

The Political Element in the Works of W. Arthur Lewis A Black Fabian's Attitude to Africa

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Introduction

W. Arthur Lewis once wrote that readers who needed solutions tended to read them into a text, and to attribute to the writer positions which he did not hold¹. Although this defensive remark does contain truth, it is not reproachable for a troubled reader to seek solutions in classical texts. We will rather try to carefully delineate the actual positions of Lewis himself, and his own judgements on the ethical plane, to get clearer notions of what the scholar really meant in the formation of his models, including the most celebrated 1954 model of "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour".

Long before Lewis became a luminary in the fields of development economics and of development policy making, the situation around him made him hold a dual identity as a colonial intellectual and an active Fabian. While Lewis elaborated the model of Unlimited Labour Supplies by 1954, he must have called in mind various patterns of development experiences in the world, theoretical demarcation lines of which include such distinction as labour-abundant and land-abundant economies. However, the fact is that the places where he then had accumulated by far the best first-hand knowledge were the Caribbean and tropical Africa, and he continued to hold emotional ties with those lands of "colored natives" as long as he lived². Understanding particular contexts that lead Lewis to develop the 1954 model is expected to contribute to our apprehension of its universal nature, as well as to the acquisition of the art of applying a general model to local realities.

Lewis was born in 1915 in St. Lucia, a tiny Caribbean island ceded from France to Britain in 1814, which attained independence only in 1979, the year in which Lewis became a Nobel prizewinner. Lewis was six years junior to Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana to whom he eventually would serve as an economic policy advisor, and ten years senior to the famous revolutionary psychoanalyst, Franz Fanon, who was born in a French Caribbean island,

¹ W. Arthur Lewis, *The Evolution of the International Economic Order*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 76.

² "We thus have two Imperial policies: a democratic policy for provinces in which the white colonists are in a large majority, and a bureaucratic policy where the majority consists of colored natives". Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society*, London: Grant Richards, 1900, p. 16. The challenge for the Empire in the mid-twentieth century, however, proved to be the formulation of a truly democratic policy for the latter.

Martinique³. In his short autobiography Lewis recalled that his father took him to a local Garveyist gathering when he was still a young boy, and in the acknowledgements of *Politics in West Africa* published in 1965, he clearly identified himself as a Pan-Africanist, stating that he had "known the chief Pan-African leaders personally for thirty years, sharing their anti-imperialism, and their goal of an Africa united in stages"⁴. However, in the context of the present paper, what he did not share with major Pan-Africanists is also of great importance, namely that he was the very opposite of a propagandist of "great human ideals" and always stuck to details and practical solutions. His cautious realism and pliable eclecticism are nothing but the hallmarks of Fabianism, which he chose as his political creed after he moved to Britain and set to study economics at the London School of Economics in 1933.

1. The Germ of an Idea: Labour in the West Indies

Immediately after Lewis left the Caribbean, his native islands started to be wrapped in flames of political disturbances. Sluggish export, stinginess in transfer of public fund from London and deteriorating living conditions in the 1930s conduced to strikes and violent confrontations in Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, British Guyana and other numerous islands, while concurrent urban revolts spread on the other side of the Atlantic, in Gold Coast, Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia. Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald managed to appoint a Royal Commission on the British West Indies in 1938, marking the centenary of the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire, in order to make inquiry about the nature of the disturbances and to propose necessary policy reform in the colonies.

Against this background, Lewis, still an LSE student, wrote in 1935 a letter with the letterhead of the Students' Union of the LSE to John Parker, General Secretary of the New Fabian Research Bureau, in which he stated: "if you do need assistance on the West Indies, I beg to offer my services. I am myself a West Indian student, and have recently been doing a not inconsiderable amount of research into the history, government and prospects of the West Indies... I might add that I am well known to the leaders of the Socialist Party in this school". With a strong backing of Leonard Woolf who thought that the proposed pamphlet was "just what is wanted in the Party", the initiative of Lewis materialised in the same year as *The British West Indies*, a comprehensive policy document "for the next Labour Government", composed of detailed accounts of history, welfare conditions, politics and economics in the Caribbean. It is recorded that, in his correspondence with Parker prior to the publication of the pamphlet, Lewis expressed his early idea about the prospect for agricultural reconstruction on the islands. "The issue, you may remember, is between cooperative peasant agriculture – to which most thinking

³ In the 1960s, Fanon harshly criticised authoritarian, corrupt leaders of the newly independent African states exactly in the same manner as Lewis did, depicting that these "heads of government are the true traitors in Africa" and calling for peasant revolution. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, New York: Grove, 1963, p. 183. See also: Robert H. Bates, *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 107-8, 132.

⁴ William Breit and Roger W. Spencer eds., *Lives of the Laureates: Seven Nobel Economists*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986. W. Arthur Lewis, *Politics in West Africa*, Toronto and New York: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 11.

West Indians are looking – and large-scale farming. I take the view, with Dr. Martin Leake, that the latter is preferable, but I reject his proposals, in favour of socialised farms"⁵.

This debut work of Lewis eventually consolidated as his first famous monograph still in print, *Labour in the West Indies*, originally published by the Fabian Society in 1939, the year after he was appointed to be full-time lecturer at the LSE. In the preface of this pamphlet, Arthur Creech Jones, a Labour MP who was active in exposing colonial problems and later to become Colonial Secretary under Clement Attlee, introduced Lewis as "a West Indian of African Descent", "a close student of Imperial, social and economic problems who has spoken and written much on these matters". If Lewis had quitted becoming a professional economist, this Fabian pamphlet written by a young talented colonial would have remained a mere footnote to the famous alarming tract by W.M. Macmillan⁶. What is noteworthy with hindsight, however, is that the main features of *Labour in the West Indies* prescribed contours of his comprehensive policy proposals for colonial dependencies and post-colonial nations that were to be fully developed in later period including his Manchester days.

First, his policy for the Caribbean was penetrated by the strong will for an economic development in which economy of scale was to play an essential role. The overseas market such as the United States should be reopened, protectionism against tropical products should be repealed, local economic structures should be diversified, and a federalist framework should be sought for in order to economize the cost of infrastructure. Second, Lewis denounced the monopolistic nature of white planters' aristocracy on moral and political grounds, and upheld a radical land distribution policy to create small peasant proprietors. To make peasant production more efficient and competitive than plantation agriculture, he suggested provision of educational, financial, processing and marketing institutions for the peasantry on a large scale⁷.

Thirdly, crossing the boundary from economic to political spheres, Lewis pressed for popular participation in the political life. Recommended in addition to the above mentioned land distribution were improvement of industrial relations, and a constitutional reform that would extend franchise as widely as possible. Interesting reservation is that Lewis, bitterly critical of the behaviour of rich white planters, was against too heavy direct taxation, because "if it is too high, it will reduce the savings of the rich, and this in the long run will reduce the standard of living of the workers if it results in the community consuming its capital". Finally, Lewis

⁵ Lewis to Parker, 12/March/1935 and 10/April/1935; Woolf to Parker, 5/April/1935, ACJ 25/1a, ff. 6-7, 8, 11 (ACJ: Arthur Creech Jones Papers, Rhodes House, Bodleian Library, Oxford). W. Arthur Lewis, *The British West Indies*, London: Fabian Society, 1935. Leake actually did not give unconditional support to the plantation system, but suggested "vertical co-operation", which was tantamount to the creation of tenantry. See: Hugh Martin Leake, *Studies in Tropical Land Tenure*, Trinidad: Government Printing Office, 1933, pp. 49-55.

