thus, the poorer countries are being alienated in the global economic market. Azikiwe is of the considered opinion that harmonizing the good elements of different ideologies and other economic doctrines can reconcile their warring exponents. This he brought down to the level of Nigeria as a nation; that neo-welfarism will guarantee “political freedom, economic security and social equality”; Azikiwe (1980: 129).

On a critical examination, it seems that Neo-welfarism does not have adequate ingredients to withstand and replace socialism and capitalism or even welfarism as the best alternative, even as each of them habours some dangerous defects. That Zik fails to identify the specific good elements of each of the economic doctrines that should be harmonized into a single whole remains a major source of concern with regards to his neo-welfarist ideology. Following from this is that “neo-welfarism did not specify the extent of private and public participation in economic activities such that the bad features of the capitalist and socialist economies are not perpetuated” Agbafor Igwe (1992:267). Similarly, Lawrence Ogbo Ugwuanyi (2013:61) flaws Azikiwe for ignoring the conflicts of forces that define modern Africa and the contestation of these forces. The implication of this he explains:

By this, I mean that many of these states were established for economic reasons but that while socio-economic benefit might influence the course of the states, the political values that define these states may go beyond these; that the conflict of political values and interests that define these are almost more overbearing than economic interests and have continued to affect the state project.

One would have expected Azikiwe to put these relevant facts into consideration if he should propound a solid theory for Africa and Nigeria’s emancipation. We have also seen some vagueness in Zik’s neo-welfarism in his failure to draw a contrast between the ideology and mixed economy. Furthermore, Zik was not able to harmonize effectively: socialism, capitalism and welfarism which he claims are the components of neo-welfarism.

Joseph Omogbegbe observes a similar loophole in Zik’s Neo-welfarism and thus described it as an old wine in a new bottle. Omogbegbe argues that the only new thing about the ideology is that Azikiwe claimed it was practiced by our ancestors; that it is inaccurate and even anachronistic to say that our ancestors combined elements of capitalism and socialism in their political system was “socialist in structure but capitalist in content” ; Eze Nwokereke (2002:121).

Furthermore, looking critically and holistically at Neo-welfarism, one is tempted to argue that it is a misrepresentation of African communalism. What Zik calls welfarism when
viewed critically from the European context, is government taking care of the poor and the unemployed in the state. But he was applying it to African communalism which means African nuclear-families taking care of its own members. That is to say that Africans do not necessarily leave members of its own families to take care of other families. In the welfare system, it is government that takes care of the people, not the other way.

But as we have also buttressed in the research work, the major aim of Neo-welfarism is to “accelerate the political emancipation of Nigeria through the restoration of an authentic democracy that will guarantee social equality, economic security and political freedom”; Azikiwe (1980:129). The second chief aim is an economic prosperity which will guarantee the high quality of life for Nigerian citizens. Hence, Azikiwe must be commended for his statesmanship and patriotism in formulating a viable ideology of which if its basic principles are applied to the current Nigeria’s democratic system, will definitely and arguably deepen its course. This ideology will not only promote Nigerian cultural ethics, but it will also position the country to contend and cope with alien ideologies which are capable of making a negative impact on our dominant ways of life. To this end, we must respectfully acknowledge Zik’s ideology of Neo-welfarism for its far-reaching envisaged benefits for the Nigerian nation.

Be that as it may, despite the immense benefits of the ideology, this research have also advocated for care and restraint to be applied in the application of this ideology in solving current and future Nigeria’s myriad of political challenges. We have already discussed that there are certain dangers inherent in the ideology such as its foreign influence, non-specifications of the good elements of capitalism and socialism that should be applied among others. But we must score Azikiwe high as his ideology still have a lot more to offer to Nigeria if reasonably and adequately utilized.

**Concluding reflections**

In the concluding segment of this paper, there is need to critically re-examine Azikiwe’s political ideology of Neo-welfarism. In doing so we shall stress that Azikiwe’s attempt to harmonize and synchronize the opposing economic doctrines through his method of eclectic pragmatism “suggests a viable path to present and future economic development and political integration, Agbafor Igwe (1992:264).

