CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND WELFARIST APPROACH TO STATECRAFT IN NIGERIA'S FIRST AND SECOND REPUBLIC

FRIDAY JOHN OGALEYE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, EDO STATE UNIVERSITY, UZAIRUE, NIGERIA.
princeogaleye@gmail.com

PROF. GODWIN A. VAASEH
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, EDO STATE UNIVERSITY, UZAIRUE, NIGERIA,
vaaseh.godwin@edouniversity.edu.ng

KEYWORDS
Political philosophy, Welfarist approach, Governance strategies, Social welfare policies, Regional autonomy, Federalism, Socio-economic development, Legacy, Contemporary relevance

ABSTRACT
This research paper discusses Chief Obafemi Awolowo's political philosophy and welfarist approach to statecraft in Nigeria first and second republics. Awolowo a patriot and African hero was known for his contributions to knowledge, constitution-making, and the development of democracy in Nigeria and Africa at large. Chief Obafemi Jeremiah Oyeniyi Awolowo, GCFR, was a nobleman, politician, Yoruba leader, and advocate for Nigerian and African independence. The study explores into his reasoning and methods for improving effective leadership and reinforcing good governance in Nigeria by promoting intellectual capacity among political leaders, leading to general growth and development. He made sure that effective governance includes the following: transparency, accountability, social justice, fairness, and equity, and selflessness, critical observation of the rule of law, purposeful leadership, effective institutions, and legitimacy of political economic and administrative authority, security and order. Awolowo believed the intellectual capacity of people is crucial. That education leads to the development and transformation of mind and body, enabling individuals to address issues accurately, appropriately, and promptly. The paper further assesses the efficacy of his governance strategies, and evaluates the current significance of his ideas in shaping Nigeria's governance structures and public policies. The purpose is to enhance scholarly debate by addressing these gaps and offering useful insights into Awolowo's legacy and its consequences for current Nigerian administration. In order to accomplish these goals, a combination of different research approaches was utilized, including the examination of historical documentation, conducting in-depth interviews with important individuals, and extant literature. The study seeks to conclude by bringing together discoveries from historical studies, interviews, and literature to

offer an in-depth understanding of Awolowo's political philosophy, governing approaches, and legacy. The research provides significant insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners who are interested in addressing Nigeria's governance challenges by examining Awolowo's contributions to the country's political growth and his lasting influence on current governance.

Introduction

The lack of trust in the Nigerian government and leadership is often attributed to the absence of patriotism among Nigerian political leaders, especially when compared to those in developed nations. This deficiency impedes Nigeria's progress, causing the country to fall behind its more technologically advanced counterparts. This paper argues that a key solution to this issue lies in a thorough reassessment and meticulous evaluation of the political philosophy and governing methodologies of Chief Obafemi Jeremiah Oyeniyi Awolowo, GCFR, a distinguished African leader known as the "Sage of Ikenne." Approximately thirty-eight years ago, Awolowo became renowned for his advocacy of intellectual ability as a crucial element of leadership, as evidenced by his extensive body of work, including written texts, lectures, seminars, and publications (Adeniran, 2016, p. 31). He emphasized critical thinking as an essential attribute for effective leadership. Awolowo's perspectives extend beyond Nigeria and include universal principles that address leadership challenges on a global level, aligning with profound thinkers whose works reveal deep truths and have a lasting impact (Adeniran, 2016, p. 31).

Awolowo is widely recognized as a staunch advocate of public education, viewing it as essential for fostering a peaceful, prosperous, and cohesive society (Salu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024). His political worldview, rooted in welfare and progressive governance, aimed to achieve thorough socio-economic transformation in Nigeria. This included proactive government intervention to enhance the well-being of citizens, particularly the marginalized. Motivated by socialist ideologies, Awolowo championed equitable resource distribution and social equity (Olayinka, 2018). As Premier of Western Nigeria, he implemented free primary education, reflecting his commitment to education as a basic right and a pathway for upward social mobility (Olaniyan, 2016, p. 12). This policy not only increased educational opportunities but also laid the groundwork for human capital development and economic empowerment in the region.

