

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The philosophy of nonviolent resistance in *Fela's Afrobeat*

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Abstract: This study explores Fela Anikulapo Kuti, arguably Africa's most iconic resistant artist of the twentieth century by analysing his philosophy of nonviolence in his responses to numerous violent attacks by the repressive and oppressive regimes of the post independent Africa, nay Nigeria. Using the conceptual tool of music as social process and philosophical tool of critical and constructive analysis, the study combines documentary data in Fela's Afrobeat and Key Informant's Interview, in order to demonstrate the philosophical status of nonviolence resistance in conflict engagement and transformation in Fela's Afrobeat. The study argues that Afrobeat is a musical philosophy shaped by disregard for human rights and gross irresponsibility on the part of government that have manifested in Africa/Nigeria's underdevelopment since the Union Jack was lowered in 1960s. The study avers that Fela chose to be part of politics of revolution by using his music to exude protest and persuasion, non-cooperation and intervention against injustice that has created the many problems of man and social reality. The study concludes that for Fela, it is unAfrican to exert coercion; beat, kill or lynch and hopeful that Africans will eventually value nonviolence rooted in their cultural tradition.

Keywords: Fela, Afrobeat, nonviolence, nonviolent resistance, nonviolent methods, popular consciousness

1 Background

... the most dangerous things that a dictator or tyrant would need to fear is when people decide they want to be free. Once people have made up their minds to that, there is nothing that could stop them (KII, 2018).

Exploring the logic of nonviolence in Fela, the foregoing response from a key informant aptly captures Fela's position about empowering the powerless masses by transforming them into powerful resisters or activists; a process of disempowering the powerful oppressor; and how social movements can leverage through third-party advocacy. Essentially, nonviolent resistance is a strategy to empower the 'powerless'; strategy to win over the opponent as well as a mechanism of change. It is also a strategy to leverage through third-party advocacy. Noteworthy is that negotiation is the purpose of nonviolent direct action. Nonviolent action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It also seeks so to dramatise the issue that it can no longer be ignored (King, 1964).

Fela was right, but in a country that Nigeria had become, it is difficult to make this kind of statement and remain untouched. Fela had become a real pain in the neck to government so they ensured that Fela was dealt with by continuously harassing his people and periodically throwing him into prison. Despite the persecution, Fela never went back on his mission of being a torn in the flesh of the repressive and oppressive government, he noted that:

one thing I want to assure them, if they think I am going to change or compromise in my attitude, in my way of life, or my expression or my goal towards politics. They are making me stronger and I am much more stronger. So as a matter of fact I am surprised that I am much more stronger with the kind of beating that I got. So you want to see the police beating, you must see it, I'll show you, look at it, look at my yansh, fire all over my body. They beat shit out of me. But you see I didn't die. Because my name is Anikulapo, I have death in my pouch, I can't die, they can't kill me... (Collins, 2009: 5)

Nonviolent Resistance (NVR) is a precursor, or catalyst, to conflict transformation. Negotiation is only possible when the needs and interests of all those involved and affected by the conflict are legitimated and articulated (Lederach, 1995: 14). Nonviolent struggle is a necessary complement to negotiation as well as helps marginalised communities to achieve

sufficient leverage for an effective negotiation process. Nonviolent action produces a change in the participants: It corrects their lack of self-confidence as former subordinates; and, through the development of self-reliance and fearlessness, it gives them a sense of power-over-oneself.

This capacity of NVR to enable oppressed and disadvantaged communities to take greater control over their own lives earns it the recurrent label “power of the powerless”. The first stage of self-empowerment also called education (Curle, 1971), conscientisation or awakening. Creation of political awareness about the nature of unequal relationships and the need for addressing and restoring equity. The second stage of self-empowerment involves group formation and mobilisation for direct action (Francis, 2002: 49), usually begins with a core of activists (e.g. university students or trade unions). The activists quickly rally support from other walks of life, especially among those previously not committed to the cause. The below statement accredited to Fela represents his protest in support for the oppressed:

The president of Nigeria is dangerous, Shagari is dangerous, as a person himself he is weak but his surroundings is dangerous. His administration is dangerous. He is not as dynamic to me as dangerous, but his set-up is dangerous. They all say he's great and all but underneath, he's spoiling the whole continent. He is dangerous, he has nothing to offer, he doesn't make big statement as such but he's dangerous because it's in Nigeria they come and do apartheid meeting, apartheid this, in the media in Nigeria. But you see this country is a Gestapo country. How can Nigeria be talking about South-Africa. You see, South Africa is better than Nigeria. I know so, but look, we are saying Whites and mistreating Blacks in South Africa, Okay that is bad . . . that is racism, they have a reason to do it, but Blacks are mistreating Blacks in Nigeria, what is the reason. It is worse, Police beat people on the streets like dogs (Collins, 1999).

