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# Chinweizu, Asia's Rise and Disentangling Africa's Strategic Incoherence for Africa's Future

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## Abstract

Chinweizu's wide-ranging and copious intellectual output persistently brings into sharp focus penetrating analysis of Asia's contemporary rise (read in Chinweizuan terms as autonomous modernization and industrialization) in juxtaposition to Africa's de-industrialization and with it her firm rootedness at the periphery of global power. "Africa's Staticity-Asia's Rise" is a binary that bothers Chinweizu to no end. In two key works presented in Accra and Abuja respectively (Chinweizu, 2010a; 2010b) he tries to find answers. The two papers throw up in my view, a few strategic questions : i. how should Africa relate to a rising Asia in contemporary times? ii. What will it take in real terms for Chinweizu's Black Superpower to emerge if the Asian example is a compelling one? iii. Is industrialization an existential necessity for Africa? iv. What kind of political, economic and social structures are required for a Black Superpower to emerge to command the respect of the world like Japan, Korea or China? This article will critically engage with these two works in order to attempt to respond to these strategic questions in the hope that it will aid in sharpening the theoretical underpinnings and practical processes for building the Chinweizuan Black Superpower.

## Keywords

Africa's staticity – Asia's rise – Black Super Power – Black Radical Thought – industrialization

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We need, ... to understand our *past defeats* if we want to avoid the *deadly shocks our future seems to be holding in ambush for us*. And to do so, it is imperative that we revise our understanding of the history of which we are products.

CHINWEIZU (1975: xi) (emphasis mine)

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What is especially feared is rapprochement between Asia and Africa.

CHEIKH ANTA DIOF (1974: 21)

• • •

... being Black hurts.

TUPAC AMARU SHAKUR (2001; from the track "Letter to my Unborn Child" on the album *Until the End of Time*)

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## 1 Introduction

In his closing speech, "To the Nations of the World," at the Pan-African Conference held in London in 1900, W.E.B. Du Bois (2007:210) will first use the phrase in which he famously captures anti-black racism as a global problem (Foner 1970:125):

*The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the question as to how far differences of race—which show themselves chiefly in the color of the skin and the texture of the hair—will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization.* (emphasis mine)

In his *Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois 2007:15) he used the phrase again twice in the second essay, *Of the Dawn of Freedom*. The second rendering is germane for our analysis here and worth quoting “*The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea*” (emphasis mine). As a core member, to borrow the phrase of Rabaka (2009), of the “Black Radical Tradition,” (BRT) Du Bois, paid very close attention to events in Asia as he extended his intellectual and activist gaze beyond the borders of the United States.

Indeed this Du Boisian Asian interest culminated in three visits (Gao 2013) to China in 1936, 1959 and 1962 (the Ghanaian intellectual was hosted and feted by Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai). Initially extolling the virtues and necessity of Japanese imperial incursions into Manchuria in the 1930s as strategic for China’s modernity and Pan-Asianism, Du Bois will thoroughly amend his views<sup>1</sup> in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Du Bois recast his colour line problematic in terms of the world-wide anti-imperialist struggle of the working classes with modern China as the arrow head not Japan. This amendment of thought by Du Bois regarding Blackness, anti-black racism, Asia’s response to Western hegemony and the implications of all this for Africa’s own future, represent an important point of departure for Chinweizu’s reflection on these matters. If for Du Bois the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) victory in 1949 proved a revolutionary counterpoint to Euro-American imperialist hegemony to which Africa’s politico-economic fortunes were necessarily tied, then an economically and politically powerful China in the era of global neoliberal capitalism had to serve as an African exemplar for Chinweizu.

To be sure China and Japan loom large in the intellectual universe of these two Black Radical thinkers but their approaches to what these Asian countries meant for African liberation could not be starker. Du Bois framed especially China’s relevance to Africa in Marxian world class struggle against capitalism and imperialism terms in which the Maoist three worlds thesis was implicated and took as given China as the natural leader (after Bandung) of the third world. The color line problematic in this fresh Du Boisian rendering had become entangled in the discourse and practice of world revolution:

China and Black Africa were joined in the present and future battles against European and American imperialism and capitalism. If the Chinese wanted to teach Du Bois about the need for international

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<sup>1</sup> Du Bois’s evolving thinking is well documented by scholars such as Mullen (2004; 2005; 2015; 2016); Frazier 2010; Ho 2008; Kelley and Esch 2008.

revolution, he was ready to applaud their efforts and instruct them how to achieve that goal.

GAO 2013:69

Chinweizu does not get drawn into such an entanglement. On the contrary, his life's work has held the line firmly on the colour-line problematic and focused in this regard on the global existential interests of Black Africa (i.e. sub-Saharan Black Africa and the Black African Diaspora). Indeed Chinweizu is quite explicit in denying both Western and Asian hegemonic control in any disguise. This is clear in the case of Japan which he considered expansionist; Black Africa had to escape expansionism at all cost or rue it:

With the end of the Cold war the world is being refashioned with five centres of immense power—the United States, western Europe, the U.S.S.R., China and Japan—replacing the big two of the Cold War era. Of these five superpowers of tomorrow, three belong to the expansionist tradition. Only China and USSR belong to the anti-expansionist tradition. As part of the legacy of the past five hundred years, southern lands of the earth, Latin America, Africa and South Asia—are satellites of Europe and the United States. They shall remain so in the twenty-first century unless they bestir themselves in the right manner and escape their chronic subjugation.

