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Critique of the Decolonization Principle: In Dialogue with Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò Book “Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously”

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Abstract. This article presents an analysis of the academic debate surrounding the book “Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously,” published in 2022 by the Nigerian philosopher and scientist Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò. The central thesis of the book is that it formulates a new approach to the phenomenon of decolonization. In the article, the author examines the content of the publication, highlighting key ideological and philosophical meanings. Meanwhile, the debates within the Anglo-American academic community are also explored. The article concludes with a critique of the monograph. The ‘political mission’ of the book is also investigated since it is directed against the growing “decolonization of modernity” trend of in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of methodology, the author used text data mining (TDM) to analyze the original text. Discourse analysis was utilized to investigate the scientific discussion surrounding the book. The article draws several conclusions. O. Táíwò’s monograph represents a reaction to the series of revolutions in West Africa, which resulted in withdrawal from French neocolonial influence in some countries. The trend towards the liberation of African countries from neocolonial dependency had emerged, and the former metropolises were unable to stop this process. Consequently, it required the Western scientific community to urgently develop an ideological platform asserting the need to preserve the previous neocolonial order. O. Táíwò presents this ideological concept in his monograph. Its essence unfolds the thesis that decolonization was completed when African colonies gained independence and statehood. Further decolonization, referred to in the book as the “decolonization of modernity,” is harmful and destroys the essential complex historical and cultural African heritage. Therefore, the rhetoric of “decolonizing modernity” is considered illegitimate and must be stopped.

Key words: colonialism, metropolises, decolonization of modernity, neocolonialism, sub-Saharan Africa

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Критика принципа деколонизации: в диалоге с книгой Олуфеме Тайво «Против деколонизации: серьезный подход к африканской акторности»

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Аннотация. Анализируется научная дискуссия, развернувшаяся вокруг опубликованной в 2022 г. книги нигерийского философа и ученого Олуфеме Тайво «Против деколонизации: серьезный подход к африканской акторности», в которой был сформулирован новый подход к трактовке феномена деколонизации. Рассмотрено содержание публикации, выделены ее ключевые идейно-философские смыслы, а также исследована дискуссия вокруг работы О. Тайво в англо-американском научном сообществе. Последний раздел статьи посвящен критике монографии и выявлению ее «политической миссии», которая состоит в констатации необходимости противодействия тренду «деколонизации современности», набирающему силу во многих странах Африки южнее Сахары. Автор применяет интеллектуальный анализ текстовых данных (TDM) к монографии О. Тайво, а дискурс-анализ позволяет проанализировать характер дискуссии вокруг работы нигерийского философа. Делается вывод, что монография О. Тайво стала реакцией на серию революций и переворотов в Западной Африке, приведших к выходу таких стран, как Нигер, Буркина-Фасо, Мали и др., из-под французского неоколониального влияния. Возникший тренд на освобождение африканских стран от неоколониальной зависимости и неспособность бывших метрополий остановить данный процесс потребовали от западного научного сообщества срочной разработки идейной платформы, утверждающей необходимость сохранения прежнего неоколониального порядка. О. Тайво в своей монографии представляет такой идеологический концепт. Его суть сводится к тезису о том, что, когда африканские колонии обрели государственность, они стали независимы и деколонизация была завершена. Дальнейшая деколонизация, именуемая в книге «деколонизация современности», вредна и разрушает комплексное историко-культурное наследие, необходимое африканцам для развития. Как следствие, риторика «деколонизации современности» нелегитимна и должна быть прекращена.

Ключевые слова: колониализм, метрополии, деколонизация современности, неоколониализм, Африка южнее Сахары

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Introduction

“[T]o turn colonialism into the most important or even the only element in explaining social phenomena in Africa cannot be plausible, adequate or correct. This is, for me, probably the most vexing aspect of the decolonisation trope. Because colonialism is adopted as the single or dominant axis on which to plot the continent’s history and events post-colonisation ... are glossed over in most analyses” (Táíwò,

2022, p. 148), pinpointed Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, explaining one of the main ideas of his book “Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously.”