Nonviolent initiatives facilitate a wider participation than other forms of asymmetric conflict. It provides ways for all citizens to take responsibility for changing the situation. In practice, a number of collective forms of action are designed to reinforce the power and the will of the resistance movement. Symbolic actions such as large-scale demonstrations and protests help to raise mobilization and cohesion among the activists. Constructive programme (e.g. parallel media, social services, tax systems, elections, institutions) is another identity-producing dynamic that help individuals and groups for self-transformation.

Gene Sharp's *Mechanisms of Change* (1973) is an important part of NVR theory. The mechanisms describe what happens to the opponents in the course of a nonviolent struggle, and the nature of their decision to give power away. The mechanisms of change are: nonviolent conversion; nonviolent coercion; nonviolent accommodation; and nonviolent disintegration. Gandhian NVR favor the process of nonviolent conversion. In this scenario, the adversaries come to embrace the point of view of the challengers. It assumes that “the potentiality for good exists in every living person” (Gregg, 1960: 117), and therefore a sense of justice can be awakened in the opponent by the force of good argument. However, it may not work in acute political conflicts, such as interethnic rivalries with high levels of polarization and antagonism

Nonviolent conversion is more likely to occur in conflicts arising out of misperceptions. With human needs involved, rulers are unlikely to yield to persuasion. Also, conversion is an inter-individual mechanism, which is difficult to translate to large-scale conflicts, where it would require the conversion of all the opponent's troops, supporters and elites.

This mechanism of change occurs in negative conflict processes. It is achieved without the consent of the defeated opponent, whose mind has not been changed on the issues and wants to continue the struggle, but lacks the capability to choose a viable alternative. The demands are consequently agreed by force rather than by conviction (Burrows, 1996: 118). Nonviolent accommodation is an intermediate process between conversion and coercion. The most common mechanism of change in successful nonviolent campaigns. In this model, opponents grant the demands of the nonviolent activists not because they have changed their minds about the issues involved (nonviolent conversion), and without having lost the physical possibility to continue the conflict (nonviolent coercion). However, they realize that the balance of forces is shifting against them, and find it politically wiser to negotiate, because it is cheaper or easier than holding firm. A fourth mechanism of change which is sometimes added on to this model is nonviolent disintegration which occurs when the government breaks down in the face of widespread nonviolent action (Sharp, 2005: 418).

In pragmatic literature, planning a nonviolent uprising is fairly similar to devising a military campaign: it starts by identifying an opponent's “pillars of support” (Helvey, 2004) and areas of vulnerability. However, whereas classical strategic studies have a tendency to equate power with military capabilities, nonviolent struggle emphasises political and psychological factors of power, such as undermining the opponent's sources of authority, and increasing division in its base of support. There are different types of action to weaken the power positions of the targeted

regime or occupation forces. “Denial actions”, such as civil disobedience, express citizens’ refusal to cooperate with the regime they oppose, while “undermining actions” aim at promoting dissent and disaffection within its ranks, especially within key political and military groups without which it is unable to carry on its aggression (Boserup & Mack, 1974). In comparison with armed rebellion, NVR is indeed more likely to generate active sympathy in sections of the population whose support the regime had earlier enjoyed (Randle, 1994: 105), and provoke loyalty shifts among its enforcement agents, e.g. police, army, public servants (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008).

Furthermore, violent repression against NVR is likely to “rebound” against the attackers, by weakening their power position while for the nonviolent group both internal determination and external support become stronger (Sharp, 2005: 406). This process has been variously described as “moral jiu-jitsu” (Gregg, 1960) or “political jiu-jitsu” (Sharp, 1973), and was recently re-examined through the theory of “backfire” (Martin, 2007). However, these claims should be greeted with caution. For instance, the differences in the adversaries’ cultures are likely to influence the outcome of NVR: if they are too far apart, the subordinate nonviolent group might be seen as foreign, sub-human or uncivilised, and violent repression may be seen as merited or acceptable by the wider public. Therefore, nonviolence works better the shorter the social distance involved (Galtung, 1989: 19). A non-democratic context can also limit the effects of a nonviolent strategy, because oppressive regimes do not govern by popular consent and can repress with more impunity (McAdam/Tarrow, 2000: 151). Some nonviolent campaigns have proven vulnerable to military and police repression (e.g. China, Kosovo, Burma), and the probability of success of civil resistance against brutal and “extremely ruthless opponents” has been called into question (Summy, 1996). In extremely asymmetrical situations, particularly acute in ethnic conflicts, nonviolent strategies might not have sufficient leverage to bring about necessary changes.