⁶ W. Arthur Lewis, *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers' Movement*, London: Fabian Society, 1939. W.M. Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies: A Tract for Africa and the Empire*, London: Faber and Faber, 1936 (paperback edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938). While Lewis was despised by Susan Craig as "the leading ideologue of his class and of imperialism", Stephen Howe rightly warned that one should not "lose sight of just how radical the same proposals were in the context of 1930s British thinking". Susan Craig, "The Germs of an Idea", an afterword to: W. Arthur Lewis, *Labour in the West Indies*, reprint. London: New Beacon Books, 1977, p. 77. Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 102.

⁷ Lewis, *op.cit.*, pp. 44-6, 49, 52.

thought that a major transformation of economic and political structure of the Caribbean colonies could be materialised only through the actions of the educated local elite. He observed that under white supremacy the attitudes of local elite polarised between those who "identify themselves with the ruling classes" and "become often more reactionary than the white" on the one hand, and those who "ally themselves with the masses... and seek to secure for coloured people a higher social dignity", but "refuse to associate themselves even with the most praiseworthy official enterprise" on the other. Lewis's stance was clearly to take balance avoiding these two extremes and he concluded with confidence that there "is still room for political education of the middle classes"⁸.

Immediately after the publication of this monograph, a significant turning point in the British colonial history arrived. In 1940, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act was enacted partly due to the political pressure from the Caribbean and tropical Africa and from the British Parliament, and partly in order to pre-empt criticism, from Nazi Germany and from the giant British ally in the other side of the Atlantic, of the British colonial domination as grave hypocrisy⁹. Whatever the underlying political considerations, the gist of this legislation, fairly the brainchild of MacDonald, was clearly represented in the title of the Act itself, "development and *welfare*". Before this legislation, the notion of development had long been associated with the exploitation of natural resources in the vast undeveloped estates in the Empire, as was represented in the Chamberlainite interventionist colonial policy of the late nineteenth century, and later in the first element of the dual mandate of the British colonial administration propounded by Lord Lugard. But now, a considerable amount of public money started for the first time to be invested directly on health, education, water, nutrition, housing and labour for the betterment of the welfare conditions of colonial subjects¹⁰. In spite of this, however, the new welfare initiative still fell far short of granting political self-determination to the colonies, sowing the seeds of further confrontation on the part of colonial nationalism.

2. A Black Advisor to the White Empire

The year of 1940 turned out to be a major turning point in the history of Fabians' attitude toward the colonies as well. Although some of the distinguished figures of Fabian socialism, such as Bernard Shaw, Sydney Olivier and Leonard Woolf, had produced a series of influential writings about socialism and imperial and colonial questions, there had been no

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 13-4, 46-51.

⁹ Suke Wolton, *Lord Hailey, the Colonial Office and the Politics of Race and Empire in the Second World War: The Loss of White Prestige*, Basingstoke London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

¹⁰ "On the one hand the abounding wealth of the tropical regions of the earth must be developed and used for the benefit of mankind, on the other hand an obligation rests on the controlling Power not only to safeguard the material rights of the natives, but to promote their moral and educational progress". Frederick J.D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1922 (reprint, London: Frank Cass, 1965), p. 18. As for the evaluation of the development and welfare regime, see: Stephen Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy 1914-1940*, London: Frank Cass, 1984, pp. 238-57; Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in British and French Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 67.

official organ of the Fabian Society chiefly dedicated to colonial research and policy formulation until the war broke out. An initiative taken by Rita Hinden, a South African-born economist, to establish such an organ was materialised in 1940 as the formation of the Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB) with Creech Jones being chairperson and with Hinden herself influential secretary. The precedence of Africa in the FCB's agenda is represented in Hinden's first book, *Plan for Africa*, in which she put forward her strong case that the African poverty was caused by a lack of capital, which deprived the colonies of fundamental public services¹¹. The Advisory Committee to the FCB was also established in 1940 and enlarged in the following year, by inviting Lewis and other Fabian colonial specialists to become regular members¹².

In 1940, at almost the same time as the Colonial Development and Welfare Act passed through the parliament, the Labour Party decided to give emergency support to Conservatives and joined the war-time coalition government under the leadership of Winston Churchill. Party leader Clement Attlee was installed as deputy Prime Minister while Ernest Bevin was appointed to Labour Minister. Oliver Stanley, who is supposed to have been the most liberal Conservative politician in terms of attitude to colonial affairs, was Colonial Secretary from 1942 to 1945¹³. In October 1943 Stanley set up the Colonial Economic Advisory Committee to produce "a body of principles" for future economic planning in the colonies. Lewis was recruited as secretary to the Committee, but the calibre of this young LSE lecturer still at the age of twenty-eight soon proved to be disproportionate to the expected secretaryship¹⁴.

At the second Committee meeting in December 1943, Stanley suggested that there should be an agenda sub-committee that would produce "a programme for future work on broad lines covering the whole economic field," from minerals and industries to land tenure and statistical research¹⁵. In spite of this ambitious directive from the top, activities of sub-committees stayed dormant largely due to discouraging actions taken by permanent officials such as Sydney Caine, head of the Economic Division of the Colonial Office, leaving Lewis and his Labour-Fabian colleagues in the Committee, Sir Bernard Bourdillon and Evan Durbin, with an enormous sense of frustration. In September 1944 Lewis made suggestions to Caine about the topics to be discussed in various sub-committees, but Caine's reaction was far from warm. It was Lewis's proposals about the Primary Production Sub-Committee that were most bluntly turned down by Caine. Lewis had written that "the 'agricultural revolution' will be put on its

¹¹ Rita Hinden, *Plan for Africa: A Report Prepared for the Colonial Bureau of the Fabian Society*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1941, pp. 187-216. As for Hinden's position in Fabian socialism, see: Helen Goethals, "Rita Hinden: Travaillisme et décolonisation", in: Maurice Chrétien dir., *Le Socialisme à la Britannique: Penseurs du XX^e siècle*, Paris: Economica, 2002.

¹² Other Advisory Committee members were: Wilfred Benson, W.M. Macmillan, Margaret Cole, John Parker, Frank Horrabin, Julian Huxley, Margery Perham, Sir Drummond Shiels and Leonard Woolf. David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945-1961*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, pp. 123-7. Patricia Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism*, London: Methuen, 1984, pp. 188-195.

¹³ Goldsworthy, *op.cit.*, pp. 183-4.

¹⁴ Lewis's contact with the Colonial Office is said to go back to September 1941 when he was recruited by the Office to write about the flow of capital to the colonies. J.M. Lee and Martin Petter, *The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy: Organisation and the Planning of A Metropolitan Initiative, 1939-1945*, London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1982, p. 188.