CHINWEIZU 1975:490

Chinweizu's political theory is his self-described "Neo-Garveyism or Black Power Pan-Africanism" (2010:1), the ultimate objective of which is to build this century a Black Super Power which will safeguard, promote and protect the Black existential interests alluded to and can stand toe to toe with the Asian one, China, and the Western one, America. In other words Chinweizu envisages a state of things in which Black Africans will come to depend on themselves for their own survival and flourishing for the first time since the Maafa<sup>2</sup> without the intervention of others, Asian, Arab or European. It is not out of place at all in our view to locate within the framework of this Black Super Power agenda Chinweizu's ruminations on Asia.

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2 This refers to the 504 years (1441–1945) of "five centuries of a Race War of unparalleled brutality in which Sub-Sahara African Negroes were subjected to unrelenting terrorism, torture, brainwashing and exploitation, on both sides of the Atlantic, by and for the profit of Europeans." (Chinweizu 2015:1)

Chinweizu's wide-ranging and copious intellectual output persistently brings into sharp focus penetrating analysis of Asia's contemporary rise (read in Chinweizuan terms as autonomous modernization and industrialization) in juxtaposition to Africa's de-industrialization and with it her firm rootedness at the periphery of global power. "Africa's Staticity-Asia's Rise" is a binary that bothers Chinweizu to no end. In two key works presented in Accra and Abuja respectively (Chinweizu 2010a; 2010b) he tries to find answers. The two papers throw up, in our view, a few strategic questions: i. how should Africa relate to a rising Asia in contemporary times? ii. What will it take in real terms for Chinweizu's Black Superpower to emerge if the Asian example is a compelling one? iii. Is industrialization an existential necessity for Africa? iv. What kind of political, economic and social structures are required for a Black Superpower to emerge to command the respect of the world like Japan, Korea or China?

This article will attempt to answer these queries in the hope that it will aid in sharpening the theoretical underpinnings and practical processes for building the Chinweizuan Black Superpower. Divided into four main sections, the first section, this introduction, deals with the general issues; the second section lays out Chinweizu's "Africa's staticity-Asia's Rise" binary problematic as evidenced through a systematic review of his two key works alluded to and the responses he proffers for Black Africa. The third section concerns itself with a discursive review of the Chinweizuan responses presented in the preceding section involving parsing them into the theoretical and practical with a view to attempting a rescue from an anticipated wishful thinking trap. The last section concludes with a summation of the key claims and some recommendations.

## 2 Chinweizu's Burden: "Africa's Staticity-Asia's Rise"

Chinweizu is at pains to demonstrate the socio-economic and political strides that Asian nations have made relative to African ones following the liberation and anti-imperialist struggles on both continents in the early 20th century. Quoting Prah (2006), Chinweizu (2010b) underlines the stark reality of bleak Black African existence on the continent where 1 out of 3 children are malnourished; about half of the entire population of the continent subsists on less than \$1 a day and about 80% of this population lives on less than \$2 a day. Chinweizu (2010b:18) adds his own take on this by pointing out the worsening historically vast distortions of living standards between the super-rich and abject poor in Black Africa: "The gap between the standard of living of the Black colonialist comprador millionaires and that of the shanty dwellers and the rural population is today even greater than the gap, in the 1930s, between the white expatriate colonialists and the African masses."

Chinweizu's critical gaze on these questions will bring Asia into that cerebral field of vision. From a historical comparativist perspective he has been wondering why Asia has turned the corner decisively while Black Africa has not. And this focus has become even more imperative given the rise of especially China and its deepening economic, political, diplomatic, cultural and trade relations (Amoah 2020; Ampiah and Naidoo 2008; Bodomo 2010; Gros and Fung 2019) with Africa.

The Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) has become the foremost mode of engagement between Africa and China. Seven FOCAC meetings have taken place so far; four of these in Beijing China with the rest in Africa. China has come up with two China-Africa Policy Documents (CAPD). The first was drawn up in 2006 and subsequently revised in 2015. Through the FOCAC and the CAPD, Africa and China, are co-operating on areas as diverse as fishing for anchovies and research on artificial intelligence. Indeed it was Japan which came up with this institutional, or better still summitry type of periodic meetings between African and Asian nations (post the Bandung Conference) in the Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD). The first TICAD was held in Tokyo in 1993 and the last in 2019 in Yokohama. South Korea (hereafter Korea) followed the Japanese and Chinese approaches with its Korea-Africa Economic Co-operation (KOAFEC) Conferences the first of which was held in 2006 in Seoul, Korea. The last KOAFEC was held in 2018 in Busan, Korea. India has come up with its India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS). The first IAFS was held in Delhi in 2008; the fourth is expected to be held in the same place in 2020.

In his seminal and bestselling work, *The West and the Rest of Us* (which marks its 45th year of publication in 2020 at the time of writing), Chinweizu paid close attention to especially the changing place of Japan and China vis-à-vis Africa in the global scheme of power. He (1975:492) then argued and correctly that when:

... Japan realized her inferiority to the West, her Meiji elite autonomously reformed Japan into a world power. Similarly when, when in the twentieth century China felt the humiliations of her inferiority to the West and Japan, her elite autonomously reformed her into a world power. Now, what does Africa's petit-bourgeois elite propose to do about the inferior situation of black Africa?