When the power differential or social distance between the activists and their opponent is too big, or where the “consent theory of power” does not apply, a new dependency relationship must be created between the targeted regime and its nonviolent challengers. Galtung (1989: 20) advocates the recourse to a “great chain of nonviolence” through nonviolent action by people other than the victims themselves; more precisely, by “those whose active or passive collaboration is needed for the oppressor to oppress”. Schock (2005: 20) also describes the “boomerang pattern” whereby “challenging movements within non-democracies exert pressure on their own states indirectly through ties to transnational social movements that mobilise international pressure against the target state to help them achieve political change at home”. This role is most often played by individuals or organisations from powerful countries on which the regime depends. But it might also be performed by members of the opponent group (e.g. opposition in Britain during the Indian decolonization struggle, Israeli anti-occupation groups during the intifada). It is for the reason that Fela noted that:

one of my explanations of why Africa is low today: we all know that Europeans taught Africans what they know today. What we use for our governmental processes. We all know about democracy. I condemn democracy now because it’s no more democracy. I write a tune about democracy and I call the tune TDT ME “Teacher Don’t Teach Me Nonsense.

Fela’s Afrobeat lyrical power cuts through the political milieu, in the form of opposition politics. Political dissatisfaction is the very basis of the music that confronts the postcolony (Kong, 1995). This is because the lyrics are self-evident that he was a firebrand and the bane of the civil and military repressive state apparatus of federalist Nigeria. Fela is a complex and a controversial figure, and what can be clearly stated is that he did not claim any form of political ideological purity. He has not been able to make it to the list of those who are claiming to be the paragons of morality. Political commitment has been the centre of Fela’s life since he pursued the idea of the utopian society as he was the voice of reason to those who were oppressed, marginalised and excluded (KII, 2018). The focus here is on the resistance that has characterised Fela’s musical socio-political and economic form. In a way, his musical lyric has been the one that was used as a weapon, and to advance the political nature which will create the humane society. In a way, Fela’s music was not mere entertainment, but pedagogically oppositional with the intention of unmasking the injustice of the African postcolonial state.

Fela’s music is tied with a political code, and that is why the music is Afrobeat, the musical form that channelled his oppositional politics which were anti-establishment par excellence. Afrobeat is the musical form that comprises various musical elements but that can easily when blended to be relevant to Africa. Veal (1996: 30) articulates this musical form to mean that Afrobeat, as played by Fela, was a political music obviously rooted in the highlife tradition, but

stretched far beyond in the parameters of the genre. It was jazzy but not virtuosic; it was funky, but not frivolous.

Afrobeat, a musical form that Fela is identified with as the originator and performer is a politically charged music containing all elements of nonviolent resistance. This is because, Fela as the ideological patron of this music, happened to form and articulate its lyricality in the context of the being the agitator of the oppressive postcolonial state apparatus (Aderinto, 2013; Balogun, 2012). Essentially, Afrobeat is the music that is politically embedded, and more so from the perspective of the originator, Fela “who remains Africa’s most challenging and charismatic popular music performer” (Grass, 1986: 131). According to Moore (2010: 25), “Afrobeat emerged as a necessary synthesis- the cry, the shout, the lament: the call-and-response to all of the earlier, chaotic centuries of blood and violence, and their cacophonous legacy”. This demonstrates that Afrobeat is the music that is politically charged, a charge which fuels agency. This is found in the musical form that is identified with as the agent of social, cultural and political reform. As Olaniyan (2004) states, Afrobeat is the music that changed the whole landscape where Fela adopted the interventionist role without fear of state power.