¹⁵ CEAC second minutes, 9/December/1943, CO 990/1 (CO: Colonial Office Records, Public Record Office).

agenda, including river control and water supplies", and that because "rural over and under population is a subject frequently referred to, but never studied," the committee "might make a sort of map....of the places where it is said to occur." Caine retorted that river control and water supplies were not economic but "technical" matters, and that they had no information about a classification of over- and under-populated regions¹⁶. This rejection may have had crucial bearing for Lewis, given that pressing needs for agricultural revolution and for coping with rural-urban migration were to form important subjects in his 1954 model.

Also in September 1944, Lewis submitted an Agenda Sub-Committee report entitled "Colonial Economic Development", which was drafted possibly with some inputs from his comrades within the Committee to provide a strategy for rapid economic development in the colonies. Lewis emphasised the significance of agricultural development indicating that in "any programme for colonial development agriculture must come first," and that "an increased output of foodstuffs should be one of the principal objects of economic policy". In order to achieve this goal, he proposed to consider ways of restructuring local agricultural institutions, especially increasing the size of production units, and advocated "mass education" including agricultural extension service. As for industry, he reiterated the merit of larger units and recommended to "concentrate on creating a limited number of centres, each equipped on an economic scale". "Agricultural and industrial development", Lewis continued, "usually go hand in hand. The 'agricultural revolution' releases labour from the land, as it becomes possible for fewer men to produce a larger output per acre; this labour is then available for industry. The 'industrial revolution' in turn provides the farmers with a remunerative market, and, if on a sufficiently large scale, with cheap commodities. It is therefore desirable at the start to concentrate one's efforts to secure an agricultural revolution in those regions which have been selected as suitable for supporting industrial centres"¹⁷.

That this simple two sector development strategy was expressed by Lewis as early as 1944 is intriguing for us, but the discussion along the above line was again shut off by Caine who, according to Lewis's minute dated in November 1944, "attacked the underlying theory that administrative action is necessary for, or can make a substantial difference to economic development", and then made an attempt "to suppress the memorandum on the ground that acceptance of these economic policies would raise political questions outside the Committee's terms of reference"¹⁸. Lewis's more unreserved criticism of Caine's philosophy can be found in a confidential document filed in the FCB, also entitled "Colonial Economic Development", in which he described Caine in the following manner: "Contemporary of Robbins and Plant as students of Cannan at L.S.E. he is a religious devotee of laissez-faire, and his headship of the Economic Department at this juncture is fatal.....[his approach] is fatal not only in the decisions he makes, especially on secondary industry, on marketing and on co-operative organisation, but

¹⁶ Lewis to Caine, 2/September/1944; Caine to Lewis, 13/September/1944, CO 852/586/9.

¹⁷ Agenda Sub-Committee Memorandum, "Third Report, Colonial Economic Development", 14/September/1944, CO 990/2.

¹⁸ Lewis, minute, 30/November/1944, CO 852/586/9.

also in the appointments he recommends to important jobs in the Colonies, for which he chooses almost invariably people as laissez-faire as himself¹⁹. As a result of this intense crossfire with Caine and his followers, he decided to resign in the same month from the Advisory Committee.

In light of the fact that Lewis later advocated ardently the value of compromise and consensus in his manifesto of pluralist democracy for West Africa, his taking exit option at this conjuncture could be interpreted as being too hasty especially because the Advisory Committee lost morale and virtually collapsed after the resignation of this brilliant secretary²⁰. What concerns us, however, is not the propriety of Lewis's decision but rather that so many of the elements of his development theory had already taken shape in embryonic forms in his days in the Colonial Office: agricultural revolution as a precondition of industrialisation, productivity increase based on scale economy as well as mass education, and desideratum of economic planning to name but a few²¹.

3. Toward Agricultural Revolution

In July 1945, the Labour Party won a landslide victory in the post-war general election. In the front of imperial politics, Prime Minister Clement Attlee appointed Bevin to Foreign Secretary, and Creech Jones to Colonial Secretary a while later in October 1946. Concerning the attitudes of British political parties to the colonies, Bernard Porter argued that many Conservatives had moved toward a moderate centre during the war, while Labour had never been far away from that centre²². Labour had already been outdone in their own forte by MacDonald's benign, welfare-oriented colonial legislation in 1940 and its financial reinforcement in 1945. Moreover, both parties never contemplated granting political independence to the tropical colonies in Africa and the Caribbean in the foreseeable future. Colonial policy continued to be formulated in a bipartisan way, and the difference between the parties in terms of their attitudes to the colonies should not be exaggerated.

Be true as it may, there is no gainsaying that post-war Labour government was overburdened with unprecedented dual difficulty regarding colonial questions, economic and political, from the beginning. One is high expectation of change widely shared by colonial nationalists. As a keynote article of the FCB's bulletin noted, the "Labour victory in Britain has aroused the keenest expectations throughout the Empire. From Colony after Colony come letters

¹⁹ "Colonial Economic Development", ca. 1944, FCB 67/2, ff. 219-225 (FCB: Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers, Rhodes House, Bodleian Library, Oxford).

²⁰ Vindication of Caine as a conscientious bureaucrat who was at great pains to coordinate activities of different sections and committees in the Colonial Office can be seen in: Lee and Petter, *op.cit.*, pp. 208-15. Lewis's fight against *laissez-faire* through *politics* is favourably depicted in: Cooper, *op.cit.*, pp. 69, 119.

²¹ Lewis later added the question of foreign exchange to his argument presented in the Agenda Sub-Committee report and reformulated the whole problem of economic planning in the colonies. W. Arthur Lewis, "On Planning in Backward Countries", an appendix to: *The Principles of Economic Planning: A Study Prepared for the Fabian Society*, London: Dennis Dobson, and Allen & Unwin, 1949.

²² Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*, third edition, London: Longman, 1996, pp. 316-20. As for the continuity and congeniality among British colonial policymakers, see: J.M. Lee, *Colonial Development and Good Government*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

and newspaper articles expressing confidence that at last the problems and grievances which have agitated the people for so long will be resolutely tackled", even though "it would be foolishly Utopian to imagine that a Labour Government, or any other, could bring a solution to them all overnight"²³. Also in 1945, nearly a hundred nationalists from Africa and the Caribbean organised the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, featuring Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast as the most vocal apostle of Pan-Africanism. After this historic gathering, Lewis made an attempt at open, critical dialogue with the African colonial elite including Nkrumah, which will be discussed at some length in the next section.

Another is the so-called dollar crisis. Britain had to repay its war debts in dollar, but the export capacity of the damaged economy was still limited. In order to lessen the burden of external debts and to finance its domestic move to a welfare state, the Labour government opted for a policy of massive export drive from the colonies. Given that India was on the way to independence with other Asian colonies going to follow suit, tropical Africa and the Caribbean suddenly turned out to be valuable assets for the ailing British economy, and this perception led to hasty, reckless agricultural projects such as the highly mechanised groundnuts production scheme in Tanganyika, only to produce disastrous failure by the end of the 1940s. Although the Labour-Fabians did not seem to be conscious of it, the Labour policy of "Colonial Development Offensive" was nothing but a recurrence of Chamberlain's productionist idea of developing neglected colonial estates²⁴.