In Chinweizu (2010a; 2010b), this close watch of Asia is maintained with a focus on Japan and China in particular and to a lesser extent India, Korea and Singapore. Indeed, he makes clear his interest in East Asia when it comes to comparative analysis of Africa, Asia and power (Chinweizu 2015:4). The interest

TABLE 1 Constructed by author; data from various sources

Asian flying geese economies		
Nations	Commodities	Time-lines (Approximate)
Japan	PCs, DVDs, Televisions, Steel, textiles	1900s–1960s
Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan	DVDs, Televisions, Steel, textiles	1960s–1980s
India and China	Steel and Textiles	1980s–2000s

on these countries lies in their becoming powerful in political, military and economic terms. Japan led this power surge. Kaname Akamatsu's (1962) *Flying Geese Paradigm* offers insightful explicatory power in understanding Asia's emergence initially via the economic route. In this construal Akamatsu's claim is that the increasing complexity of Japan's production capacity moved her further up on the value chain (towards capital intensive production) and away from labour intensive production. This created space for less developed economies around her in Asia to fill the gap (see Figure 1) and set in motion their own rapid economic advance. To be sure Japan's own industrialization<sup>3</sup> (Norman 2000 [1940]) in the critical period between the *Ishin Meiji* (Restoration of the Meiji), which ended the reign of Tokugawa Shogunate in 1867, and the War with China in 1894 inspired the Asian continent. Of course, this industrialization came on the back of rapid leaps in technology in the 19th century (Kamatani 1988; Matsumo and Sinclair 1994; Matsumo 1999) which laid the foundation for further technological deepening in the 20th century.

On Japan's back Singapore has made it to the "First World." Singapore has become a strategic base for some of the world's leading multi-national companies (Lee 2000). The World Bank has consistently rated Singapore as one of the "easiest places to do business" in the world; the city-state is also regarded as one of the most competitive economies globally. From practically nothing Singapore built one of the world's best airports, Changi Airport,<sup>4</sup> and

3 It is worth noting that during the Edo Period Japan pulled off some endogenous innovation. For example modern Japanese vessels weighing up to 700 tons traipsed the seas of East and South East Asia in the 17th century.

4 It has recently been renovated to include a "doughnut-shaped exterior framed in steel and glass, the 135,700-square-meter space (around 1.46 million square feet) is a multi-use

trans-shipment ports (Lee 2000). Home ownership rate<sup>5</sup> in Singapore in 2009 was put at 89%. Singapore is part of the global top ten sovereign wealth fund holders (“in the main, sovereign wealth funds are funded by foreign-exchange reserves, assets which are held by monetary authorities or central banks in the form of U.S. dollars and other leading world currencies as a way of backing liabilities. Sovereign wealth funds are state-owned and are composed of a wide array of financial assets including stocks, bonds, real estate, precious metals and other financial instruments”); in 2019 it had \$US815 billion worth of assets under management.<sup>6</sup> From a lowly exporter of tungsten and wigs in the 1950s Korea has become a major global industrial player in complex fields such as biopharmaceuticals, gaming and smart phones (Amoah 2019). From “factory of the world,” China has moved up the value chain in a classic Flying Geese fashion and is now focusing on robotics (Wang and Ma 2019) and supercomputers (Gong and Zeng 2019). It has currently built up its military capabilities and is now able to both deter and respond to American naval power in the South China Sea in particular and the Pacific more generally.

### 2.1 *Chinweizu and Power*

At the core of Chinweizu’s “Africa’s Staticity-Asia’s Rise” binary in his texts under review here is power. In other words, Asia has become more powerful while Africa has become weaker over the last 100 years. But the pertinent question to ask is this: how does Chinweizu construe power and how does this sit with scholarly reflections on this social reality? Power to be sure has been the subject of long intense scholarly examinations and debates underlining its rather very elusive character. While not abandoning its coercive character entirely in the mainstream literature, it has increasingly come to be seen more in systemic terms and hence constitutive of reality than merely a-thing-in-the-world embodied in an agent. In their work Clegg and Hauggaard<sup>7</sup> to their credit recognize that there is no “... single concept of power which can be deemed the ‘correct one’. Rather, power is a ‘family resemblance’ concept where the extent to which a specific usage serves as a useful conceptual tool for the matter at hand is the test of utility. If the concept works for the task at hand, it is a commendable usage” (2009:400–401).

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complex designed to connect three of Changi Airport’s four terminals.” <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/jewel-changi-airport-singapore-guide/index.html>.

5 This is the ratio of owner-occupied units to total residential units in a specified area.

6 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/276617/sovereign-wealth-funds-worldwide-based-on-assets-under-management/>.