Awolowo's political ideology remains relevant in contemporary Nigeria, offering insights for addressing persistent challenges. His endorsement of social welfare schemes and poverty reduction measures provides a comprehensive strategy for tackling contemporary poverty and inequality (Omoriwo, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024). Policymakers can use his methods to foster a more inclusive and fair society by prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable demographic groups (Johnson, 2022, p. 47). An assessment of Awolowo's welfare-centric approach during Nigeria's First and Second Republics provides valuable insights into the complexities of governance and policy implementation. The knowledge gained from his efforts to promote regional development and empower local communities is particularly relevant for contemporary leaders seeking to allocate power and encourage grassroots growth (Osoba, 2019, p. 79). Awolowo's intellectual legacy highlights the detrimental impact of materialism and intellectual deficiency among politicians. This study aims to examine his political philosophy and welfarist approach to governance, which significantly fostered overall growth and development. Awolowo's framework for successful governance, security, and order is founded on principles such as transparency, accountability, social justice, fairness, equality, and selflessness, adherence to the rule of law, purposeful leadership, efficient institutions, and the legitimacy of power. This study seeks to fill a significant gap in the current literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of Awolowo's accomplishments and their enduring importance to Nigeria's political and socio-economic landscape. It will offer scholars and policymakers a deeper understanding of governance intricacies and potential pathways for Nigeria's progress.

Socio-Political Landscape of Nigeria during the 1st and 2nd Republics: Historical Perspective

The 1st and 2nd Republics of Nigeria, spanning from 1960 to 1966 and 1979 to 1983 respectively, were characterized by significant political turmoil, ethnic conflicts, and power struggles during the challenging post-colonial nation-building period. (Balogun, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024) A nascent form of democracy emerged, marked by republican constitutions and multi-party systems. However, this potential was often overshadowed by ethnic conflicts, regional inequalities, and administrative inefficiencies. (Falola, 2004) Nigeria faced numerous socio-political challenges, including widespread corruption, economic instability, and ethnic tensions. The competition for political dominance between the northern and southern regions, exacerbated by ethnic and religious differences, heightened tensions and hindered national unity. (Suberu, 2001, p. 141) Consequently, the enduring effects of colonialism have led to deep socio-economic disparities, exacerbating social unrest and political instability. (Afigbo, 1986, p. 424).

According to Salu:

> *The 1st Republic was marked by the change of guard from European control of government and the economy to more indigenous control as well as regional rivalries and mistrust. (Salu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).*

As Balogun observed:

> *The epoch in review was trapped in the confusion, chaos and troubles associated with post-independence in most African countries, especially, sub-Sahara. It was a time that a country that was ill-prepared for independence was suddenly bequeathed the rights for the administration of its territorial government. Regional aspiration for political domination was rife, and so were efforts by the few privileged individuals to take advantage of the opportunities that suddenly opened for their selfish amassment of the national wealth. (Balogun, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).*

Whereas, Ahmed assumes that:

> *During Nigeria's 1st and 2nd Republics, the socio-political landscape was marked by regionalism, ethnic tensions, and power struggles. Awolowo's philosophy of socialism with capitalist principles resonated by advocating for regional autonomy, social welfare, and economic empowerment, addressing inequalities and striving for national unity through equitable development policies. (Ahmed, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).*

In the middle of this tumultuous socio-political environment, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his political party, the Action Group (AG), emerged as influential figures advocating for progressive government and regional autonomy. Awolowo's leadership in Western Nigeria throughout the 1st and 2nd Republics was characterised by ambitious development projects and a dedication to social welfare programmes. (Omotola, 2010). Corroborating this, an informant submitted that:

> *Chief Awolowo embarked on massive infrastructural projects such as cocoa house, Western Nigeria Television (WNTV), farming settlements in Ago Owu farm settlement in present day Osun state and industrial estates in Ọgbà Lagos state and Gotta in Ogun state to improve manpower, foster an agricultural revolution and stimulate industrial growth. (Salu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).*

Balogun further supported the informant's view that:

> *Awo's social-welfarist philosophy was useful in providing early direction for the socio-economic and political development, particularly in the Western region, through the instrument of western education. Some generations of Nigerians till date, still make reference to his social-welfarist philosophy as the reason for their personal developments. (Balogun, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).*

Nevertheless, Awolowo's endeavours encountered opposition from competing political forces and had challenges in execution, especially in light of federal government interference and political maneuvering. (Falola, 2016, p. 390) The Western Nigeria Crisis of 1962-1963 was a significant event that highlighted the challenges

encountered by Awolowo and the Action Group. The crisis, triggered by political disputes and conflicts for authority within the Action Group, resulted in the enforcement of a state of emergency and the dissolution of the regional administration by the federal authorities. (Onibokun, 2008, p. 48) This episode underscored the delicate nature of Nigeria's federal structure and the conflicts arising from the concentration of authority and the desire for regional independence. Despite these challenges, Awolowo and the Action Group maintained significant influence in Nigerian politics, promoting progressive policies and advocating for the rights and interests of the general population. Their endeavours to advance education, healthcare, and economic progress had an enduring influence on Nigeria's socio-political environment, moulding the course of the country's development for many years to follow. (Johnson, 2018, p. 79) Salu, however, argues that:

> *Awolowo's welfarist (socialist) policies were largely successful and equally appreciated by the populace while he was premier of the western region. During the 2nd Republic period however, despite he's party being in control of some states within the region, the lack of centralized regional control and coordination coupled with the short lifespan of the Shagari administration probably curtailed its effectiveness. (Salu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).*

The Political Philosophy of Chief Obafemi Awolowo

Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent figure in Nigerian politics, championed a political ideology grounded in socialism, federalism, and regional autonomy. Awolowo's ideology emphasized social justice, fair development, and inclusive governance, shaped by his experiences and observations of Nigeria's socio-political environment (Adeyemo, Personal Communication, February 7, 2024). His ideology combined socialist principles with practical governance strategies to address the socio-economic inequalities prevalent in post-colonial Nigeria (Adebayo, 2012). Awolowo advocated for communal ownership and resource management to ensure fair distribution and societal well-being, asserting the government's duty to intervene in the economy to protect the majority's welfare and promote economic progress (Odugbemi, 2015, p. 70; Olorunfemi, Personal Communication, February 18, 2024).

Awolowo's political ideology also emphasized federalism and regional autonomy, advocating for decentralized governance and regional development. He supported genuine federalism, arguing for the devolution of power to regions to enable them to utilize their resources and pursue development plans tailored to their needs. This, he believed, would foster healthy competition, innovation, and socio-economic development nationwide (Akindele, 2019, pp. 34-37; Aduloju, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).

His governance strategy prioritized social welfare programs, education, and economic development to uplift the masses and create a more prosperous society. Awolowo viewed education as crucial for social mobility and economic empowerment, implementing free and accessible education systems in Western Nigeria during his tenure as Premier (Adeyemo, Personal Communication, February 7, 2024). He also prioritized healthcare, infrastructure, and agricultural development, laying the groundwork for long-term economic growth and poverty reduction (Afolabi, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024). His Free Primary Education initiative significantly improved educational access and literacy rates in Western Nigeria (Ojo, 2014, pp. 46-47).

Awolowo aimed to create a fair and prosperous society by enhancing individuals' skills and knowledge and improving social systems, enabling everyone to contribute to national development. He distinguished between education for the masses, to combat ignorance and superstition, and advanced education for leaders, to foster critical thinking and effective governance. This vision was evident in his establishment of Universal Primary Education in Western Nigeria, aimed at basic literacy for the public while ensuring leaders received advanced education (Aboluwodi, 2012, p. 62). Examining Awolowo's political theory and welfarist approach reveals their continued relevance in contemporary Nigeria. Awolowo laid the foundation for a more inclusive and participatory government structure, reflecting the aspirations of the Nigerian people, based on socialism, federalism, and regional autonomy (Falola, 2020, p. 80).

Enactment of Welfare-oriented Policies during Awolowo's Term as Premier of Western Nigeria

During Chief Obafemi Awolowo's tenure as Premier of Western Nigeria from 1954 to 1960, he implemented progressive and pioneering programs to enhance social welfare, education, and economic growth in the region (Olaniyan, 2016). Awolowo, drawing on his political ideology centered on the

welfare of the people, initiated a series of measures aimed at improving the living conditions of the masses and tackling the socio-economic challenges that Western Nigeria was experiencing during that period. The groundbreaking implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) characterized this period in the region, representing Awolowo's steadfast dedication to social progress and fair access to education. UPE aimed to eliminate limitations to learning related to socio-economic status, making educational opportunities more accessible to everyone (Aduloju, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024). Despite skepticism about the practicality of such an effort, Awolowo remained unwavering in his resolve. The driving force behind this determination was the pressing developmental requirements of the Western Region, requiring immediate and essential change. Critics raised concerns about its economic feasibility given Nigeria's impoverished social environment at the time, and the scarcity of competent instructors, inadequate educational facilities, and limited financial means (Adekola, 2021, p. 14).

According to Ademola Adekola, educational enrollment numbers highlight the challenge, with only a small portion of school-aged children attending courses, and by 1952, only 25 secondary schools had been created. The administration aimed to ensure every child was within a three-kilometer radius of educational facilities. Critics questioned the practicality of implementing UPE, especially considering the estimated £10 million needed to start the program and the additional £3 million required annually, compared to the total revenue of £5 million for the 1952/53 fiscal year (Adekola, 2021, p. 14).