As for the nature of colonial economic policy, a change came unilaterally from the side of the Colonial Office. In April 1946, Caine who remained the head of the Economic Department declared that his Department would take up the task Lewis proposed to tackle in 1944. Although at that time "there was little advantage in pursuing the discussion of 'revolutionary' economic change any further", "I suggest that the whole subject should be reconsidered now". The principal challenge contemplated by Caine was to deal with "customary practices", most typically traditional land tenure in Africa, which acted "as a pretty heavy brake on change", and he referred to possibilities of introducing "individual tenures of the type with which we are familiar in this country", as well as to "general inclination among the officials... to accept a quite substantial degree of compulsion in the introduction of agricultural and other improvements". This post-war interest in the transformation of African traditional institutions was associated with the question of "speed" of technical improvements in the colonies, and should be understood in the light of the pressing needs for the Empire to promote export²⁵.

It is true that Lewis in 1944 posed important questions such as the appropriate size of

²³ Opening article, *Empire* (Journal of the FCB), Vol. 8, No. 3, September-October, 1945.

²⁴ William Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Decolonization", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 22, 1994. Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, "The Origin and Course of Fabian Colonialism in Africa", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol.4, No.2, 1991. Michael Cowen, "Early Years of the Colonial Development Corporation: British State Enterprise Overseas during Late Colonialism", *African Affairs*, Vol. 83, 1984.

²⁵ Caine, minute, 23/April/1946, CO 852/1003/3. Lord Hailey was worried that unchecked individualisation of land tenure in Africa would induce polarisation of the local population and thus exacerbate social instability as was witnessed in India. John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872-1969*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 276-8.

production units in agriculture, which he had kept considering long back since *The British West Indies* in 1935. "A farming unit of two or three acres cannot be efficient" was his preferred formula repeated after his days in the Colonial Office. Having witnessed the fiasco of the "Colonial Development Offensive" in the post-war period, however, Lewis apparently shifted his focus from a straightforward affirmation of scale economy to more diversified paths of agricultural development. Lewis expressed a critical view of the post-war modern large scale agricultural projects such as in Tanganyika on the ground that organised migration of Indians and Chinese was not available any more, and wrote that "small producers could do much better with a little more capital – the farmer with better implements, and the artisan with modern tools – and there is everything to be said for work on modernising the traditional tools, such as the West African Institute of Arts and Crafts had started"²⁶.

His preference of small family farms was expressed in a more decisive way in *The Theory of Economic Growth* in 1954, the same year as the unveiling of "Unlimited Supplies of Labour". General advantage of large scale agricultural operations notwithstanding, small farmers tend to cultivate their lands more intensively than large farmers, and work harder without supervisory staff than hired agricultural workers. Even though a combination of family size farms and large scale central agencies in such fields as marketing is desirable, the priority should be laid on persuasion and demonstration rather than compulsion. What should be emphasised for Lewis was the significance of diffusing modern technology through agricultural extension service, and of developing adequate institutions to make capital available. A good example in this perspective could be found in the pre-war experiences of agricultural modernisation in Japan, where agricultural productivity was said to have increased by fifty percent during the thirty years before the First World War with the average size of farm remaining only two or three acres²⁷. Lewis had come to attach even greater importance to "mass education" in the sphere of agricultural modernisation, which was clearly articulated in 1948 in his memorandum for the Colonial Economic and Development Council²⁸.

Now we turn to the 1954 model. The axiom is that the long-term economic growth becomes possible at the current wage anchored down on a subsistence level, due to the unlimited supplies of labour from the subsistence sector. Lewis's position is that economic growth is desirable²⁹, and his finding is that unlimited supplies of labour available at a subsistence wage makes rapid capital accumulation possible, but he never said that the subsistence sector *should* be kept intact. On the contrary, he denounced in the same article the

²⁶ Citation from a typescript prepared probably for a lecture in Manchester around 1949. W. Arthur Lewis, "Colonial Development", date n.a., FCB 67/2, ff. 226-41.

²⁷ W. Arthur Lewis, *The Theory of Economic Growth*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954, pp. 120-36.

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 187-91. W. Arthur Lewis, "Principles of Development Planning", Colonial Economic and Development Council Memorandum, 11/April/1948, FCB 67/1 Item 1. Lewis's preference for small-scale peasant agriculture seems to be consistent with his final view of socialism, a combination of massive public saving and decentralised private enterprises, rather than big-scale state enterprises. ditto, *Socialism and Economic Growth*, The Annual Oration, London: LSE, 1971.

²⁹ W. Arthur Lewis, "Is Economic Growth Desirable?", an appendix to: *The Theory of Economic Growth*, pp. 420-1. See also: Amartya Sen, *Development As Freedom*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999, p. 290.

attitude of colonial capitalists who "have a direct interest in holding down the productivity of the subsistence workers". The plantation owners are indifferent to any attempt to diffuse new techniques or new seeds to the peasants, oppose land settlement, and instead chase the peasants off their lands. The imperial powers in Africa tried to impoverish the subsistence sector, "by taking away the people's land, or by demanding forced labour in the capitalist sector, or by imposing taxes to drive people to work for capitalist employers". This indictment against "one of the worst features of imperialism", the biased practice of colonial planters, mining magnates and colonial officials, is a strong reminder of his early Fabian pamphlets³⁰.

Lewis not only criticised these imperial attitudes of neglect and coercion, but also propounded public intervention to raise subsistence productivity, the necessity of which is clearly imbedded in his 1954 model. According to Lewis, the process of economic expansion may be brought to an end before surplus labour becomes unavailable, if the current wage begins to rise. The subsistence sector is considered to be a proxy for the food producing sector, and the capitalist sector is supposed to produce everything other than foods. First, the rising demand for foods in the capitalist sector may turn the terms of trade in favour of foods, making the wage goods dearer, were it not for parallel improvement of productivity in peasant economy. Second, massive increase in output per capita in the subsistence sector, which is desirable in itself, may raise the levels of subsistence wages, then of capitalist wages. Third, workers in the capitalist sector may start demanding more due to the changing way of life, union pressure or other factors. What Lewis thought "most interesting" among these three is the first case in which the stagnation of food production makes terms of trade against the capitalist sector, raising relative price of foods and then capitalist wages, reducing capitalist surplus. "This is one of the senses in which industrialisation is dependent upon agricultural improvement; it is not profitable to produce a growing volume of manufactures unless agricultural production is growing simultaneously. This is also why industrial and agrarian revolutions always go together, and why economies in which agriculture is stagnant do not show industrial development"³¹. Lewis's proposal made in 1944 for the restructuring of colonial economies is thus found to echo in his 1954 model.

On the other hand, the second case seems to be rather exceptional; Lewis did not cite any example where subsistence productivity disproportionately rose and peasants enjoyed "full fruit of their extra production", except for his remark that socialist China might proceed in this direction. A state "which is ruled by peasants may be happy and prosperous, but it is not likely to show such a rapid accumulation of capital". Despite productivity increase in the agricultural sector, food prices were kept at a low level through taxation on farms in countries like Soviet Russia and Japan, where the administrative calibres of development planning were exceedingly,

³⁰ W. Arthur Lewis, "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour", *The Manchester School of Economic and Social Sciences*, Vol. 22, No.2, 1954, pp. 149-50. See also his negative judgement of rent-seeking landlords on their "prodigal consumption". His categorisation is colour-blind in that he lumped native parasitic classes together with their colonial counterparts. *ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

³¹ "Unlimited Supplies of Labour", pp. 171-6.

sometimes excessively, high³². Setting aside these two cases that concerned agricultural productivity, Lewis was later to pay special attention to the third case, which will be discussed in the next section.