7 See for example Clegg and Haugaard 2009 for a useful analysis of power.



This family analytic has in its set of members cultural/ideational/ideological,<sup>8</sup> hegemonic and topological notions of power to which I will tie my analysis of Chinweizu's construal of power relative to the binary under examination here. Cultural power concerns itself with the ways in which the subject's interpretative lens construct and influence relations of domination and control. Basically, it is about ways of seeing, being and moving in the world and about particular modes of interpretation through communication of meanings in which the self is implicated in the ways it comes to be signified relationally. In other words the wielders of cultural power define the world by providing the significations (of which rituals are central) that legitimize it. Haugaard's (2009) take on hegemonic power has value for our analysis here. It draws on Gramsci (1971), Luke (1974), Arendt (1970), Giddens (1976) and Bourdieu (1977) to examine the ways in which hegemonic power relies less on coercion than on consent and the debates that have attended clarifying this understanding of power and especially in neoliberal times. The topological power is embedded in the work of Beck (2005) and Sassen (2006) theorized in what Allen (2009:159) describes as "a new geography of power ... in which the global is instantiated in the national every bit as much as the national the global." In other words, a new geography of power is emerging; "powerful geographies", to borrow Allen's (2009:158) words, in which "globalization, above all, has set in train a means for brokering power which has altered its conventional bases" (Allen, 2009:159) and deployment. Altering the "conventional basis" of power postulates prioritizing a topological perspective of space and spatiality (and time, also) over a geometric one, without abandoning the latter. For Allen (2009:158) "topological thinking suggests that individuals, groups and organizations may exercise power-at-a distance through a cross-cutting mix of distanced and proximate actions, often reaching through a succession of mediated relationships or drawing distant others within close reach through the effective use of real-time connections."

The neoliberal era of facilitated mobility of capital and space-contracting digital technology allows power to take on such a topological orientation. In this manifestation power is not simply a zero-sum game but, rather, a positive-sum game in which "inducement and manipulation can be seen to play across one another in an arrangement that involves far-reaching powers intersecting with more proximate modes" (Allen, 2009:169). Chinweizu (2010b) clearly recognizes this perspective on power in the way in which he is pointed in his critiques of neoliberalism in contemporary Africa.

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8 We will use these terms interchangeably following the style in the literature.

## 2.2 *Chinweizu's Oppositional Dialectics of Power*

While these conceptions of cultural, hegemonic and topological power have utility they barely disguise their Western liberal thought provenance and with it a loud silence on non-Western societies and their experience and expression of them. Black (2008) pointed out this gap in his critique of some methodological and conceptual aspects of Kennedy's (1987) work. The race question is also absent or not taken into proper consideration in the dominant literature on power. For example in Clegg and Haugaard (2009) race is not considered under "Part III-Power and Substantive Issues"; ironically though under this section there is an analysis of "Gender and Power." Here Chinweizu comes to the rescue by anticipating these gaps in the literature (Mann 1986) on global power; in a sense then Mann's analysis of power is Chinweizuan even if it does not *explicitly* admit this. Chinweizu sets great store on ideology as the basis for political, economic and military power; in this sense the Black African mind is a key battle ground for the fate and future of the Black race and is worth quoting in full here :

We are not **culturally or mentally independent**: we are ruled by their ideologies and religions; their music, ideas and images dominate our airwaves and our minds. Their cultural missionaries, and the evangelists of their religions are everywhere – on tv, on radio, in schools, in village meetings – instilling in our minds the subversive and anti-African idea that anything African is inherently inferior, degraded and evil. Their books, their movies, their newspapers and media shape our values and desires; our parrots echo their fads and denounce patriarchy, homophobia, circumcision, etc; our languages, our architecture, our literature, are becoming more and more Europeanized; our governance institutions and norms imitate the European models; our discourse is saturated with Neo-Liberal concepts, prescriptions and jargon like transparency, public private partnership, global best practices, training in entrepreneurship, NGO, CSO, Freedom of Information, stakeholders, human rights defenders (i.e. missionaries), HIPCs, MDGs, and poverty alleviation; yet we lie to ourselves and say we have become free from Europe. But are you free from the person who thinks for you and controls your mind and aspirations? Like Dessalines mockingly pointed out to the Haitians in 1804: "our laws, our customs, our cities, everything bears the characteristics of the French – and you believe yourselves free and independent of that Republic!"

2010b:2; emphasis mine

Mann theorizes ideology as performing two organizational functions. The first is relatively autonomous and sets the framework for “sociospatially transcendent” (Mann 1986:23) organization; a super glue “for the possibility of *greater cooperation or exploitation* that transcend the organizational reach of secular authorities” (Mann 1986:23) (emphasis mine). The second is immanent moral; this intensifies “the cohesion, the confidence, and, therefore, the power of an already established social group” (Mann 1986:24). Chinweizu will agree.

Chinweizu’s analytical contribution to the theory of power is his insistence upon how critical the race question is to such an undertaking. On account of this, my reading, is that Chinweizu prefigures the brilliant work of oppositional political theorist Mills (2013) enunciated in the *Domination Contract* (TDC). TDC is an exercise in turning racialized contract theory (Mills 1997) to progressive ends. The central claim of the TDC is that political theory must come to terms with the exploitation of groups by other groups in a contractualist mode (Mills 2013:77) and proceeds to flesh out the key descriptive (historical and factual) and prescriptive (normative) components. TDC as a non-ideal theory highlights key points through which Chinweizu’s oppositional dialectics of power can be framed and better grasped. The basic agents in TDC are “people as members of social groups in relations of domination and subordination (Mills 2013:91);” the status norm is inequality; economic transactions are typically exploitative; human divisions are artificially constructed into race, class and gender; the dominant groups’ ideation rules; the locus of problems is corrupting social institutions and the ultimate goal of the contract is to reinforce and codify unjust institutions. Mills correctly notes the heuristic power of the TDC: “readers’ condemnation of the contract, and corresponding awakening to systematic social injustice and the need for appropriate corrective measures to realize a just society (2013:92).”