Awolowo used austerity measures to achieve his goal, including the temporary use of mud walls for classrooms, significantly decreasing building expenses. Staff housing arrangements were postponed, and a charge of ten shillings was placed on adults who were subject to taxation, causing dissatisfaction and providing political opponents, particularly the NCNC, with ammunition to win the 1954 federal elections. Despite election defeats, Awolowo remained optimistic, predicting that regionalizing commodities and marketing boards and implementing income distribution based on the concept of derivation would generate an expected £34 million windfall, crucial for funding UPE (Ugwukah and Adesegun, 2023, p. 906). Awolowo gradually introduced a program awarding over 200 scholarships for higher education each year, increasing to 1,200 by 1959 (Adekola, 2021, p. 14). As a result, many people in the Western Region who were previously trapped in poverty experienced social advancement due to Awolowo's educational methods. By the end of his term as Premier in 1959, the number of students enrolled in elementary schools rose significantly to over one million, compared to 429,542 in 1953. The number of secondary schools increased from 25 in 1952 to 139, and student enrollment grew from 9,000 in 1954 to 84,374 by January 1959, surpassing the combined student population of secondary schools in other parts of Nigeria. The creation of 363 secondary modern schools, trade centers, and teacher training institutions, which accommodated 11,000 trainees by 1953, emphasized the region's growth in education (Adekola, 2021, p. 14). The University of Ife, established in 1962 and later renamed in honor of Obafemi Awolowo, stemmed from a recommendation given to the federal government in September 1960 by a committee led by Sir Eric Ashby during Awolowo's term as Premier (Ugwukah and Adesegun, 2023, p. 906).

Awolowo championed the cause of ensuring that education was accessible, free, and compulsory at the elementary level. He believed that every young person, irrespective of their socio-economic status, should have equal opportunities to receive education. The primary goal of UPE was to provide each child in Western Nigeria with the basic right to education, eliminate illiteracy and ignorance, and promote the region's socio-economic development. This strategic decision was based on the understanding that education is crucial for developing human capital, empowering people, promoting social mobility, and driving economic progress. Implementing UPE required a thorough restructuring of the educational system in Western Nigeria, including building new schools, hiring and training teachers, and supplying learning materials. The efforts focused on increasing access to education and improving the quality and relevance of teaching to provide pupils with a strong foundation in numeracy, literacy, and critical thinking abilities (Aduloju, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024).

According to Awolowo in one of his speeches:

> *To educate the child is to lay the solid foundation for future social and economic progress: to provide health services is to combat diseases which are wasting on human resources and therefore, reduce our productive potentialities. The Government has for these reasons, brought about the greatest social revolution in the history of Black Africa within the last seven years. (Awolowo, 1981, p. 197)*

The establishment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) marked a significant change in educational philosophy, emphasizing education as a key driver of personal empowerment and societal advancement. Awolowo aimed to make education accessible to everyone to create a more inclusive and knowledgeable society, where every child could reach their full potential and contribute to the community.

In addition to UPE, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's government in Western Nigeria implemented a comprehensive strategy for educational reform. This strategy included creating additional schools, hiring and educating teachers, and improving educational infrastructure to enhance educational opportunities, standards, and applicability, cultivating a more knowledgeable and proficient population capable of making significant contributions to the socio-economic structure of the area (Omoyeni, Personal Communication, February 19, 2024). Establishing additional schools was crucial to meet the increasing demand for education due to the expanding number of school-age children. Awolowo's administration purposefully placed schools in underserved neighborhoods and rural locations to provide accessible educational opportunities to everyone, regardless of geographical location or financial position (Omoyeni, Personal Communication, February 19, 2024).

Simultaneously, the hiring and instruction of teachers were fundamental aspects of the educational changes under Awolowo's administration. The government prioritized recruiting skilled and devoted teaching professionals, recognizing the crucial role educators play in influencing students' learning experiences. Comprehensive teacher training programs were introduced to provide educators with essential educational skills and subject expertise to offer top-notch education. Awolowo's government also enhanced educational infrastructure by constructing and refurbishing school buildings, supplying learning materials, and investing in instructional technologies. These modifications improved learning settings and supported new teaching approaches, leading to higher educational outcomes (Adeniran, 2016, pp. 34-35).