In his open economy regime, the benefit of increasing efficiency in the export sector automatically goes to the foreign consumer, if the exporting country fails to raise efficiency of food production at the same time. Here again, Lewis warned against the negative consequences of a development policy neglecting the peasant agriculture, especially food production. With the closed and open economy models being combined, the gist of Lewis's 1954 model lies in his advocacy of keeping "balance" between industry and agriculture, and between export and home consumption. The "truth is that all sectors should be expanded simultaneously"³³. The art of development planning is like walking a tightrope. Although disproportionate development of *any* single sector can be harmful, given the fact that the balance was utterly against sustained growth of food production in Africa and in other tropical colonies, his policy prescription for those regions had to be decisively that of "agriculture-first", and more precisely, "peasant-first". This position of Lewis can clearly be discerned, for example, in his policy recommendation for the industrialisation of the Gold Coast published just before the 1954 article³⁴.

4. Lewis and Nkrumah: Politics of Colonial Ambiguity

Now let us turn the clock back to 1945. In spite of high expectation from the colonies, the colonial policy of the new Labour government continued to be formulated under the framework of benign trusteeship, and the colonies in Africa and the Caribbean were expected to export whatever they were prepared to export in order to save foreign exchange reserves within the Empire. The FCB, both the brain of Labour's colonial policy and the mouthpiece of nationalist aspiration in the colonies, found itself between Scylla and Charybdis. It is against this backdrop that the FCB organised an important conference on the relationship between the British and colonial people entitled "Domination or Co-operation?", held at Clacton-on-Sea in April 1946. A half of some hundred participants were people from West Africa and the Caribbean, and another half were British socialists and people from the Colonial Office. Lewis who had pulled out of advisory work to concentrate on academic study was called in to prepare for the conference. Hinden consulted with Lewis to choose speakers, and Lewis replied that they should not invite Peter Abrahams, because it was not Labour's friend but its enemy who should

³² *ibid.*, 174-5. Japan's "turning point" has been hotly debated among Japanese scholars since the publication of: John C.H. Fei and Gustav Ranis, *Development of the Labor Surplus Economy: Theory and Policy*, Homewood, Ill.: R. D. Irwin, 1964, pp. 125-31, 141-3. What is essential to further the discussion from now seems to take into full account regional variances within the country in terms of wage, agricultural productivity as well as patterns of rural-urban migration.

³³ *The Theory of Economic Growth*, p. 283. As is well known, Lewis had reached a conclusion that the misfortunes of world economy in the 1930s "were due principally to the fact that the production of primary commodities after the war was somewhat in excess of demand". W. Arthur Lewis, *Economic Survey 1919-1939*, London: Unwin University Book, 1949, p. 196.

³⁴ W. Arthur Lewis, *Report on Industrialisation and the Gold Coast*, Accra: Gold Coast Government, 1953, pp. 22-3. See also: ditto, "The Economic Development of Africa", in: Calvin W. Stillman ed., *Africa in the Modern World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.

be called in, nor George Padmore, because "his widely published writings are a possible source of trouble". Then Hinden replied to Lewis, "I am also inviting some of our 'enemies', as you suggest, and look forward to a certain amount of fun", and wrote a letter to Kwame Nkrumah, "You will be the first speaker in that session which is headed: 'The Problem of Confidence: Reasons for Distrust on the part of the Colonial Peoples'"³⁵.

At the conference, Nkrumah was actually second to an anonymous speaker (probably L. Braithwaite of Trinidad) in the first session, and delivered a rather stiff, militant oration condemning colonialism, most of which was literal citation from the Resolution for West Africa adopted at the 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress. Nkrumah concluded his speech by saying, "Mr. Creech Jones has changed quite a lot since he came into office. He was an old Fabian. But more gratitude will be shown to the Fabians when they do more, when they put into practice their high sounding principles. You can shackle the bodies and feet of men, but not their minds. There is justice behind every historical necessity. The institutions of the colonial world may retreat, but the masses of the colonial peoples have nowhere to retreat. They have only one cry: 'Destroy Imperialism'"³⁶.

Then Lewis ascended the platform. He put forward dual criticism of the colonial situation, and his first criticism was directed to racism. "The only people who can transform the colonies into anything worth while are the educated Natives, intelligentsia". But, "as soon as a Native can read and write, he automatically becomes an opponent of the British Government". "Every educated African and colonial knows that he can get the highest qualifications and competence, but he cannot get the highest jobs. He is bound to have to work under a white man who may be even inferior in ability". Lewis may have recalled his own experiences in the Colonial Office. For him, however, the most critical point was that the frustration among his fellow colonial elite had devastating repercussions. Black politicians were "principally interested in acquiring power – few makes a serious study of colonial problems and would know what to do if they acquired power. Their frustration distorts their perspectives, makes them ill-informed, strident". "The art of democratic government is acquired painfully and gradually, and this is precisely the opportunity which is denied to them". Lewis who turned his black face to white colonial officials now turned his Fabian face to his fellow black intelligentsia. "Fabians are never interested in general principles, but in specific problems. A Fabian who gets an itch to do something goes down to Islington, looks at the local laundries, and comes back with a red pamphlet report on what is wrong with the laundry system and how municipal ownership would improve it. Then along comes a colonial politician with an eloquent discourse on the general principles of the rights and wrongs of mankind, which the Fabian interrupts impatiently with

³⁵ Hinden to Lewis, 9/January/1946; Lewis to Hinden, date n.a.; Hinden to Lewis, 28/January/1946; Hinden to Nkrumah, 9/April/1946, FCB 69/3 ff. 26, 27, 42, 35.

³⁶ Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited*, London: New Beacon Books, 1995, pp. 102-3. The citation from Nkrumah's statement is not from the pamphlet, *Domination or Co-operation?*, but from the typed record of the conference. FCB 69/3 ff. 155-157. This critical comment about Creech Jones and Fabians was omitted from the published proceedings.

'Yes, yes... but what are your laundries like?''³⁷.

The British government was now supposed to be controlled by Fabians. Concerning the expected role of the Colonial Office, however, Lewis's position was that of wait-and-see. "We must give the new Government time, and see what it does... If it does change we must co-operate. If not, then I agree with the previous speaker: we must push the British out and do the best we can for ourselves". Lewis seems to have been sceptical about Labour's command of the colonial policy making, and wanted to make the FCB keep distance from the government. In a letter to Hinden, Lewis commented that her review of the past FCB's activities published in 1946 "appears to commit the bureau to a sort of reformist 'leftwing of the colonial office' line, which it may have adopted in practice, but which it has never adopted or intended to adopt in principle"³⁸.