Fela and his controversial life, just like any other political activist worth his or her salt, stood at the coalface of the political power which was violent and oppressive. It is the postcolonial condition which leaves many of the African masses disillusioned. What Africa was supposed to become when colonialism ended turned out to be what was never anticipated – the continued and even worse form of oppression. As Cole (2006: 201) states, surges, abrupt cancellations, abundances, scarcity, inconsistency, and unpredictability are endemic to postcolonial life. It is in the postcolony where power of the libidinal economy finds existence and presence (Lyotard, 1996). The power of libidinal economy still plagues the postcolony and it is evident in the manner in which the ruling elite engage in excess and consumption which Fela opposed in most of his lyrics. Fela’s lyrics were the anathema to the political formation of the postcolony. Though the names are just changing from decolonisation, liberation and democratisation, the predicament of injustice and betrayal still remains. The residue is still there, and the “African Dream” has been contaminated by betrayal that aborts the true aspirations of liberation. The past, present and future of Africa present the picture that the law of repetition without change is the natural state of affairs, whereas it is not. There has been an attempt to disrupt what Bayart (1993) refers to as politics of the belly which has infested the postcolonial Africa. Politics of the belly is a form of eating without getting full (Mbembe, 2010). This form of eating goes hand in hand with the exercise of power, which is expressed in the form of overindulgence coupled with violence. For this violence not to exist there should be docility of the people by means of the patriotic duty in which they legitimise the form of rule to which they are subject. This is what is expected in the form of expression of feelings of love and pride for and belonging to the country (Kong, 1995).

As Farred (2001: 287) argues, the postcolonial leadership has failed to deliver. This is justified by the fact that such leadership gave itself up into the political life that is alien to the duties they were supposed to fulfill – to bring about liberation and new forms of political life. It is clear that concentration of power came into being instead of that power being evenly distributed. The postcolonial repressive state apparatus always engages in the effort of “muting oppositional voices” (Farred, 2001: 288). As Fela sang in the track “Sorrow Tears and Blood”:

*We fear to fight for freedom
We fear to fight for liberty
We fear to fight for justice
We fear to fight for happiness
We always get reason to fear*

This song serves as testimony to the fact that postcolonial Africa is abysmal. Nigeria in this case has seen successive military coups and there has been no change but to keep the oppressive state apparatus intact. Betrayal is what has compounded the postcolonial African state because the conferring of liberation and justice has been denied. This is the betrayal that Fela pointed out, and such a calling invited censure. Normally, the postcolonial African state does not want to be seen as failure, it wants to convince its subjects whom it oppresses that it exists and operates in line with their aspirations – it is, as the track is titled “Upside Down”. Not seeing the oppressive state apparatus as not being “Upside Down” clearly means seeing it as normal. Fela refuses to be co-opted into the narrative of the betrayal that informs the mode of operation in the state apparatus, which often reacts by violence when criticised and challenged. It should be stated clearly that the postcolonial African state through its oppressive state apparatus has the prerogative to reward, discipline and punish.

Since the state is the regime of violence exercised by the state apparatus, it is legitimated and cannot be questioned since it shows that penalties await those who criticise the postcolonial

abyss. This is a state of violence meted to those who oppose such violence or the force that is applied towards those who antagonise the state. The ruling class see themselves as legitimately exercising power. In Mbembe's (2001: 108) terms, "the question of whether humour in the postcolony is an expression of "resistance" or not, whether it is, a priori, opposition, or simply manifestation of hostility toward authority, is thus of secondary importance." According to Mbembe, the state, through its force of commandment— that is, that which set itself to express power for it to cow its subjects into objectified submission and legitimise itself even if it is illegitimate. The composition of power of the state qua commandment is both real and symbolic. Though the state aims to tame its subjects to be docile and complicit, in total opposite, Fela has the anti-establishment posture, that which defies the state and its apparatus. It is clear that in the postcolonial condition where oppression and absolutism exists, as Adesoka (2011: 108) states, "piratical power-mongering remains the order of the day". Zegeye and Vambe (2009: 17) argue that "he (Mbembe) is convinced that they (rulers in the postcolony) possess extraordinary authority that they use arbitrary". It is clear from this musical form that Fela stood in the opposition to unmask the real making of the state apparatus, and he also subverted conviviality that is assumed to be what preoccupies the rulers and the ruled, and exposed the thorny side of the postcolonial.

2 Fela's nonviolent intervention actions

In general, the postcolonial African state is informed by the discourses that seek to totalise nations and national identity. This can be by means of music that propagates the postcolonial state as heroic; legitimizing it for what it is not (Kong, 1995). In this regard, the notion of "banality of power" as articulated by Mbembe is where the state legitimises itself as the sole bearer of truth. Normally, those in power assume the role of being the custodians of truth which is not supposed to be challenged. What is this truth then if not a way to justify the politics of eatery and the form of power that should be challenged? The truth that is propagated through commandment is the kind that Fela falsifies through his lyrical might. The postcolony is, according to Mbembe, chaotically pluralistic, meaning that it is a state of permanent tension of obeying, pretending to obey and not obeying. This means the subjects have the tendency in the postcolony of toying with power by means of conviviality where the mode of oppression and resistance are collapsed into each other, and therefore capitulation takes place (Mbembe, 2001).