It is difficult to deny that the legacy of colonialism continues to shape the scientific, political, and philosophical discourse surrounding Africa and its contemporary development. This is confirmed by a large number of works published in the Western

world, Africa and Russia. Among the foreign works, it is worth mentioning a number of collective monographs (Woldegiorgis, Motala & Nyoni, 2023; Boucher & Omar, 2023; Ndofirepi et al., 2022; Twikirize, Tusasiirwe & Mugumbate, 2023), works by R. Skinner (2023), J. Ofosu-Asare (2024), Sh. Tusasiirwe (2024) and others. Among the publications on the topic of decolonization published in Russian, the works of K.A. Fursov (2015), G. Therborn and I. Tartakovskaya (Therborn & Tartakovskaya, 2005), O.S. Kulkova (2015), Ya.A. Levin (2017), S.G. Malkin (2018), A.Zh. Bissenova (2022), O.S. Karnaukhova (2022) and the landmark article “Soviet Studies of Neocolonialism” (Bokeriya et al., 2022) can be identified.

The reasons for the determination of scientific thought on the issue of decolonization are linked, first and foremost, to the complex and radical changes in the lives of the entire continent. As a result of colonial expansion, the continent found itself subordinated to the logic of European development, and, against its will, had to adapt to its new status as a “dependent territory.”

This status existed for a considerable period, and it was not until the 1950–1970s that the overwhelming majority of African colonies gained formal independence and acquire their own statehood. Nevertheless, gaining statehood did not mean liberation from the former metropolises, as pronounced political, economic, and cultural dependence remained in various manifestations. This is commonly referred to as neocolonialism in Russian political science. The modern series of revolutions and coups d'état in West African countries between 2019 and 2024, as well as their foreign policy shift towards Russia, have demonstrated the expressed desire of these countries and the continent as a whole to overcome historical dependence and neocolonial control by former metropolises through ‘secondary decolonization.’ This intention has been expressed in their withdrawal from pro-European unions and associations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and in the intensification of dialogue with alternative power centers that can

direct and support national development, opening up new prospects. However, these practical and situational, decisions made by the governments of several African countries, as well as the passive attitude of other states on the continent, raise the question of the need for a “decolonization of culture” and “decolonization of thinking” in African societies, as they seek to find their unique path of development.

This question becomes the object of analysis in an extremely relevant and innovative work of the famous Nigerian philosopher, professor, and director of the Center for African Studies at Cornell University in the U.S., O. Táíwò “Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously” (Táíwò, 2022). The book under consideration inherits a whole series of major works by the author (Táíwò, 2010; 2014; 2015).

Review of the Work

In the context of the global transformations that the modern world is undergoing, many historical processes have unexpectedly received a new impetus for development. One such process that has created a trend in global development is undoubtedly the decolonization of sub-Saharan Africa.

The book “Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously” expresses the author’s protest against the increasing trend of the continent’s abandonment of historical heritage formed during the colonial period, in accordance with principles and ideas rooted in the European tradition. In this regard, O. Táíwò argues that decolonization was initially justified and aimed at liberation from external economic, military, and political control in order to pursue an independent course of development. However, today, this rejection of control has evolved into a complete rejection of European influence in all significant areas, from philosophy to medicine, for an ‘imaginary’ authenticity that never existed in those areas, as they were created by Europeans.

Speaking out against the ‘comprehensive’ decolonization of culture and science, O. Táíwò presents the perspective of globalism,

emphasizing the unity of the historical development of national cultural traditions, which have been woven into the shared processes of historical development in Europe and Africa. In this regard, the attempt to remove the effect of colonial influence from history and culture undermines the modern achievements of African societies, because almost all new developments are based on colonial foundations, and the destruction of these foundations deprives modern African thinkers of the most valuable resource from Western culture and intellectual heritage, which “infantilizes” the results of their work.

In his critique of “comprehensive decolonization,” O. Táíwò engages in a polemic with the “counter-hegemonic discourse,” whose proponents claim that the coercive power of colonialism continues long after its official end date. According to the author’s opinion, as reflected in the book, the counter-hegemonic discourse for most critics is an end in itself with a demonstrative effect. Meanwhile, it does not contribute to the acquisition of real freedom by the former colonies or to a real path of self-determined development.