By means of what I will describe as *Africana Critical Theoretic* (Rabaka 2009) oppositional dialectics<sup>9</sup> Chinweizu’s *Black Power*<sup>10</sup> politics takes on TDC and particularly the inherent historical asymmetries of power that lies at its core. To be sure Rabaka’s (2009) timely and insightful effort does not dig deep enough into the Chinweizuan corpus. There is no exploration of Chinweizu beyond his 70s and 80s work; this robs us of the evolution of the insights of a major *Africana Critical* theorist. This work contributes to plugging the gap.

9 We will not go into a full scale analysis of dialectical thought here except to say that as an analytical concept it has a long provenance going back to antiquity in Ancient Kemet (*Kuk* and *Kukhet* i.e. darkness and light [Obenga 2004]). The Greeks (Heraclitus and Pythagoras) engaged in disquisitions on it and Asian Sages with their *ying* and *yang*. In modern Western thought Hegel and Fichte will add their bit.

10 Kwame Ture (Carmichael 1997) popularized Black power as a concept.

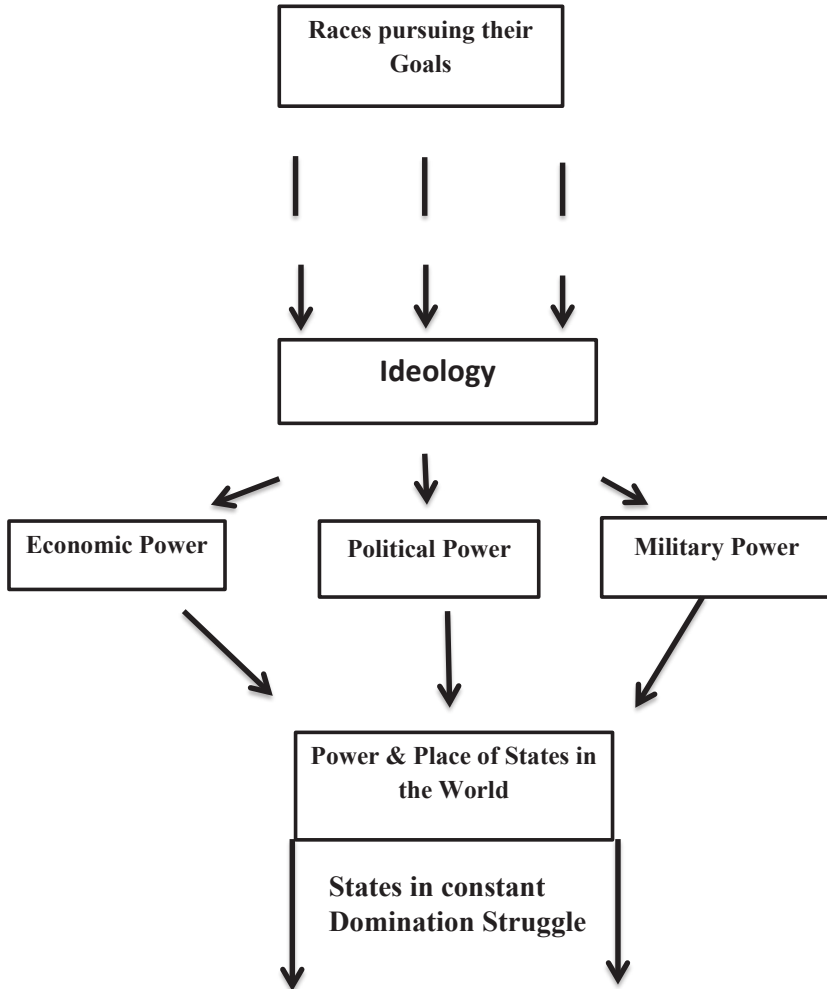


FIGURE 1 Chinweizu's framework of global power in outline according to author's interpretation

Note: This diagram draws insights from Mann's influential work (1986). The broken arrows for example mimic the complexity in Mann (1986, 29) of theorizing causality for some social phenomena. This is the context in which Chinweizu directs his Oppositional Dialectics.

By oppositional dialectics I mean a consistent rebuttal and rejection of the idea of white supremacy and its praxes focusing in particular on its apparatus of power which embodied in anti-black racism has rendered Black Africa and Black Africans less powerful and therefore weak. The acme, or to be technical, the synthesis, of Chinweizu's oppositional dialectics is a powerful Black Africa expressed in powerful Black African states and the rise of a Black African

Superpower. The binary under discussion is essentially a formal naming<sup>11</sup> device (Mills 2013:77) for making real the stark power differences between Africa and Asia and showing what a people can do to overcome the asymmetries of power engendered by TDC in its racial instantiation. Chinweizu reveals this through his oppositional dialectics. Chinweizu thus forges the much “feared” Diopian Africa-Asia rapprochement.

### 3 Chinweizu’s Visions – the Core Concerns

At this juncture the key question given that Black Africa’s weakness has been established via the binary under discussion is how Chinweizu proposes that Black African Super power be constructed. A close reading of the Chinweizu texts under consideration suggests a process of construction fashioned out of the responses to the weaknesses identified. In consequence we will group this process of construction into two: the ideational and practical. It should be noted that the two are not mutually exclusive but tied up in a dynamic fashion of constant interaction. The distinction is proposed for analytical purposes. We shall demonstrate here that while Chinweizu’s answers are anchored in the thinking of the BRT there are important departures that he brings to the table.