Although there are inherent and perceived loopholes in Azikiwe’s ideology, this research insists that neo-welfarism remains a worthy venture and therefore should not be thrown away through the back door. This is because the ideology has a lot to offer to the Nigerian nation and beyond. It is strongly an apostle of democracy, ideal humane principle, justice, harmonization of opposites as well as economic and political liberation. Neo-welfarism as canvassed by Azikiwe shows that the eclectic-pragmatic method which if applied is the most suitable instrument for dealing with the contemporary political, economic, social and cultural realities and challenges of the Nigerian state. This is so because it ultimately aims at achieving the practical and full realization of good governance irrespective of major differences and diversities. Azikiwe (1980:111) throws lights on it in these words;
It is not syncretic because it does not attempt to reconcile or combine irreconcilables. Rather, it leaves the contradictions resolved but blends incompatibles to make them practicable for utilitarian purposes. Its merit lies in the fact that by applying this method, any persons or group of persons can add, subtract, multiply or divide any idea and adapt it to their situation or historical circumstance.

Thus, Agbafor Igwe (1992:296) argues that the harmonization of opposing ideologies through eclectic pragmatism would save energy and time formerly wasted on quarrelling over points of difference. Such energy and time would then be expended towards the provision of goods and services for the benefit of man.

Hence, we argue that Neo-welfarisim is very important in the current Nigerian socio-political situation which is marred by tribalism, religion and ethnicism. These elements pose a great threat to the survival of democracy in Nigeria and its corporate existence. We need not to resolve our contradictions, but “to blend our incapabilities ” in order to achieve desired goals. This implies that we begin to accommodate our good ideas and harmonize them to build a stronger nation and lasting democracy. Hence, tribalism, extremism, hatreds, parochialism and other social vices would be things of the past. Agbafor Igwe (1992:219) succinctly captures this in this way:

Political rapport and possible integration which would follow from the eclectic harmonization of ideologies would discourage the kind of extremism and dogmatism which vitiate the modern world......The eclectic pragmatic method is a useful and dynamic method of understanding reality in general and socio-political reality in particular”.

Even if neo-welfarism has some defects we can always see that it harbours some goods which cannot be jettisoned. Just as we have posited already, neo-welfarism upholds moral and ideal humane principle. Azikiwe argues that neo-welfarism will avoid social injustice of capitalism, and at the same time the evil associated with socialism whereby individuals’ dignity are hampered through reduction of human beings to nonentities by the state authorities. Azikiwe further argues that “neo-welfarism will allow private ownership of property and private motive is an individual initiative”; Omoregbe (2010:166). The humaneness of the ideology also lies in the fact that “it does not allow the attitude of laissez-faire because it leads to the exploitation of men by their fellow men.

We can never exhaust the critical relevance of neo-welfarism without once more asserting it’s outlined social, political and economic objectives. We have seen previously in this research work that the major aim of neo-welfarism is to restore authentic democracy as well as economic security and social freedom in the Nigerian state. Neo-welfarism as an important ideology, advocates the attitude of staunchness in our attitude to the rule of law; Azikiwe (1980:127). Moreso, Azikiwe argues for the “restoration and re-enforcement of the fundamental rights of the Nigerian citizens as entrenched and guaranteed in the Nigerian
constitution without temporization or equivocation or derogation. According to Joseph Omoregbe (2010:167), “In the neo-welfarist state, the government shall not be above the law. The fundamental human rights shall be guaranteed”. He sums up the political and economic objectives of neo-welfarism in these words:

The neo-welfarist state will assume the responsibility of freeing the citizens from hunger, diseases, ignorance and fear. Its aim will be to have abundance of goods. The state will participate in the private sector enterprise by sponsoring companies. It will adopt the policy of free enterprise and regulated competition. It will be a democratic state with individual liberty and equality before the law. There shall be checks and balances in the state in order to ensure stability” Omoregbe (2010:166).

Therefore, even if Neo-welfarism harbours some inherent defects as it attempts to harmonize contending ideologies, it remains a great and useful ideology which can form a solid foundation for social, political and economic development of Nigeria. Its eclectic pragmatic method remains a model for unity and survival of the Nigerian state whose future and survival has been threatened every now and then by poor governance. Neo-welfarism therefore presents Nigeria a critical window of opportunity for the sustenance of her nascent democracy. It has what it takes to create a viable path to present and future economic development as well as political and social integration of Nigeria.

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A Critique of Azikiwe’s Political Philosophy of Neo-Welfarism


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