In this regard, O. Táíwò distinguishes two types of decolonization.

The first type is liberation from the control of a metropolis, which lead to the independence of countries. In Africa, this has already been achieved and has undoubtedly benefited the continent. The second type of decolonization, according to O. Táíwò, means that “an ex-colony reject entirely any cultural, political, intellectual or linguistic artefact idea, process, institution or practice that retains even the slightest trace of the colonial past” (Táíwò, 2022, pp. 183–184).

This process, advocated by counter-hegemonists, according to O. Táíwò, has no end in sight, and should ideally return the country to a point in history when colonization had not yet occurred. Such a goal is certainly unrealistic and contradicts the interests of any African society, which has made significant progress over the past 200 years, even within the context of the colonial system. Nevertheless, this populist idea seems attractive to society, as it allows “writing off” numerous social and political problems. As

a result, O. Táíwò calls for abandoning the term ‘decolonization’ in principle, as it hides false goals and replaces the effect of real liberation with a form of endless manipulation. He states that “Any colonialism-tinged phenomena must be purged from the postcolonial world” (Táíwò, 2022, pp. 7–8).

According to O. Táíwò, there are several reasons why it is impossible to indiscriminately remove the legacy of colonialism from the history and life of African societies.

First of all, he notes that the intellectual, social, and political history of Africa was replete with cultural contacts with Europeans even before in the pre-colonial period, and then this influence was not binding, but rather perceived as an impetus for development, albeit fragmentary.

The second thesis is related to the fact that, before, during, and after colonialism, it was the indigenous people of Africa and their specific representatives who implemented transformations in all spheres of society, i.e. they were always part of the development process, perceiving certain decisions as part of their lives, even though the root causes of these decisions were often European. In this way, Africans have created their own modern socio-political reality, which cannot be seen as artificial or imposed.

O. Táíwò acknowledges that decisions made with the participation or influence of Europeans led to both positive and negative changes in the lives of African societies. Nevertheless, he argues that these decisions cannot be generally denied and states that they have definitely led to a crisis and the deprivation of African peoples of independence within the colonial system. According to him, these decisions are still at the root of the whole variety of socio-political problems of African societies, which means that they have to be “removed” within the framework of contemporary decolonization.

As a consequence, attempts to generalize the negative effects of the colonial past, according to O. Táíwò, can lead to the fetishization of the imaginary autochthonous past of African people and stimulate the initial incorrect conclusion that the future should be based on the model of this ‘fetish,’ which has nothing to do with reality.

O. Táíwò's position can therefore be conceptualized as a rejection of the idea of an African purity policy and a return to the roots of African civilization. The fundamental reason for this rejection is that the removing the legacy of the colonial past would destroy the present, the preservation of which is based on the interests and desires of Africans themselves. In this context, O. Táíwò writes about a peculiar paradox of Africans' perception of European influence. In their perception, "Modernity is conflated with Westernism and with 'whiteness' — and all three (modernity, Westernism and 'whiteness') with colonialism ... [and as a consequence] decolonisation has become a catch-all idea to tackle anything with any, even minor, association with the 'West'" (Táíwò, 2022, p. xvi).

O. Táíwò condemns this view, arguing throughout the work that such an approach is fundamentally wrong, since modernity is not inherently "Western," white, or colonial. Instead, it is the result of Euro-African cultural exchange at a distant point in history when intercontinental contacts were just emerging. Ultimately, O. Táíwò concludes that if 'modernity' is considered a product of colonialism and the result of an artificial European imposition, its philosophical content and historical development will inevitably be misunderstood.

In this case, the author omits the very fact of European colonialism, which he clearly condemns, based on the fact that the inhabitants of the colonies were excluded from politics and could not change a regime which they disagreed. However, this raises the question of how this thesis is presented. Literally, the author writes the following: "Colonialism was characterized by the denial to the colonised of the modern philosophical tenet of political legitimacy, which insists that no-one should have to obey the rule of any government to which she has not consented" (Táíwò, 2022, p. 58).