These educational changes had a dramatic cumulative effect, leading to a substantial rise in school enrollment and literacy rates across Western Nigeria. Awolowo's administration empowered citizens by increasing education accessibility, raising instructional quality, and building educational infrastructure, enabling them to actively engage in socio-economic life. These changes also established the basis for sustained human capital improvement, promoting economic advancement, social mobility, and national development.

The UPE plan also led to the creation of the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) on October 31, 1959, acknowledged as the first television station in Africa. At the ceremonial opening of the parliament building in Ibadan, Awolowo emphasized its role in improving the speed and quality of education, viewing television as a means of teaching, entertaining, and mobilizing communal efforts for Nigeria's progress (Ikimi, 1979).

Another deliberate policy under Awolowo's leadership was healthcare reform, particularly focusing on children under eighteen, leading to significant changes in medical services in Western Nigeria (Ugwukah and Adesegun, 2023, p. 909). The main focus was setting up basic healthcare centers and significantly increasing medical services in rural regions. These initiatives aimed to tackle persistent inequalities in healthcare access and delivery, improving overall health outcomes and life expectancy. The creation of basic healthcare centers was crucial in decentralizing healthcare services, providing necessary medical treatment closer to communities. These centers functioned as primary healthcare institutions offering preventative and curative treatments such as immunizations, prenatal care, and basic diagnostic tests (Ugwukah and Adesegun, 2023, pp. 909-910). Awolowo's government placed these centers in underdeveloped regions and isolated villages to ensure equal access to healthcare for all citizens, regardless of location or socio-economic background. Corroborating this assertion, Ugwukah and Adesegun submit that:

> *Apart from the fact that his government implemented the policy of establishing at least one hospital in every administrative division in the western region, yet other important towns which were not administrative headquarters equally benefited from the Free Health Scheme as hospitals were equally established in the domains. Also three mobile dispensaries took hospital and other medical facilities to remote parts from bases in Ibadan, Abeokuta and Benin provinces, two touring launches did the same f rom Epe and Forcados while three Ambulances stationed at Badagry, Okitipupa and Warri took patients to hospitals. Indeed, it was clear and glaring that the children in schools and post -primary institutions were the first to benefit from this scheme*

> *while enjoying their free primary education and other scholarship schemes. But farther than other citizenries of the western region were all beneficiaries of this health programme which transformed the medical lives of the people and gave them more life in abundance unlike their previous lives in which traditional medicine was the only recourse they had to their health and lives. (Ugwukah and Adesegun, 2023, 909-910).*

The combined effect of healthcare reforms during Chief Obafemi Awolowo's administration had a dramatic impact, significantly improving the accessibility of affordable and high-quality healthcare services across Western Nigeria. By prioritizing resource allocation, these measures not only reduced the impact of avoidable illnesses but also enhanced the general welfare and economic success of the area (Johnson, 2018, pp. 46-47).

During Awolowo's tenure, there was a significant revitalization of the agricultural sector, a crucial aspect of the economy in Western Nigeria. Although the Yoruba people had a strong tradition of farming before colonial authority (Ugwukah and Adesegun, 2023, p. 911), Awolowo implemented innovative improvements that benefited both farmers and young graduates pursuing careers in agriculture. His administration emphasized agriculture, leading to the creation of many farm settlements and institutes aimed at providing employment and essential farming skills to young graduates (Ugwukah and Adesegun, 2023, p. 911). Programs like the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN) demonstrated focused efforts to provide high-yield, disease-resistant seedlings to farmers (Lawal, 2007, p. 423). The Western Nigerian Development Corporation, for example, oversaw six large plantations growing products such as rubber, palm oil, citrus, cashew, and coffee in 1958 (Salu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024). The Rubber Improvement Scheme also played a significant role by distributing high-yielding seedlings, including cocoa seedlings of the Amazon type, to farmers.

Awolowo's government made substantial investments in agricultural research and infrastructure, recognizing the importance of innovation and technological progress in fostering agricultural development. Research institutes were established and funded for projects aimed at improving crop varieties, boosting soil fertility, and controlling pest and disease outbreaks. Additionally, investments in agricultural infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, storage facilities, and rural roads, aimed to enhance agricultural productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, and improve market access for farmers (Adeyemi, 2019, pp. 79-80).

Awolowo's government also prioritized rural industrialization, exemplified by the establishment of textile training centers and cooperative weaving organizations. These initiatives aimed to equip school leavers with skills in wide loom weaving, designing, and dyeing, promoting local manufacturing and ensuring economic sustainability.