In 1948, two years after the conference, Lewis moved to the University of Manchester, whereas Nkrumah returned to Ghana in 1947 to lead the mass movement calling for immediate independence. In his academically prolific days in Manchester, Lewis did not stop thinking and writing about Africa. The most important publication with this regard is the penguin paperback of 1951, *Attitude to Africa*, to which he contributed the third chapter entitled "A Policy for Colonial Agriculture"³⁹. At the beginning of this policy proposal, he called for a massive financial transfer from Britain to Africa, with the proposed annual amount being 100 million pounds, in line with the advocacy set forth by Hinden's *Plan for Africa* published ten years before. This apparently was meant to make Britain continue committing herself to the development of tropical colonies and ex-colonies against the backdrop of rapid dissolution of the Empire. Then, Lewis declared that the times for large plantation was over, and examined the way how to make the large capital available to each small farmer, through various measures including the formation of co-operative organisations. Agricultural extension service should involve not university graduates but local men, so as to engender the feeling of ownership among the peasantry. This detailed agricultural policy proposal could be regarded as Lewis's own "red pamphlet" for the problem solving of Africa, the land of his ancestry.

The political development in the 1950s was amazingly quick. Nkrumah, who parted with the moderate United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and started to lead the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in 1949, was arrested and jailed by the British authorities in January 1950. The Colonial Secretary was still Arthur Creech Jones, whose candidacy in the next month's general election turned out to be unsuccessful. Hinden resigned in the same year from her

³⁷ The citation from Lewis's statement is from the FCB pamphlet: *Domination or Co-operation?*, London: Fabian Publications and Victor Gollancz, 1946, pp. 5-9. The question of colonial psychology was later to be taken up by Hinden, an economist with a Jewish background, in her political anatomy of the empire based upon "national self-criticism" of the European race. Rita Hinden, *Empire and After: A Study of British Imperial Attitudes*, London: Essential Books, 1949, pp. 166-76. This is a good sequence to Fabian's classic: Sydney Olivier, *White Capital and Coloured Labour*, London: Independent Labour Party, 1906.

³⁸ Rita Hinden, *Socialist and the Empire: Five Years' Work of the Fabian Colonial Bureau*, London: Fabian Publications and Victor Gollancz, 1946, pp. 3, 22-7. Lewis's comment, FCB 31/3, ff. 1-14.

³⁹ W. Arthur Lewis, Michael Scott, Martin Wight and Colin Legum, *Attitude to Africa*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951. Reviews by Richard Hughes, Julius Nyerere and Peter Abrahams can be found in: *Venture* (Journal of the FCB), Vol. 3, No. 11, 1951.

secretaryship of the FCB, which apparently deprived the FCB of most of its organisational vigour thereafter. Attlee's Labour was eventually defeated in the general election in October 1951 and Churchill was reinstated as Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the new constitution for the Gold Coast was enacted in January 1951, the CPP achieved a sweeping majority in the next month's general election, and Nkrumah was finally freed from prison to lead the Gold Coast toward independence as new-born Ghana in 1957, when Lewis was invited to serve as the economic advisor to Prime Minister Nkrumah.

However, Lewis's advisory work there was far from smooth sailing. He recalled an interesting dialogue with Nkrumah that took place in his sojourn at the government office of Ghana. When a draft of Ghana's Development Plan was completed, Nkrumah told Lewis that he was planning to allocate 50 per cent of the budget to the capital, Accra, which had only 5 per cent of the total population of Ghana. According to Lewis's account, Nkrumah said, "Why not? When you think of England, you think of London; when you think of France you think of Paris; when you think of Russia, you think of Moscow". Lewis replied, "No, sir. When I think of England, I do not think of London because I live in Manchester, and this is also why I know that capital cities exploit the rest of the country"⁴⁰. Given the fact that Manchester was the place where the 1945 Pan-African Congress that strongly featured the presence of Nkrumah was held, it is evident that the above remark of Lewis was downright sarcastic.

As is evident, this problem of urban bias corresponds to the third case of the 1954 model mentioned in the previous section in which the workers in the urban capitalist sector demand more and push up the wage so that capital accumulation would be retarded. The competition frontier between capitalist and subsistence labour describes not a beach but a "cliff", which could become higher and higher due to the expectation of the urban dwellers and the action or non-action of the government⁴¹. Ironically, the problem of urbanisation and rural stagnation was exacerbated by the relatively good education enjoyed by Ghana, which witnessed the exodus of educated youth with high expectation from the countryside to towns and cities. Lewis thus warned against popular belief in the betterment of primary education and argued instead for giving priority to adult education including agricultural extension that would both improve agricultural productivity and stem the tide of continuous bleeding of young people from rural areas⁴².

Despite the fact that Nkrumah's aspiration to "seek the political kingdom first" had imbued so many young Africans with self-respect and confidence, his later years did not turn out to be so blessed. Nkrumah's personal cult, intolerance and economic mismanagement had accumulated strong discontent among civil servants and army officials. Thus, while Nkrumah

⁴⁰ W. Arthur Lewis, "Unemployment in Developing Countries," *World Today*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1967, p. 16. We would better discount a little of what Lewis said about Nkrumah, for the economic policy of Ghana was not formulated only in terms of Nkrumah's personal preferences but strongly influenced by mainstream economic thinkings in the West and the East at that time. Tony Killick, *Development Economics in Action: A Study of Economic Policies in Ghana*, London: Heinemann, 1978.

⁴¹ "Unlimited Supplies of Labour", pp. 150, 172.

⁴² W. Arthur Lewis, "Education and Economic Development", *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1961. ditto, *Some Aspects of Economic Development*, pp. 19-33.

was staying in China, his government was overthrown by a military *coup d'état* in February 1966, forcing him to seek asylum in Guinea. Two years later, Lewis paid a short visit to the University of Ghana to address the Ghanaian youth, to give an Agger-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lecture which was published next year under the title of *Some Aspects of Economic Development*. In its conclusive remark, Lewis made it clear that the "two most powerful classes, the urban workers and the educated middle class, have unlimited demands for more consumption now, and save next to nothing". He emphasised decentralisation of finance, and continued that the "members of such a government would themselves have to set the example, by living austere lives – taking low salaries, living in small houses, driving small cars, and so on". In a section that referred to Africa's inequality, Lewis issued even sterner warning. "In Europe socialist parties were built by a coalition of trade unions and middle-class intellectuals. In Africa both these groups are on the wrong side. The underdog is the farmer, and both the trade unions and the educated classes live by sucking the farmer's blood. A truly socialist or egalitarian movement would presumably have to start in the countryside, but of all Africa's so-called socialist writers, the only leader who sees this very clearly is Mr. Nyerere of Tanzania"⁴³.

His criticism of the privilege of African urban trade unions and middle classes was consistent with his criticism of the racial exclusiveness of British trade unions. In 1948, Lewis became furious when he learned from a local newspaper article that a Manchester spokesperson of the National Coal Board said the British coal mines, being pressured from the National Mineworkers Union, would not hire a coloured worker⁴⁴. Lewis touched this sort of question in a section about immigration in the 1954 article, and later more explicitly in his discussion in "The Dual Economy Revisited" about the segmentation of labour market between good job and bad job, consolidated by strict control of entry as well as different educational backgrounds, which pushes up the wage of privileged workers in spite of the continuous presence of unlimited supplies of labour⁴⁵.