Thus, the problem of colonialism is not the exploitation of the local people by the colonists, but rather a lack of awareness among the local people, who do not understand that they have the right to refuse colonists. A critical understanding of these ideas is presented below. According to

this thesis, 'modernity' is not a result of colonialism or its negative effects, but rather a positive outcome of successful liberation from colonial rule. It is a development that needs to be nurtured and supported.

In this regard, the author refers to the opinion of the population of African countries, although, he does not study it in this work, but accepts it as an axiom. He assumes that Africans should decide for themselves about whether to embrace traditional ideas or those of foreign origin. He believes that Africans will choose the latter, as they best meet their needs for well-being and prosperity.

O. Táíwò directly links the dominance of the discourse on the "decolonization of modernity" to the philosophical concepts prevalent on the continent. He emphasizes the importance of his own philosophical argument in this regard. O. Táíwò notes that "Thinkers like Kwasi Wiredu and the late Kwame Gyekye, it is rare among academic philosophers to find proponents of decolonising who lay out defects in their indigenous heritage and how such are to be resolved" (Táíwò, 2022, p. 175). The rest are aimed at formulating concepts that are autochthonous for communities before colonization, but such constructs are born as *a priori*, without competition from other concepts of non-local origin, which distorts their fair assessment.

In support of his thesis, O. Táíwò references a number of African philosophers from the mid- to late 20th century, including Léopold Sédar Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, and Amílcar Cabral, and characterizes them as authors who defend decolonization as the gaining of independence by African countries, rather than as supporters of the "decolonization of modernity."

At the same time, O. Táíwò sharply criticizes a group of African authors who defend national languages and advocate for a reduction in the role of European languages in education and communication in African countries. One of the thinkers the author criticizes is Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a professor of literature at the University of Nairobi, who advocated the abolition of the English department and the

teaching of African literature in national languages, which was implemented in Nairobi in the late 1960s.

The second target of criticism was K. Wiredu, a Ghanaian philosopher, who, through his efforts, African philosophy was identified as a distinct category from the philosophy of colonial Africa. K. Wiredu believes that the African philosophes differ from Western philosophers in their perception of philosophical concepts through the prism of language, which makes his view of typical philosophical forms unique.

O. Táíwò sees language as the most significant issue in his critique of the decolonization of modernity. He points out that European languages are a means of introducing African societies to a global, non-colonial modern culture. Additionally, he cites A. Cabral's "instrumentalist" approach to language and argues that the use of European languages by Africans is the result of their voluntary decision to adopt the language, religion, and other cultural aspects of the colonizers (Táíwò, 2022, p. 174).

At the same time, in practice, many colonizers forced the use of their language in Africa and contributed to the disappearance of local languages, punished students in schools for speaking their native language. The author will critically examine these ideas of O. Táíwò below.

With regard to language, O. Táíwò concludes that European languages, which have become a part of African culture, are perhaps the only way for African people to be heard and to present the "product of African genius" to the world. This should be an important incentive for African youth to realize that they are heirs to an intellectual tradition that is richer and more sophisticated than what modern decolonization supporters claim.

All the above-mentioned points, presented in the four chapters of the book, according to O. Táíwò, "prepare the ground for considering the issue of freedom and autonomy of Africa in the modern world through new prisms," through which only a society free from the legacy of decolonization can look at, ready to decide for

itself whether traditional ideas and institutions or ideas of foreign and mixed origin are more preferable. The current situation of the dominance of the idea of decolonization in modernity is described by the author as "the tragedy of decolonization," which is expressed in the fact that modern Africans cannot accept modernity as a reality they themselves have created, leading to the shortening of their rich and long history (Táíwò, 2022, p. 192).