#### 3.1 *The Ideational Core*

For Chinweizu the ideational lies at the core of Black Africa’s weakness in the global power order. Responding to it therefore is a necessary condition for fixing this weakness. In the BRT Fanon (1965; 1967; 1968; 1969) is the torchbearer on this. Indeed Diop (1987:120) will credit Fanon’s work on tackling the ideational problematic for framing his own thinking on the question. Diop will subsequently offer his own three part exploration of the question which he described as “cultural”: “I realized that the cultural personality of a people, of any people, was made up of three interrelated factors. The *psychic* factor. The *linguistic* factor. The *historical* factor. I didn’t invent that notion. Others had outlined it before. I merely saw it to be a fact.” (1987:120).

Chinweizu did not invent it either but he will offer a rendering directed at the service of Black Power. In his view the Asian powers had resolved the ideational question; Black Africa needed to be guided by their example and quickly. To be sure both Fanon and Diop watched Asia closely and were

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11 Mills (2013:77) asserts that.... “the formal act of naming an entity helps to make it more real for us...”

interested in the fortunes of the nations there. Diop's reading of China for example was clearly linked to its status as a "yellow or colored power" (Diop 1987:20) and the centrality of military power to that:

The West's frenzied haste to undertake disarmament reflects a latent malaise, a hidden fear, which had seemed to be gone forever: that of the Yellow Peril.... In certain circles one often hears expressions of concern at seeing such a power appear and fear of what it might become by the year 2000 – with a full arsenal of atomic weapons. There is talk of China overflowing, of its swallowing up Europe in a full-scale replay of Attila the Hun. Efforts are made (by various means which may well have a broader scope at a later date), artificially to keep this absurd fear alive in nonsocialist minds and consciences, the idea being to stimulate a panic causing reflexive reactions in self-defense. What is especially feared is rapprochement between Asia and Africa.

DIOP 1987:20–21

Chinweizu's contribution is that he has had the longevity to witness Asia's rise beyond 2000 and subsequently, regarding the ideational question, proffers answers for Black Africa. For Chinweizu the answer lies in Black Education for Liberation (BEL) (Chinweizu 2010a). Given that the ideational problematic is a necessary condition for Black Power in Chinweizuan Thought the BEL is a survival imperative:

Think of the issues I have raised thus far in this paper. They should properly determine the core aspects of an **Afrocentric education, of any education of Black Africans in the interest of Black Africans**, any education that aims to carry out what, according to Amos Wilson, is the major function of Black African education, i.e. to help secure the survival of Black people ... We must invent an education system that gets us to understand, not only ourselves and our European and Arab enemies, but also the way the world of today works and was put together. It must get us to understand all the other peoples with whom we must share this planet Earth. **Such an education is a strategic necessity for our survival.**

CHINWEIZU 2010a:16 (emphasis mine)

Chinweizu (Chinweizu 2010a,16) links this new education pointedly to Black African psychic rehabilitation: "We must also consciously fashion an Afrocentric education system, formal and informal, that will repair the colossal

TABLE 2 Drawn from information from Chinweizu (2010a)

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**Chinweizu's Black Education for Liberation**

Key Themes	Areas under Themes
<b>World View Re-Ordering (WVR)</b>	Afrocentric Political Education; Education for Race Loyalty; Education for the Unification of our Peoples; Education for strong racial consciousness and solidarity; Education for security consciousness; Education for social responsibility; Afrocentric re-orientation of disciplines
<b>Production Awareness Building (PAB)</b>	Education for productivity; Education for autonomous modernization; Education for an Afrocentric governing cadre

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damage that centuries of defeats and enslavement, and a century or more of Eurocentric education has done to the **Black African psyche.**" (emphasis mine)

The BEL (see Table 2) covers two broad areas namely World View Re-ordering (WVR) and Production Awareness Building (PAB).

### 3.2 *Practical Concerns*

Chinweizu's ideational ruminations explicated above are clearly instrumental. Their instrumentality is directed at clear practical concerns for Chinweizu is no mere theoretician concerned with sterile conceptual investigations for their sake. In some of his early writing this pragmatic focus have been evident. This has been linked to the binary under discussion in this work. In his contribution to the *UNESCO General History of Africa, VIII*, Chinweizu berates the incapacity of Africa's élites to engage in the direct production of the material needs of the continent because of their proclivity for consumption "... the élites felt no pressure to change their ways and submit to the rigours of capital accumulation and investment in productive forces which make for autonomous development" (1993:792). He juxtaposes this with what leading Asian nations had managed to do after 1960:

But was it possible, in the world conditions between 1960 and 1984, for any poor underdeveloped country to develop? Yes, indeed! Development was possible, both without delinking from or altering the fundamental structures of Western capitalist dominance (as shown by Singapore, Taiwan,

Hong Kong, South Korea and other Third-World NICs – New Industrial Countries), and with delinking from the capitalist system (as with China after 1949). So, why did Africa fail? Why did not even one African country become an NIC?<sup>12</sup>