5. Plural Democracy for Africa

The most crucial message in Lewis's writings about the art of development policy making lies in his emphasis on keeping the right balance between agriculture and industry, between rural and urban sectors, between production for export and production for domestic consumption. A final question thus arises regarding how to achieve a prudent, balanced policy in a volatile post-independent state, especially in Africa, haunted by conflicting interests of different segments of the society. A balanced policy requires politics of consensus; all the

⁴³ W. Arthur Lewis, *Some Aspects of Economic Development*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969, pp. 69, 76-7. "Our intellectuals should try to ensure that any group of politicians which comes to power does so knowing in advance what the main issues are, and what the snags are in each of the possible solutions. Where are the African Fabian Societies or political party research departments?", *ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁴ *Manchester Evening News*, 28/February/1998. The clipping and Lewis's letter to Hinden, 1/March/1948, FCB 5/6 f. 44.

⁴⁵ "Unlimited Supplied of Labour", pp. 348-9. W. Arthur Lewis, "The Dual Economy Revisited", *The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 1979, pp. 223-8.

stakeholders should be invited to the realm of politics of compromise as a basis to reach a fresh agreement on the nature of public goodness for all. African dictatorship proved to be no answer for Lewis, so the challenge was how to formulate a feasible alternative to dictatorship in the face of misleading praise and goodwill conferred upon nationalist charismata.

In the 1960s, Lewis produced two important works on policy and politics that drew heavily on his experience in Ghana. One is the above mentioned *Some Aspects of Economic Development*, while the other is *Politics in West Africa*, made public as the tenth Whidden Lectures at MacMaster University in 1965 and the only substantial work of Lewis that grapples squarely with the political problems encountered by post-colonial nations. In this concise manifesto, Lewis depicted West African society as a plural society, a word coined by the British colonial specialist on British Burma and Netherland India, J.S. Furnivall, who was also passionately against colonial *laissez-faire* philosophy and associated with the Fabian Society. According to Furnivall, plural society in Southeast Asia was a heterogeneous medley of colonial inhabitants: Malays, Indians, Chinese and Europeans. Placed within the same political unit, these segments that maintain their own religions, ideas, cultures and languages do "mix but do not combine"⁴⁶. In Lewis's writings, the concept of plural society first appeared in the second chapter of *Attitude to Africa*, "Basis for Policy", which is surmised to have been written mainly by Lewis and Colin Legum⁴⁷.

In *Politics in West Africa*, Lewis argued that typical European society such as Britain and France could be characterised as a vertical society where the polarisation of the rich and the poor was translated into nation-wide class antagonism, whereas the nature of West African plural society could not be understood without paying proper attention to its horizontal divides between different ethnic groups. In land-abundant West Africa, landlords and industrial capitalists were still a tiny minority, and each country consisted of "several tribes, speaking several languages. Each includes some Muslims, some Christians and adherents of African religions". Lewis pointed out further that wide economic differences were superimposed on these historical, cultural, and geographic cleavages. Thus, the "economic differences between the provinces of a single state are much wider than is known inside any European country"⁴⁸.

In the 1960s, the single-party system was favoured not only by African politicians but also by Western conscientious thinkers with the positive expectation that a monolithic single-party system with bureaucratic muscle would successfully contain ethnic passion and lead a confident process toward industrialisation. But, Lewis thought in an entirely different way. When opposition politics are suppressed, a ruling party can be overthrown only by *coup d'état*, or opposition builds up inside producing a messy power struggle within the party structure. The alternative to the single-party system, which is absolutely unstable, should be nothing but a

⁴⁶ J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948, pp. 304-5. ditto, "Some Problems of Tropical Economy", in: Rita Hinden ed., *Fabian Colonial Essays*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1945. As for the influence of Furnivall's idea in the British colonial policy making, see: Lee, *op.cit.*, pp. 188-90.

⁴⁷ Lewis et al., *Attitude to Africa*, pp. 45-61.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Politics in West Africa*, p. 24.

multi-party democracy, but the idea that democracy works only through a two-party system combined with single-member constituency system "is an Anglo-American myth". In the West African context where the people believed in the divine right of majority rule, a system in which two parties alternate in the role of ruling party like a swinging pendulum would result in a dangerous zero-sum game, for in such a system those who voted the "wrong" party could be harshly penalized as traitors. Besides, the single-member constituency system would exaggerate the geographic differences of political persuasions and suppress minority voices with a considerable amount of votes being wasted⁴⁹.

The pluralist democracy Lewis propounded is a combination of three distinctive institutional arrangements. The first is proportional representation to ensure that minorities are adequately represented in the national legislature. "The democratic problem in a plural society is to create political institutions which give all the various groups the opportunity to participate in decision-making". "National loyalty cannot immediately supplant tribal loyalty; it has to be built on top of tribal loyalty by creating a system in which all the tribes feel that there is room for self-expression"⁵⁰. The second is coalition government. A free coalition "respects the rule of law and the right of free criticism, leaving individuals and parties free to oppose if they so desire". However, Lewis argued "not only that some parties ought to form a coalition, but that all the major parties ought to form a coalition" in order to achieve stable governance in the thorny transitional period toward economic independence. He proposed a constitutionally guaranteed coalition in which, for example, every party that had received more than twenty percent of the votes could be given seats in the cabinet in proportion to its polling results⁵¹. The third is federalism or provincial devolution. Under a federalist framework, it would be easier for the central government to contain disaffection of the richer minority and possible movements toward secession. Moreover, federalism was expected to improve tax collection from the people in remote areas who would loathe being taxed by a central government in a faraway capital⁵².

In the Acknowledgements of *Politics of West Africa*, Lewis wrote that he "wanted to write this monograph for the past eight years, for emotional reasons". He came to Ghana to serve as Nkrumah's advisor in 1957, exactly eight years before its publication⁵³. However emotional the underlying motivation may be, just like his 1954 article, *Politics* is a cool-headed synthesis of his advisory works and academic exploration. In addition to the writings of his contemporaries in the field of political science including W.J.M. Mackenzie's *Free Elections*⁵⁴,

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 55-63, 70, 72-3, 76.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 66, 68.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 81, 83.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 49-55. See also: *Some Aspects of Economic Development*, pp. 50-2. As for the nature of federalism as "a short-run refuge from cleavage and strife", see: W. Arthur Lewis, *Racial Conflict and Economic Development*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 25.

⁵³ Lewis recalled how Nkrumah endowed with oratorical and administrative gifts usurped the leadership of nationalist movement from J.B. Danquah and other doyens. *Politics in West Africa*, p. 27. Danquah who proposed the name Ghana for the Gold Coast colony identified himself as a Black Fabian in his days as a lawyer in London. R.D. Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy 1938-1948*, London: Frank Cass, 1982, p. 110.

⁵⁴ W.J.M. Mackenzie, *Free Elections: An Elementary Textbook*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958. This guidebook of electoral systems written by Mackenzie, also a Manchester Professor, was based on his experiences in

he may have drawn some inspiration from the early non-Marxist works of the Manchester-born political scientist Harold Laski, who also taught at the LSE. Although the pros and cons of each of proportional representation, coalition government and federalism had been thoroughly discussed by political scientists and politicians, Lewis's combination of these three was an absolutely new, pathbreaking venture.