Debate and Critique

The publication of O. Táíwò's book "Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously" has become a resonant event among American and British researchers and publicists, as indicated by the abundance of published reviews. It should be noted that all the reviews found are positive and enthusiastic. For instance, the review by Ohio State University professor Adélékè Adéèkó is indicative, who notes that the book "starts a positional war. Its flaming arrows hit all, sparing no axiom of reflex decolonisation. This is a *bólẹ̀kájà* (come-down-let-us-slug-it-out) critique in its most consequential form. If you are not provoked by its argument, you sabe nothing."¹ Meanwhile, Ato Sekyi-Otu, emeritus professor of social and political thought at York University in Toronto, writes that "with characteristic cogency, lucidity and audacity, Táíwò shows that 'decolonisation' has become an idea promoting indiscriminate hostility to forms of thought and practice wrongly tarred with malign colonial auspices. The ironic result is a rhetoric that gives short shrift to African agency. It's time to drop the erroneous conflation and recognise our right to inventive appropriation of the human commons."²

Another characteristic review was provided by Columbia University professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who stated that "Táíwò has written an indispensable book. To sloganise for cultural and ideological decolonisation is to deny

¹ Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously // Hurst Publishers. URL: <https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/against-decolonisation/> (accessed: 27.06.2024).

² Ibid.

history and agency to Africa. He makes his point through a thorough analysis of politics, economics and debates around language and philosophy.”³

Similar reviews (more than 10) were presented by other authoritative thinkers and publicists representing Oxford, Harvard, and Birmingham Universities, as well as the BBC and CNN.⁴ At the same time, no reviews or comments from authors representing African countries or continental European countries were found during the study of this issue.

Speaking about criticism of the work, it is worth noting the review by the associate professor of philosophy at Sam Houston State University, Thomas Meagher.⁵ It is characteristic that this author specializes in African philosophy and the philosophy of science, i.e. he is a specialist in the ‘philosophy of decolonization.’

T. Meagher’s critical remarks are based on several key points.

Firstly, the trope of decolonization is relative, and if O. Táíwò divides it into two types — political and legal decolonization and “decolonization of modernity” (cultural, linguistic, social), this does not mean that there is no possibility of implementing a more graded approach, in which, for example, one of the forms of decolonization ideology will be compatible with the acceptance of modernity by the population of Africa. In addition, according to T. Meagher, the absolutized ideology of decolonization itself can, hypothetically, at a certain stage of its development make a choice in favor of modernity and justify the idea of decolonization in the light of O. Táíwò’s criticism.

The second thesis of T. Meagher’s critique of O. Táíwò’s work relates to the latter’s

interpretation of K. Wiredu’s ideas. Táíwò interprets K. Wiredu literally and states that, according to Wiredu, decolonization was successful when the conceptual frameworks inherited from colonialism were critically analyzed and rejected in favor of new and authentic frameworks (Táíwò, 2022, p. 95). However, in reality, K. Wiredu wrote about rethinking these frameworks and creating a new synthetic construct with autochthony as the defining element. Therefore, from this perspective, Wiredu is not a supporter of decolonizing modernity, as Táíwò claims, but rather proposes to rethink modernity and manage it in favor of African interests.

The third thesis of Meagher relates to O. Táíwò’s excessive focus on decolonization and its implications for African societies. Táíwò refers to the idea of coloniality, which he proposes to avoid and erase from the discourse of African philosophical and political thought, as closed by the fact of “primary” decolonization through the independence of African countries. In this regard, T. Meagher notes that the abuse of the colonial determinant in discourse is negative, but its complete ignoring is impossible and could damage the integrity of African societies’ perception systems of their past. From this, T. Meagher deduces the possibility of the existence of “any number of meanings of decolonization that are centered around the eradication of coloniality, as opposed to the eradication of colonialism as such (as in primary decolonization) or any shade inherited from the colonial period (as in decolonization of modernity). In his view, adequate decolonization is required situationally and should focus “on eradicating what has a persistent colonial function, and not just a colonial ‘shade’”.⁶

As a result, T. Meagher states that O. Táíwò’s arguments do not justify the need to abandon the decolonization trope, and moreover, the rejection of this idea is impossible in practice, as the supporters of modern decolonization are steadfast in using this trope,

³ Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously // Hurst Publishers. URL: <https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/against-decolonisation/> (accessed: 27.06.2024).

⁴ Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously // Hurst Publishers. URL: <https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/against-decolonisation/> (accessed: 27.06.2024).