However, Mbembe remarks that those who toy with power through humour and laughter, whether in private or public domain, do not bring a collapse to state power.

The postcolony is the period of performance of power – the one in a symbolic existential plane, but at the same time raw in its very nature. The postcolony is the period of hopes trashed – that is, it is the period which did not and does not bring the imaginations of the people. Fela was "running resistance against all that he perceived as wrongs in society" (More, 2010: 327). This is what makes his music topical because it is the musical form that problematises and resolves the conundrum of the postcolonial African state. Fela, as a critic of the postcolonial condition, finds himself inside the complexities of such a state which put him in a subjugated position. The suffering of the masses has become a fait accompli; one which is seen as normal whereas it is structural and the ruling elite has no imagination or ambition to change it (KII, 2018).

It is in the postcolonial Africa where rebellion of Fela's music comes in and by extension the music that is politically oriented which has made him a rebel with a cause. The appropriation of music can translate it to be a tool for protest and resistance (Kong, 1995). In the case of Fela, it comes as a form of a topical critic since postcolonial Africa is arrested by the colonial disguises. Fela's music was not only a topical critic but had the power to articulate and ridicule the postcolonial conundrum in a confrontational manner. Fela attacked the state apparatus through his lyrical genius. He ridiculed the postcolonial state as an environment that creates a hellish existence for its own subjects it is supposed to protect. In "Tears, Sorrow and Blood" Fela sang about the brutality of the postcolonial repressive state apparatus thus:

*Everybody run run run
Everybody scatter scatter
Some people lost some bread
Someone nearly die
Someone just die
Police dey come, army dey come
Confusion everywhere
Hey yeah!
Seven minutes later
All don cool down, brother*

*Police don go away
Army don disappear
Them leave Sorrow, Tears, and Blood ...*

These lyrics dramatise the violence of the state apparatus, which expresses the force of the state power, the violence which is topical in the heart of Fela's genre. Satarising and confronting the state and its apparatus, Fela's weaponry and music are identified by his attitude of being "brash and outspoken" (Olaniyan, 2004: 51). This is the truth that Fela is committed to, the one which is the antithesis of the truth of commandment preferred by the postcolonial state.

Depoliticisation is desirable and necessary as this negates agency and the rise of competitive political struggle. This is a mode of pacification to leave the excess of power to be uninterrupted. As Kong (1995) argues, it is the environment that aims to create consensus rather than contention. This enables depoliticisation to set in where opposition and resistance are outlawed, or if they find existence they are violently squashed if there are avenues of resistance.

The politics of commitment and the lyrical power Fela's rebel with a cause persona is projected through his lyrical political activism which is informed by politics of commitment. It was, and it is expected that the postcolonial state requires obedience and blind loyalty, which is contrary to Fela's persona. State power is what Fela directly confronted in pursuit for the rights which are due to the people who must just be afforded justice and humane ways of existence. It is through

Fela's cause that corruption and power abuse of the postcolonial African did not go unchecked. As Grass (1986) argues, Fela's lyrical power stems from the musical forms that are sending uncompromising messages to the political power, instead of the conventional form of singing praises to the state.

Fela as the voice of the postcolonial polity was not driven as Mbembe (2001: 188) states "into the realms of fantasy and hallucination". The lyrical power of Fela is a weapon which left the postcolonial authorities irritated as Fela sang about the problems created by these postcolonial authorities. The antagonism of Fela towards state power and its apparatus was dramatic to the extent that he wrestled with it. As Moore (2010: 326) notes, "Fela's diehard conviction that humans are responsible for their fellow being human" is part of politics of commitment. This is a type of politics that attests to the fact that Fela is the man who gave voice to the people's silence (Moore, 2010). In fact, the voice of Fela has been a clarion call. Essentially, the target of Fela's lyrics is the "political state, the structure of authority and those who rule" (Olaniyan, 2004: 96). This shows that the existential condition of those who are at the receiving end of the postcolonial prowess of state power and its apparatus was really a concern for Fela. According to Kong (1995), political dissatisfaction is the very basis of the music that confronts state power and its apparatus.

The topicality of Fela's music resonates with means of making reality visible- the exposé of what the African postcolonial state seeks to hide. According to Cole (2006), the challenges that face African artists are complex and compelling because of the dire postcolonial condition. As Hand and Tyler (2003) argue, "Fela's music was not only effective as a political message that provoked social commentary". The lyrical power is that which captures various forms of life – the reincarnation and the reawakening. Such are the antithesis of the postcolonial state apparatus because it wants its subjects to obey sheepishly. The power of the lyric goes in tandem with the notion of music being a potent weapon. If music was not a weapon, the power of the lyric would be rendered obsolete. According to Pratt (1990: 8), "expression may be utilised instrumentally as an explicit form of political action designed to move publics". Fighting for the rights of the common postcolonial subjects who are objectified is what featured in the core of Fela's music, the very things absent in the oppressive postcolonial life. Fela even denounced the whole judicial system by stating that they are useless as they operated according to the dictates of state power, that is, they are also part of the oppressive state apparatus.