We may well call this normative set of institutions as another Lewis model, or Lewis's *political* model, given that his proposition in this field was formulated in a great imaginative simplicity, and subsequently gave great inspiration to professional scholars, just like the economic one. However, immediately after an abbreviated version of *Politics in West Africa* appeared in the journal, *Encounter*, his political innovation provoked a series of unfavourable reactions from his contemporaries. Colin Legum criticised Lewis's characterisation of West African politicians as "rogues", "unscrupulous", "bosses" and "power-hungry demagogues", and defended the single-party state as an inevitable transition toward full independence. Gray Cowan then indicated that coalition would not work without a common policy based on a nation-wide consensus. Finally Keith Kyle wrote that Lewis's ideas could be applicable to Nigeria but not to anywhere else. In reply to them, Lewis agreed on the significance of consensus, clarified that he had been writing only about West African pluralism, and stated that, whether African or non-African, "most men are motivated both by a desire to be of service to their fellows and also by the need to fulfil their own personal ambitions", reaffirming the needs for a political institution that "contains a set of controls adequate to enable society to rid itself of unworthy operators"⁵⁵.

In the 1970s when Lewis's political proposal seemed to have started to fall into early oblivion, Arend Lijphart, a Dutch-American political scientist, resurrected Lewis's original inspiration into a stylish, rather schematic model of "consociational democracy", which consists of grand coalition, proportionality, segmental autonomy or federalism, and the fourth element, mutual veto. One of the earliest references by Lijphart to *Politics in West Africa* appeared in 1971, and he then made direct assessment of "Lewis model" in his classic work in 1977, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, stating that the "most interesting, specific, and detailed proposal of this kind is made by Sir Arthur Lewis – not a political scientist but, like J.S. Furnivall, an economist". The only substantial criticism of Lewis posed by Lijphart is that Lewis attributed "a too high degree of homogeneity and consensus to the countries of the West"⁵⁶. Lijphart argued that consociational democracy and its variants had been developed in continental Europe as well as in Lebanon, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and other plural societies in the developing world. One striking example of the application of this model can be seen in the formation of

Central and East Africa in the 1950s. See also: W.J.M. Mackenzie and Kenneth Robinson eds., *Five Elections in Africa: A Group of Electoral Studies*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.

⁵⁵ W. Arthur Lewis, "Beyond African Dictatorship", *Encounter*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1965. Letters section in: *Encounter*, Vol. 25, No. 6, 1965, and Vol. 26, Nos. 2, 3, and 4, 1966.

⁵⁶ Arend Lijphart, "Cultural Diversity and Theories of Political Integration", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1971; ditto, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, pp. 143-7.

Government of National Unity of South Africa in 1994, the institutional feature of which is actually closer to the original conception of Lewis than to Lijphart model in that the addendum of Lijphart, mutual veto, was dropped from the South African interim constitution during the course of multi-party negotiation⁵⁷. The Lewis-Lijphart model has now come to be taught in political science classrooms in many universities, but is barely noticed by professional economists.

Ronald Findlay evaluated *The Politics of West Africa* as a work that is "memorable for the unequivocal commitment to liberal values"⁵⁸, but this appraisal seems to be only half-true. Although coalition, proportionality and federalism do form parts of the tradition of Western liberal democracy, especially in continental Europe, Lewis's particular combination of these three institutions is noticeably original. What is at stake is not to endorse the principles of democracy *per se*, which must be of universal value any way, but to choose appropriate forms of democratic institutions in a selective, independent and coherent way. Lewis concluded *Politics in West Africa* with a message to young Africans. "The main weakness of democracy, however, is that not enough of West Africa's newly educated believe it to be feasible. Western democrats have abandoned the African... The first condition for democracy in West Africa is that the young people now pouring out of schools should understand the real nature of their problems, and not be taken in by bogus explanations"⁵⁹. Here we witness his undertaking the task of "political education of the middle classes", brought up in his *Labour in the West Indies* back in the 1930s.

Conclusion

According to Lewis's own account, though industrial economics and the history of the world economy were not the subjects of his own choosing, his interest in economic development "was an offshoot of my anti-imperialism". In 1948 Lewis started to teach the subject now called development economics at the University of Manchester where the "emphasis was heavily on policy. One must therefore have a good idea of the sociological background and also of the political linkages"⁶⁰. His scholarly, practical and emotional interest in the realm of politics and policy making was quite evident and consistent. Considering his African-Caribbean background and his commitment to Africa's democratic rebirth, it would be justified for us to locate the political writings of Arthur Lewis somewhere in the diverse works left by the African diaspora like Eric Williams, George Padmore, C.L.R. James, Franz Fanon

⁵⁷ Arend Lijphart, *Power-Sharing in South Africa*, Policy Papers in International Affairs No. 24, Institute of International Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1985. Yoichi Mine, "Rewriting the Political Landscape of Africa: A Perspective from South Africa", in: Eisei Kurimoto ed., *Rewriting Africa: Toward Renaissance or Collapse?*, Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001. As for a reasoned criticism of Lijphart's "grand theory", see: Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*, second edition, London: Macmillan, 1997, pp. 69-75.

⁵⁸ Ronald Findlay, "On Arthur Lewis's Contribution to Economics", in: Mark Gersovitz et al., eds., *The Theory and Experience of Economic Development: Essays in Honor of Sir W. Arthur Lewis*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Politics in West Africa*, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁰ Breit and Spencer eds., *op.cit.*, p. 14.

and Aimé Césaire.

However, as a matter of fact, the body of his economic writings as a whole do not reveal his African-Caribbean origin at all. The real merit of a model should be appreciated not by lofty ideals or inner passion entertained by the scholar but by the explanatory power of the model itself. Knowing something about biographical details of a producer of a theory, in the first instance, does not affect either the framework nor the policy implications of that theory. Lewis's theoretical and practical interest was so multiple that the political element, or more particularly the African-Caribbean element, in his works seems to constitute only a part of the whole range of his achievements.

The point is however that his 1954 model does not contradict his anti-imperialist agenda but contain it in a perfect way. His dislike of irresponsible colonial *laissez-faire* and of plantation aristocracy, as well as his propositions of agriculture-based industrial linkages and of policy balance, combined with constitutional innovation for a plural society: all are in good accord with the framework of the model. Even though his criticism of urban bias and his advocacy of good governance were not heeded very much by African policymakers and their Western friends in his times, Lewis did open a new chapter in the post-war history of development study for Africa⁶¹. The 1954 model must be the single most important contribution of Lewis to development economics, but should also be understood in historical perspective as a part of his overall contribution to a wider spectrum of development policy studies.

⁶¹ In the field of African studies, the rectification of the past urban bias and the emphasis on political factors have become an established norm since the publication of the seminal work by Robert H. Bates: *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981. It seems that the rich legacy of Lewis's work with this regard has scarcely been noted yet in the literature of the renewed African political economy school, however.

Please do not quote from any part of this draft paper.

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