⁵ Meagher T. For Modernity: A Review of Olúfemi Táíwò’s *Against Decolonisation* // Blog of the APA. April 11, 2023. URL: <https://blog.apaonline.org/2023/04/11/for-modernity-a-review-of-olufemi-taiwos-against-decolonisation/> (accessed: 27.06.2024).

⁶ Ibid.

and the only way out of this dichotomy is through dialogue and the search for compromises.⁷

Author's Critique

T. Meagher's approach to critiquing the work of O. Táíwò is balanced and well-reasoned, but it is rooted in the system of Western (Anglo-Saxon) political and philosophical thought, which, of course, has a place not only for opponents but also for moderate supporters of decolonization. Works by Alan Hirsch and Carlos Lopez (Hirsch & Lopes, 2020), Regis Musavengane and Llewellyn Leonard (Musavengane & Leonard, 2019), Nicola Viegi (2016), and others are illustrative here, although most of these works were published before 2020, that is, before the escalation of the geopolitical situation on the African continent.

At the same time, examining O. Táíwò's work through the lens of Russian African studies raises many questions that are not addressed in the review. A fundamental question, naturally, is the lack of even an indirect mention of the phenomenon of neocolonialism in O. Táíwò's work (Medushevskiy & Shishkina, 2022), despite his active engagement with the ideas and actions of K. Nkrumah, who coined the term in his work "Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism" (Nkrumah, 1965), was joined by other figures such as A. Cabral in the fight against neocolonialism. The essence of neocolonialism is the maintenance of colonial dependency, despite the attainment of statehood. This in turn leads to the inevitability of continued decolonization, what O. Táíwò calls the "decolonization of modernity."

The second thesis of our critique is related to O. Táíwò's distortion of the logic of colonial dependency. In particular, attention is drawn to the fragments of the book already mentioned in this work, in which O. Táíwò asserts that

a) the reason for the preservation of colonialism in Africa was the ignorance of the principles of legitimacy by the local residents, and, as a result, the inability to understand the illegitimacy of colonial administrations,

b) that Africans freely and independently adopted European languages, culture and religion and appropriated them.

Both statements, in our opinion, are absurd, as colonialism did not give local residents the right to choose, and the adoption of political institutions was a condition for the survival of entire ethnic groups. Language, religion, and culture were also necessary conditions for socialization within the framework of colonial systems. The horrors of European colonialism in Africa have been documented in numerous European, American, and African works, as well as in Russian ones (Abramova, 2023), and O. Táíwò, as a native Yoruba and a representative of a people who paid a high price for the colonial borders in modern Nigeria, should be aware of this.

The third point of our criticism relates to the choice of authors that O. Táíwò selects as supporters or opponents. Certainly, authors such as K. Wiredu, K. Gyekye, Charles Wade Mills, L. S. Senghor, K. Nkrumah, F. Fanon, and A. Cabral and others are extremely authoritative figures and have made significant contributions to the development of African political and philosophical thought. However, all of them are thinkers from the second half of the 20th century and are no longer with us, so O. Táíwò's discussion is essentially a debate about the past. Additionally, some of these authors were also active politicians whose opinions O. Táíwò relies on in his work. For example, A. Cabral was assassinated by conspirators, which demonstrates the reluctance of African societies to adopt certain progressive ideas, such as the Pan-Africanist vision of K. Nkrumah or A. Cabral's concept of "class suicide" (Cabral, 1973).

The fourth thesis of criticism is related to this. Throughout his work, O. Táíwò emphasizes the importance of society, arguing that it is society, or alternatively, the "African agency," that must decide whether to abandon the

⁷ Meagher T. For Modernity: A Review of Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò's *Against Decolonisation* // Blog of the APA. April 11, 2023. URL: <https://blog.apaonline.org/2023/04/11/for-modernity-a-review-of-olufemi-taiwos-against-decolonisation/> (accessed: 27.06.2024).