Furthermore, Awolowo's administration initiated ambitious infrastructure projects to modernize Western Nigeria's physical environment, including improving transportation networks, communication systems, and urban amenities. This comprehensive strategy aimed to stimulate economic growth, promote connectivity, and improve the general quality of life for citizens in the region (Adeyemi, 2019, pp. 79-80). For example, significant funds were allocated to enhance rural infrastructure, evidenced by massive road construction initiatives, including bituminous surface tarring. In 1959, the legislature approved a significant capital investment for a Road Development program to pave over 2,200 miles of roads across the region, highlighting Awolowo's commitment to comprehensive rural development and economic advancement (Adekola, 2021, p. 14). These initiatives improved the mobility of goods and people, reduced transportation costs, increased market access, and promoted commerce between rural and urban areas, stimulating economic activity. The development and enhancement of road networks increased connectivity and accessibility, promoting regional integration and socio-economic development.

Awolowo's government also focused on modernizing communication networks, recognizing the importance of telecommunications in promoting economic growth and social unity. Investments were made to expand telephone networks, develop postal services, and deploy radio and television broadcasting facilities in Western Nigeria, improving access to information and communication services for citizens. Additionally, the development of urban amenities such as public parks, recreational facilities, and civic buildings improved the region's livability and quality of life (Adeyemo, Personal Communication, February 7, 2024). Investments in urban infrastructure not only provided essential services and facilities to residents but also served as symbols of progress and growth, fostering civic pride and communal identity.

Legacy and Contemporary Relevance of Awolowo's Political Philosophy

The political ideology and welfarist approach of Chief Obafemi Awolowo have had a lasting impact on Nigeria's governance institutions and public policies, significantly influencing the country's political landscape and socio-economic growth. His forward-thinking guidance and dedication to fairness and equality continue to shape discussions and decisions in politics at both the national and regional levels. For instance, Awolowo's advocacy for genuine federalism has laid the foundation for a fairer allocation of resources and power-sharing among Nigeria's various ethnic and regional factions (Salu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2024). His efforts to empower local areas and promote bottom-up development have left an enduring mark on Nigeria's governance systems, addressing regional inequalities and fostering national cohesion (Olayinka, 2017).

Awolowo's focus on the well-being of the people still influences public policies and development priorities in contemporary Nigeria. His emphasis on social welfare programs, education, and economic development remains relevant in addressing the country's socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment (Odugbemi, 2018, p. 48). Awolowo's commitment to investing in human capital and social infrastructure demonstrated the importance of proactive governance in improving the welfare of the people and promoting inclusive economic development. His welfarist approach continues to resonate with political leaders and policymakers, who prioritize social justice, equity, and participatory governance (Johnson, 2019, pp. 79-80). Political parties and organizations uphold his principles, striving to advance his vision of a fairer and more prosperous Nigeria.

The enduring significance of Awolowo's political ideology underscores the need for continued efforts to build on his legacy and address the current challenges facing Nigeria. His principles of social welfare, regional autonomy, and inclusive governance provide valuable insights for navigating Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape today. These principles offer hope and guidance for achieving national unity, equitable development, and resilience in the face of socio-economic disparities, political instability, and ethnic tensions.

Awolowo's advocacy for Universal Primary Education (UPE) had a significant impact beyond Western Nigeria, leading to similar initiatives in other regions. For example, the Eastern region implemented UPE in February 1957, but its effectiveness was short-lived due to problems like inadequately trained teachers and insufficient financial resources. The Northern region, however, prioritized Islamic education over UPE. Consequently, the Western region emerged as a stronghold of educational progress, attributable to Awolowo's steadfast commitment to improving education. He believed education was key to unlocking individual potential, arguing that human capital was the most valuable resource for any state. Awolowo maintained that while ignorance among a large population could hinder progress, a well-educated populace was crucial for the success of any state.

Analysing the Political Philosophy of Awolowo and Welfarist Approach

The political ideology and welfarist approach of Chief Obafemi Awolowo can be analyzed and juxtaposed with other ideologies and governance models, both historically and globally. This analysis provides valuable insights into effective approaches for addressing socio-economic challenges and fostering equitable growth. A key feature of Awolowo's political ideology is his endorsement of socialism, which emphasizes communal ownership and control of resources to ensure fair distribution and societal well-being (Odugbemi, 2017). This socialist perspective parallels other leftist ideologies, such as Marxism and democratic socialism, which also prioritize social justice and economic equality. However, Awolowo's approach is distinct in its focus on pragmatic governance and gradual reforms rather than radical change.