CHINWEIZU 1993:7989

It is clear from the above that the practical challenges that Black Africa has to deal with regarding its weaknesses as construed in his works under review boils down to those linked in particular to capital accumulation and investment that makes industrialization possible. Industrialization (anchored on technology) is the sun around which revolve other key practical questions such as military strength, the nature of the ruling élite and the kind of African state fit for purpose for industrialization. In Chinweizu (2010b) the word industrialization with its cognates is mentioned fifteen times. In my close reading of these texts Black Africa's industrialization to which the other key practical concerns just referred to are connected point ultimately to what Chinweizu describes as "autonomous modernization." In our Chinweizuan rendering of power here ideological clarity is the necessary condition for military, economic and political power which flow from industrialization. Chang, for instance, lays down in a nomothetic fashion how industrialization is linked to economic power in his claim that "it is a law of competition that those who can do difficult things which others cannot will earn more profit" (2007:41). The correctness of Chinweizu's reading of the centrality of industrialization to remedy Black Africa's weakness is evidenced by recent engagement of the subject of industrialization in the literature (Aryeetey and Kanbur 2018; Aryeetey and Fenny 2018; Chang and Andreoni 2020; Huage 2020; Andreoni and Chang 2017; Chang and Zach 2018; Stiglitz 2018; Lin 2018; Wade 2018; Evans and Heller 2018). Chang (2020, 324) argues that ".... industrial policy is now back in fashion, both in academia but also, more importantly, in the real world." To be sure theorizations on industrialization have a long provenance going back in the modern era to the seminal work of Antonio Serra (1613[2011]) and others. Without going into the details these debates have gone through four stages (Chang and Andreoni 2019) chronologically viz infant industry, inter-sectoral and structural issues, full works and mainstreaming phases.

For Andreoni and Chang (2019) the last phase of the debates (mainstreaming phase) is fraught with theoretical and practical limitations which require fine tuning. On the theoretical side for example they argue that the current debate is ill at ease moving away from the Neo-Classical framework. To fix this

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<sup>12</sup> New Industrialized Country.



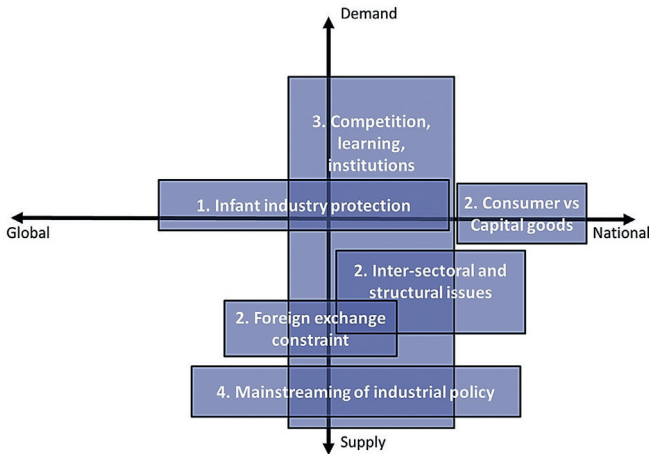


FIGURE 2 Four Key Phases of Industrial Policy Debates

SOURCE: ANDREONI AND CHANG 2019: 141

they extend the discourse (Chang and Andreoni 2020) to encompass four key issues namely commitment under uncertainty, learning in production, micro-economic management, and conflict management. What is clear from the analysis on industrialization as briefly sketched here is that industrialization will take not place of itself; it is not self-fulfilling. It needs agents who will consciously act to realize it. For Chinweizu's visions of Black African industrialization to be actualized it requires action. We try to tackle this in the next section.

#### 4 Chinweizu's Visions: Beyond the Wishful Thinking Trap

At the practical level is Chinweizu's insistent focus that Black Africa industrialize as the basis for curing its modern perennial weakness realistic? Is it just wishful thinking? For a working definition of wishful thinking in this work we rely on Amzat (2020). Wishful thinking is a psychological condition in which one dabbles in illusions about desires and merely speculates about the realization of these desires. In other words for a problem "possible solutions that could be vital ... are never implemented or are never meant to be implemented." (Amzat 2020:212). If my reading of Amzat (2020) is correct wishful thinking turns on two key notions: doability and follow-up. Wishful thinking does "not appeal to evidence, rationality, or reality (Amzat 2020:213) and therefore is not doable. It is essentially an exercise in building the Pyramids in the air; follow-up is therefore moot by definition. Chinweizu's take on Black Africa's weakness compared to Asia's and his recommendations for action are

anchored in evidence both historical and contemporary, and well argued. The rise of Korea, China, Japan among others as industrial powerhouses is compelling evidence that a non-industrialized state can become one in a generation.

Our task regarding Chinweizuan thought on the matter at hand here and elsewhere then is to continue to push it beyond the grasp of wishful thinking regarding doability to further strengthen its actionability appeal. In this work doability is the foremost criterion for rescuing Chinweizu's vision from the wishful thinking trap given that the first task of great thinkers is ideation. Follow up is necessarily a political matter the realization of which may be engendered by the force of clarity of the ideas at stake. We will engage, albeit briefly, two key ideas in Chinweizu's visions for the construction of a Black African Superpower as part of a broader research agenda for further extending, reinforcing and fine-tuning them.