“decolonization of modernity.” At the same time, the author does not rely on public opinion research data, and moreover, with his entire concept, he leads the reader to the result of public choice, which he considers the only possible one, since, from his point of view, Africans think rationally and will not abandon a comfortable and promising modernity in favor of its abstract decolonization. Modernity offers benefits and opportunities, while decolonization would hinder development.

This thesis also seems far-fetched and artificial, since, firstly, the decolonization of modernity is presented as a total and complex phenomenon, but it is not, as it is implemented in a fragmented way. Secondly, modernity, which, in the author’s opinion, brings benefits and opportunities, is far from being such for all Africans, as indicated, on the one hand, by the extremely high level of poverty and hunger,⁸ crime and drug addiction, and on the other, by the percentage of Africans who still live in rural areas and are traditionalists in their religious, social and political views (Voronina, 2020). Thus, the obvious choice of Africans in favor of postcolonial modernity, for the author, is completely unobvious.

Conclusion

On the basis of our rather harsh criticism, one might get the impression that O. Táíwò’s work is untenable and lacks scientific value, as it appears to manipulate the reader’s thinking by offering ready-made solutions and convenient arguments. However, such a conclusion would be incomplete.

The book “Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously” is a political work, not a philosophical one, as the author wants to present it, and its mission is political. The essence of this mission, in our opinion, is as follows.

⁸ Poverty and Hunger: 31 Countries with the Poorest Populations // Rambler. October 27, 2017. (In Russian). URL: <https://finance.rambler.ru/other/38267137-nischeta-i-golod-31-strana-s-samym-bednym-naseleniem/?ysclid=m7eh6yq24432827810> (accessed: 27.06.24).

After gaining formal independence in the 1960s and 1970s, African societies faced a persistent crisis related to the search for an independent path of development and the lack of political experience. Figures such as K. Nkrumah, A. Cabral or L.S. Senghor did not really call for the “decolonization of modernity,” after gaining formal independence in the 1960s and 1970s, faced a persistent crisis related to the search for an independent path of development and the lack of political experience. However, their political experience clearly demonstrates that power in Africa remained entrenched in neocolonial institutions, Western corporations, and puppet elites. Of course, this order of things was contested by the socialist countries that supported many African governments, but the crisis of communist ideology and the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia made it possible to restore and even extend neocolonial control, which had nothing to do with the free choice of the ‘design of modernity’ by African societies.

Today, as the world is facing a crisis of the unipolar pro-Western system, there is a strong trend towards the destruction of the neocolonial model, as evidenced by the independent and anti-Western policies of countries such as Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and Senegal, which, from a neocolonial perspective, are choosing the ‘wrong side’ by opposing relations with the European Union and the U.S. in favor of establishing relations with Russia and China. In fact, in our opinion, this indicates a growing shift in thinking among Africans, within the framework of which the “modernity” supported by Western countries, which O. Táíwò defends, is elitist and does not meet the interests of Africans, and therefore must be rethought.

In this regard, O. Táíwò’s work institutionalizes and provides a philosophical basis for the idea of returning African societies to the *status quo ante bellum*. O. Táíwò very skillfully distinguishes between the colonial past, which is interpreted as unambiguously negative, and the post-colonial society, which is the “modernity,” which should not be decolonized in any way, but not because, as O. Táíwò writes, this would return Africans to the pre-colonial period of history (this is no longer possible), but

because this decolonization would free Africans from the stereotypes convenient for the West, which still ensure their dependence and loyalty.

The political significance of this work by O. Táíwò is evidenced by the tremendous support it received from leading Anglo-American universities. It was written within the walls of Cornell University, which belongs to the Ivy League, a community of universities that prepare representatives of the American political elite. Ultimately, this is why O. Táíwò, an ethnic Yoruba from a background that represents “modern” and “non-decolonized” Africa, wrote this book.

Therefore, O. Táíwò’s book constitutes a manifesto published by a prominent African scholar that reflects an increasingly influential and inherently American approach to shaping contemporary African socio-political thought. This makes O. Táíwò’s work both extremely relevant and dangerous in the context of the growing global ideological confrontation, where the hegemonic interests of the United States and the European Union are in conflict with the idea of a multipolar and equal world, as defended by Russia.

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