Fela's stance is informed by a politics of commitment, the necessity to realise a just society, the very antithesis of what the postcolony is. As Pratt (1990) argues, the political meaning of any musical form is dependent on how such music is used. The use of Fela's music was a confrontational lyrical posture that resonates with the commitment of not having anything to lose, but everything to gain to realise a humane life. This is amplified by the lyrics of "No Agreement" which stated:

*No agreement today, no agreement tomorrow...
No agreement now, later, never and ever...*

As already indicated, Fela did not compromise or try to negotiate the betrayal of the post-colonial state. The agreement here can be understood within the context of copulating with the state – that is, agreeing on basis of being docile, submissive and complicit. Fela refused to agree

with the commandment of the state, for that, his musical form will just be propaganda of the state machinery. He deviated from this commandment by rather opting for mass empowerment and egalitarianism. The lyrical power constituted in the politics of Fela is that music as a weapon should be understood on basis of articulation of agency through lyrical power. Doing it defiantly, Fela's lyrical power was not just a mode of criticism but a confrontation to the postcolonial state and its state apparatus. Fela's commitment stemmed in "denouncing those corrupt, unprogressive politicians and military men to the people" (Moore, 2010, 141). It is clear from the above that Fela did not submit to the might of the repressive state apparatus.

According to Moore (2010), Fela saw those in the whims of power as destroyers. That is why he refers to them in the track "V.I.P" as "Vagabonds in Power". The politics of commitment goes with consistency and speaking truth in the face of the repressive postcolonial state and its apparatus. Fela maintained the oppositional trend to show political commitment. In the absence of a politics of commitment, there will be a compromise and this leaves the machinery of the state in the status quo position. Challenging the might of the state shows that Fela was willing to escape, as Pratt (1990: 14) puts it, "from something that restrictive or repressive, and for something that is conducive to an increase of freedom and well being" (emphasis original). The politics of commitment is a primary tool which makes the lyric, its motive and outcome to show

the capacity of speaking truth in the face of power where there is absence of fear, but a deep political commitment. Kalakuta Republic and speaking truth in the face of repressive state apparatus. According to Olaniyan (2004), Kalakuta Republic was supposedly independent of the Nigerian republic, with Fela himself as president. The Kalakuta Republic as a communal compound was set up in an "attempt to reinvent and re-imagine another Africa" (Moore, 2010: 21). As an electrified fenced place, the part of another federation within the federalist Nigerian state, it is a form of a zone that is not attached to the Nigerian state in the imaginary sense. The Kalakuta Republic was a political statement of defiance because it considered itself not part of Nigeria. "The Kalakuta Republic made the point that any self-professed republic is necessarily founded on exclusion" (Edwards, 2007: 97).

This should be understood on the basis that Fela regarded the state of Nigeria as a site of corruption, oppression, confusion, and injustice. So, Kalakuta Republic was the state in the making, and Fela tried to make society to be in the dilemma of being social and also at the same time, isolated (Labinoh, 1982). Edwards (2007) argues that there was a contestation of the use of the word "republic" in reference to Kalakuta. Kalakuta, in Fela's sense, is in fundamental opposition to the nature and formation of the Nigerian state. The Nigerian state prohibited the use of the term "republic" in reference to Kalakuta since there cannot be any formation that is a domain in a sense of a state within the state formation. Whether the term was imaginary or real, it was fiercely opposed because the political role that Fela has assumed through his music has been that of antagonising the state. It means that Fela was taken seriously because his politics needed to be closely monitored and an attempt was made to contain his political music.

The antagonism of Fela's music towards the state was informed by deep commitment to fight for an egalitarian society and justice, which was tempered with by the perversity of the postcolonial. The oppositionality was one informed by antagonism and the response of the might of the state, through the army clearly shows its paranoia and its fear to Fela's lyrical power. Fela's lyrical power was mightier than the arms of the state apparatus. That is why, according to the perception of the state apparatus, it was seen as necessary for it to engage in conventional warfare to the enemy. So, the power of Fela's lyrics became equivalent to the might of the state in its armed form. As Labinoh (1982: 133) puts it, "the military saw part of its mission as a moral crusade and found people like him intolerable".