Awolowo's support for federalism and regional autonomy aligns with the principles of decentralization and self-governance seen in many federal systems worldwide (Akindele, 2018, pp. 70-71). His vision of decentralizing power to regions demonstrates a commitment to local autonomy and participatory democracy, influenced by systems like the United States federal model and Germany's federal structure. Nevertheless, Awolowo's emphasis on strong central leadership and interventionist state policies distinguishes his approach from more libertarian versions of federalism. His governance strategy, prioritizing investments in education, healthcare, and economic development, aligns with welfare state models found in Western democracies (Johnson, 2020, pp. 48-49). His focus on social welfare programs and poverty alleviation reflects the tenets of social democracy and Keynesian economics, which advocate government intervention to address market failures and ensure social security. Awolowo's approach is notable for its emphasis on grassroots development and participatory governance, elements sometimes lacking in centralized welfare state models.

Comparing Awolowo's political philosophy with other ideologies and governance models reveals that his practical blend of socialism, federalism, and welfarism offers crucial insights for contemporary political theory and practice. His approach underscores the importance of social justice, equitable development, and inclusive governance, providing a strategic framework for addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by modern nations (Falola, 2022, pp. 79-81). Moreover, his commitment to empowering local communities and promoting regional self-governance serves as a guide for fostering inclusive development and enhancing unity in multi-ethnic societies.

Conclusion

Chief Obafemi Jeremiah Oyeniyi Awolowo's political philosophy and welfarist governance approach represent a distinctive and enduring legacy in Nigeria's political landscape. Awolowo's vision combined socialism, federalism, and welfarism, offering a comprehensive development model and participatory governance. His political ideology provides valuable insights for addressing Nigeria's socio-economic challenges and promoting inclusive progress. Awolowo's focus on social justice, equitable resource distribution, and local community empowerment offers a strategic framework for addressing Nigeria's diverse societal challenges and fostering national unity. His welfarist strategy, which prioritized education, healthcare, and economic development, remains relevant for tackling contemporary issues such as poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment in Nigeria. Furthermore, his advocacy for federalism and regional autonomy presents a blueprint for decentralized governance and grassroots empowerment, crucial for advancing local development and national cohesion in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. Consequently, Awolowo's political principles and welfarist approach continue to provide valuable perspectives and strategies for addressing Nigeria's governance and development challenges.

Educational initiatives in the Western region during the pre-independence colonial period primarily benefited the elite and their descendants, leading to ongoing educational progress and socio-economic improvements. Awolowo's legacies, including his free education programs, have had a significant and lasting impact on subsequent Nigerian administrations, highlighting the importance of education for social progress. His leadership periods are deeply embedded in the collective memory of the people. Thus, classifying Awolowo merely as a hero of Nigerian society would be an understatement. His visionary goals, actions, and influential policies in the South Western region and beyond clearly establish his heroic status. Awolowo's enduring contributions include political ideas such as fiscal federalism, resource control, ethnic autonomy, equitable resource distribution, efficient national resource management, strategic development planning, advanced agricultural methods, and scientific education. Awolowo's legacy is timeless and unalterable. By adopting Awolowo's principles and further developing his legacy, Nigeria can work towards building a fair, just, and prosperous society for all its residents.

References:

Aboluwodi, A. (2012). The Philosophical Import of Obafemi Awolowo's: Theory of Mental Magnitude. Department of Arts Education, *Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria*, 2(2), 62.

Adebayo, O. A. (2012). *Awolowo's Political Philosophy and Its Impact on Nigeria's Development.* Lantern Books, 2012.

Adeniran, A. O. (2016). The Rational Approach of Obafemi Awolowo's Principles in Enhancing Efficient Leadership and Good Governance through Intellectual Enormity. *International Policy Review*, 2(9), 31.

Adeyemi,F. (2019). *Infrastructure Development and Economic Growth in Western Nigeria under Awolowo's Administration. Journal of African Infrastructure Development*, 12(1), 79-80.

Afigbo, A. E. (1986) The Legacy of Colonialism in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective. *Journal of Black Studies,* 17(4), 424.

Akindele, R. A. (2018). Federalism and Decentralization: Lessons from Awolowo's Approach. *Journal of Comparative Politics*, 25(2), 70-71.

Akindele, R.A. (2019). Federalism and Regional Autonomy in Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Political Thought, *Journal of Nigerian Studies,* 14(1), 34-37.

Awolowo, O. (1981). *Voice of Reason*, Fagbamigbe Publishers, 197.

Falola, T. (2004). *The History of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.

Falola, T. (2016). Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Nigerian Politics. *Journal of African History,* 57(3), 390.