#### 4.1 *Industrialization and the State*

It is clear from Chinweizu's analysis that Black Africa's industrialization can only be accomplished through an extensively interventionist state (Chinweizu 2010b:8). Such a state will utilize its bureaucratic infrastructure, regulatory power, financial muscle, moral suasion, information control among others for industrial policy formation. Chinweizu is gesturing, I will argue, towards the developmental state which had its classical roots in contemporary Asia. He does not indicate that explicitly in the texts under review but his discourse on strong African states that can depend first and foremost on themselves for their material, defense, technological and other needs as the leading Asian states have done provides compelling clues to his developmental state proclivities or better, sympathies. The developmental state idea has come under intense scrutiny with some scholars proclaiming its demise. This endist view has been inspired particularly by the rise of neoliberalism which effectively outlawed the state in development thought and practice (Öniş 1991). Jayasuriya (2005:338) for example has argued that the increasingly complexification of governance brought in part by global regulatory regimes "explain the crises and demise of the developmental state." Amoah (2018; 2019) contests this view by arguing that the "demise" school conflates the "iterationist" developmental state with the "theoretical"<sup>13</sup> one and that the supposed demise must be seen as the actually existing development state responding to the changing realities of the international political economy. Yeung's (2016) displays this plasticity of the developmental state by pointing out quite convincingly how

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13 Essentially the classic developmental state that was initially propounded and analyzed by Chalmers Johnson (1982; 1999).

the development state can survive the challenges of a new regulatory political economy (which facilitates the easy movement of transnational capital and therefore has made global competition the norm) by finding ways to articulate connections with Global Production Networks (GPN) in what he describes as “strategic coupling” via the developmental state’s firms. What must be taken into consideration therefore as the developmental state’s co-ordinating power is reconfigured is that (Yeung 2016:189):

This evolving state-firm-GPN assemblage is critical for understanding East Asian development in the era of *global competition*, because no matter how cohesive or powerful, the developmental state or its elite bureaucracy does not perform the actual catching up process. It is rather the national firm, chosen or otherwise, that acts on these state-led directives and incentives to industrialize the nation. (*italics mine*)

A recent work by Thurbon and Weiss (2019) is cast in the mode of Yeung (2016) as it looks at the development state in its current iteration in East Asia. Some scholars have also recently joined the debates on the developmental state in Africa (Ikpe 2017; Edigheji 2010; Hasselskog 2018; Goodfellow 2017) in the wake of the abysmal failure in the last 40 years of the neoliberal mode of development. Amoah (2018) characterizes these efforts as providing the framing lineaments of the African Developmental State (ADS).

As already indicated for the development state to realize its core function to industrialize it has to focus on quite difficult and complicated tasks requiring the uncommon co-ordinating capacity of the state (Chang and Andreoni 2020). One typical arena requiring such capacity is commitment under uncertainty. Technology choices for firms for example can be tricky and costly given the inherent irreversibility of choices made in the face of uncertainty in demand. The developmental state is called upon, for example, to protect infant industries without generating inefficient industries and a hollowed-out state choking on rents. Another key area is learning in production. This view challenges the Research and Development (R&D) approach for de-emphasizing “on the floor” and “hands on learning” in the production process. Learning in production (Chang and Andreoni 2020) is about “a collective and cumulative process embedded in existing production structures, involving continuous and interdependent changes in agents’ capabilities, organizational configurations, and investments in material assets, including machinery and infrastructure.” In this understanding R&D is part of the process of learning in production instead of the exclusive means. Chang and Andreoni (2020) also point to Conflict Management as inherent in the drive to industrialize because policymaking

is ultimately political. Some gain from the process (as firms or citizens/groups of citizens) while others lose. Such an outcome is clearly conflictual especially for targeted policy formation such as is involved in the drive to industrialize as understood in this work. To all these must be added the climate change/environmental question which cannot be avoided in the industrialization equation. This is so given the devastation wrought on the biosphere leading to what is being described as the era of the Anthropocene; the age in which human beings by their actions have decisively altered the Earth's environment (Tiessen 2018; Powell 2019).

We highlight the issues just raised to draw attention to questions implicated in the Chinweizuan vision of industrialization in Black Africa. What political system for example should be put in place to manage such conflicts in the Chinweizuan strong Black African states envisioned? Is the liberal political order now in vogue in Black Africa fit for such a purposeful drive for industrialization and its necessarily conflictual nature; has it long reached its limits? In a major contribution to this debate Lumumba-Kasongo (2006) and Ayelazuno and Mawuko-Yevugah (2020) raise searching questions about liberal democracy in Ghana which has effectively impoverished further the poorest of the poor. What kind of political parties are required in Black Africa for the pursuit of the industrialization agenda? How can an industrialization focused governing elite and bureaucracy be forged? These are pressing questions that need to be answered for theorizing the ADS and soon as possible within the 100 year Chinweizuan time frame. And the answers should respond to the doability of Chinweizu's visions and rescue them from the Wishful Thinking Trap.

## 5 Conclusion

In this work we have engaged Chinweizu's large corpus of work generally and in particular those which detail his engagement with Asia's rise. While his Asia analytical excursions go back to the 70s, two of his most recent works (2010a; 2010b) in the last decade form the basis of our critical interest. In these works we have shown that via the binary of "Africa's Staticity-Asia's Rise," the venerable Black African thinker attempts to answer vital strategico-existential questions on Black Africa's future. The achievements of now powerful Asian states is presented as an inviting mirror reflection of what Black Africa can do to escape its seemingly fixed place at the margins of global power. We have exposed the theoretical and empirical claims embedded in these works which point to the necessary debates in Black African political-economy (what Hanchard [2010; 2020] fittingly describes as Afro-modern politics) that must be had. At the core

is whether and how powerful Black African states can emerge and with that at the very least one Black Super Power in this 21st century.

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