On 18 February 1977 the Nigerian state apparatus, with one thousand armed soldiers, attacked Kalakuta Republic. Fela was assaulted, including his wives and some were even raped. His mother was thrown out of the window from the first floor of the compound which later resulted in her death. The army then burned the whole compound. Fela was arrested. It is in this encounter where indeed Fela became victorious because he was not tamed or silenced by the brute force of the state apparatus. He engaged in the response-response encounter – that is, a condition where he antagonises the state machinery and as a result of that he is met with the might of the postcolonial repressive state apparatus by means of naked violence. There is nowhere in his rebellious musical career where he was co-opted by the state power. This is because he defied the commandment of the postcolonial African state as he confronted it not in the private but in a public realm.

Fela did not back down and he continually exposed the oppressive postcolonial state machinery for what it is. Political resistance is powerful in this context and it is in itself, a power that antagonises. According to Olaniyan (2004: 57), "constant state harassment, intimidation, imprisonment and physical violence" did not deter him but made him to compose prolifically to become a bane that cannot be contained. The song 'Coffin for the Head of State' as a result of

Fela's mother's death clearly showed how the might of the lyric was such an antagonising force which will not bow down to the commandment of the state apparatus. Fela, after being attacked by the state apparatus, never stopped, but continued to antagonise it. This serves as a testament to the fact that his struggle was more important than his livelihood. His confrontation to the state apparatus shows the revolutionary commitment he has, and fear was not a determining factor in the modes of his engagement.

The response of Fela after the Kalakuta Republic military attack came with more lyrical might. The track "Zombie" is a systematic response and attack on the army as being remotely controlled by the power of the postcolonial state. Fela sang:

Zombie no go go, unless you tell am to go (Zombie)
Zombie no go stop, unless you tell am to stop (Zombie)
Zombie no go turn, unless you tell am to turn (Zombie)
Zombie no go think, unless you tell am to think (Zombie)
Tell am to go straight

Mbembe (2001) argues that mutual zombification is what defines the domain and the dominated in the postcolony – that is, a mutual exchange of where coercion exists in tandem with conviviality. It is this zombification which Mbembe regards as intimate tyranny. Again, Fela opposed this zombification thus:

No agreement today, no agreement tomorrow ...
No agreement now, later, never and ever ...

It is clear from Fela's resistance that there is no agreement, and this opposes zombification. The state apparatus had the power to endlessly prosecute Fela. The battle field is that of the political genre- Afrobeat. The nature of the relationship that Fela had with the state apparatus was a burdened one. The response-response nature of this relationship is informed by constant antagonism because Fela had the power to ridicule the repressive state, and also make it to look illegitimate in the eyes of the people (KII, 2018). The power of the state can enforce, but that of the music if taken into account can bring fuel agency as a result of consciousness, but not to the extent of being enforced and realised like that of the state. The might of the postcolonial state failed in any way to discipline Fela. To amplify this, Pratt (1990) argues that music is a transformative force that subverts existing systems. The process of transformation is the one moving towards liberation – a utopian route towards social reorganisation.

Fela is the one who refuses, such a refusal is even antagonistic since it does not only react, but acts. Fela was antagonistic throughout to render the postcolonial apparatus naked. Fela's confrontation makes the dramatisation of the state apparatus a mere mockery. It was his music which illustrates the terror of the postcolonial oppression. This is amplified by Hand and Tyler (2003) who argue that Fela challenged the postcolonial state to give voice to the marginalised. The power of the state can even be dramatised in what it enforces. The attack on Kalakuta Republic was the dramatisation of power. Such dramatisation attempted to discipline and punish those who are on the wrong side of the power of the state or those who antagonise it. It is the power which rewards subjects who obey and comply with it and who are not obstructing the easy path of the politics of eatery and gluttony which are pervasive in the postcolony.

Pan-Africanism is obviously an ideological umbrella which influenced Fela's thinking and the manner in which his music is politically informed. Though Fela's philosophical stance was vague, what made his projection and representation was a political commitment and will to oppose the establishment. This anti-establishment posture is informed by the intention to expose the repressive state for what it is. In the musical form, ideology featured in Afrobeat is considered political and what has become political turns to be ideological. Though Fela is claimed in various ideological strands, which are often in contradiction, in other words, the ideological in Fela being pan-Africanist, a cosmopolitan, a humanist, an Afrocentrist just to name but a few are label ideological attachments evident in his music. This makes the ideological content to be amoebic. Ideologically hybrid, Fela produces mixed and contradictory results. This means that ideological clarity is absent.