Falola, T. (2020). Awolowo's Political Philosophy and Its Relevance in Contemporary Nigeria. *Journal of African Development*, 25(2), 80.

Falola, T. (2022). Awolowo's Political Philosophy and Its Relevance for Contemporary Governance. *Journal of Comparative Politics and Development*, 30(1), 79-81.

Ikime, O. (1979). *20th Anniversary History of WNTV*, *First in Africa*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

Interview with Dr. Aduloju Ayodeji Anthony, a Lecturer and an indigene of Ekiti State on February 5, 2024

Interview with Dr. Afolabi Femi, a civil servant and an indigene of Ondo State on February 5, 2024

Interview with Dr. Ahmed Wasiu Akande, a civil servant and an indigene of Kwara State on February 7, 2024.

Interview with Dr. Bolarinwa Olutayo Balogun, a civil servant and an indigene of Ondo State on February 5, 2024

Interview with Dr. Opeyemi Omoriwo, a Medical Professional and an indigene of Ondo State on February 5, 2024

Interview with Dr. Salu Babatunde Olaleye, a civil servant and an indigene of Lagos State on February 5, 2024

Interview with Mr. Adeyemo Stephen Busola, a civil servant and an indigene of Osun State on February 7, 2024.

Interview with Mr. Olorunfemi Adebayo Olugbenga, a civil servant and an indigene of Ekiti State on February 18,

Interview with Mr. Omoyeni Ojo Ignatius, a civil servant and an indigene of Ekiti State on February 19, 2024

Johnson, T. (2018). Awolowo's Legacy and the Development of Western Nigeria, *Journal of African Development Studies,* 20(1), 79.

Johnson, T. (2018). The Economic Policies of Chief Obafemi Awolowo: A Case Study of Western Nigeria. *Journal of Development Economics,* 30(2), 46-47.

Johnson, T. (2019). Awolowo's Political Philosophy and Its Influence on Contemporary Nigerian Politics, *Journal of Nigerian Studies*, 14(2),79-80.

Johnson, T. (2020). Awolowo's Welfarist Approach in Comparative Perspective: Insights from Western Welfare States. *Journal of Comparative Social Policy*, 18(3), 48-49.

Johnson, T. (2022). Awolowo's Legacy and Contemporary Governance in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science,* 14(3), 47.

Lawal, J. O. (2007). "Evaluation of the effect of climatic changes on Cocoa production in Nigeria: Cocoa research institute of Nigeria (CRIN) as a case study, *African Crop Science Conference Proceedings,* 8, 423.

Odugbemi, S. (2015). Socialist Ideals and Political Pragmatism: The Political Thought of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. *Journal of African Politics,* 18(2), 70.

Odugbemi, S. (2017). *Comparative Analysis of Awolowo's Socialist Ideals with Marxism and Democratic Socialism*, Concept Publications.

Odugbemi, S. (2018). The Relevance of Awolowo's Welfarist Approach to Governance in Contemporary Nigeria, *Journal of African Development Studies*, 25(3), 48.

Ojo, A. (2014). Education and Economic Development: The Impact of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Free Primary Education Program in Western Nigeria, *Journal of Development Studies*, 22(3), 46-47.

Olaniyan, O. (2016) *Awolowo's Legacy: The Impact of Free Primary Education in Western Nigeria.* University Press.

Olaniyan, O. (2016). Education Policies in Post-Colonial Nigeria: A Case Study of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Free Primary Education Program in the Western Region. *Journal of African Studies and Development,* 8(2), 12.

Olaniyan, O. (2017). *Awolowo and the Welfarist Approach to Governance in Nigeria*, University Press.

Olayinka, A. (2018). *The Political Thought of Chief Obafemi Awolowo: A Panacea for Nigeria's Leadership Crisis.* Concept Publications.

Omotola, J.S. (2010). *Politics and Governance in Nigeria: The Political Economy of Nigerian Federalism.* University Press Plc.

Onibokun, P. (2008). The Western Nigeria Crisis of 1962-1963: A Reassessment. *Journal of Nigerian History*, 14(2), 48.

Osoba, O. (2019). Regionalism and Development in Nigeria: Lessons from Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Era. *Journal of Nigerian Studies,* 6(1), 79.

Suberu, R. T. (2001). Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria. *Washington Quarterly*, 24(4), 141.

Ugwukah, C. A. and Adesegun, A. A. (2023). Legacies of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his Contributions to Educational Development in Western Nigeria", *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics, A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University,* 16(3), 906.