Fela embraced pan-Africanism, Afrocentricism and nationalism (Olaniyan, 2004). Therefore, Fela's ideological strands cannot be classed or dichotomized – also taking into account the commitment he had on the whole of the African continent – the postcolonial state apparatus with its rigid commandment. It might seem that the ideological content of Fela is confused, but he might be forgiven that he did not mention a particular ideology as the ideology he adheres to or the one he should be identified with. It is well known that the consciousness of Black Power, which Fela came with its dose to engage the postcolonial abyss that befall the African continent. The amoebic ideological content that Fela articulated is the one which "calls for unity in the

much divided continent” (Tennaile, 2002: 71). However, Fela’s amoebic ideological nature learned more towards essentialism and fundamentalism. This is because Fela’s ideological content smacks essentialism and fundamentalism for that it is rooted or traced in pre-colonial past as a tool to attack the postcolony. Since postcolonial Africa is a complex phenomenon, it is therefore essential to engage in multiplicity of ideological tools which are essential to antagonize and reconstitute a new imagining of the African continent and the livelihood of its postcoloniality.

It is suggested here that such hybridity is part of the nature of the musical form, which he coined as Afrobeat which in Oikelome’s (2010: 2) definition “is a confluence of musical elements from various musical typologies”. It is this hybridity which aimed to appeal to the making of the modern and complex world, particularly the postcolonial abyss which in a way he sang about issues that people can identify with. The expressiveness of Fela’s music is loud enough as he says in ‘Original Sufferhead’ to “knock some truth” in the heads of those who find themselves in the middle of the postcolonial abyss. The pedagogy of Fela’s music can be said to be the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1972). According to Adesoka (2011: 104) “[h]e not only uses his songs as teaching tools, he is concerned, and even more pointedly, that the point of his teaching is understood in its entirety”. It is the fundamentals of the pursuit of truth and justice even this comes with a greater cost.

The pursuit is problematic in the sense that it is concealed, or at worse, betrayed right in the eyes of the subject of the postcolonial subject for that they are perceived as not being a threat to the might of the postcolonial state apparatus. As Adesoka states, the revelation of the whole truth is what can really threaten state power and its apparatus, for that it is his truth that can bring its total collapse. Fela’s music was not only political but also informed by the esteemed sense of pedagogy. This is the musical form that taught about injustice and exposed a dappled character of the postcolonial Africa. Olaniyan (2004: 152) adds that “Fela’s music is perceived as largely message driven”. This is despite the fact that the instrumental introduction is long before it gets into the pedagogical lyrical form. The musical long-form is that which exceeds the traditional short or five minute musical form. Olaniyan argues that in the structure which is ideologically conservative.

As Adesoka (2011: 104) states, “the political underpinnings of the long-song for, the consciously relaxed extension of a track’s duration beyond a measured five minutes, suggest more than a radical strike against the entrenched forces of commoditization”. Fela’s radicalism can be said to find itself in the politicisation of musical form; defying the duration of the musical convention. There is often a long musical introduction creating the impression that the song is instrumental- but then, only to hear the hoarse and thundering voice coming in a form of a pedagogical narrative. The pedagogy found itself in loaded words and the language that the Nigerian masses could identify with, which is Pidgin English. This is because for pedagogy to make sense and be applicable to the people, the language has to be identical to those who have agency and seek some form of consciousness. The simplicity of this pedagogy is informed by bringing unity – an important tool for any form of consciousness which will then bring agency to being. This is the music that resonates with existential reality. Being confronted by this reality, a musical form pedagogically comes into being to engage the conditions of this existential reality, the engagement of Fela indeed.

Fela’s musical art infused in politics made him a complex and controversial figure. His musical genius cannot be contested in terms of its lyrical might which in its confrontational character matched the might of the postcolonial African state and its apparatus (Balogun, 2018). Afrobeat is a musical form that is political, and being originated by Fela it the music that is linked with his legendary. It is through the lyrical power of this musical form where politics of commitment make an entry point to engage that postcolonial condition where the regression effect of postcolonial betrayal was common ground. Fela’s concern was with the postcolonial abyss where the might of the state and its oppressive apparatus were gaining enough ground. With the commitment to justice and truth, Fela found himself in opposition with the might of the state, and he chose the role of being antagonistic. Though politics of commitment came with a greater cost to his life, he relentlessly pursued it rather than copulating with the postcolonial state. Fela’s political artistry is legendary for that his music was a weapon against the might of the state which he wrestled through his politico-musical artistry until the end of his life (Balogun, 2018).

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