OBAFEMI AWOLOWO FOUNDATION · ROUNDTABLE

KNOWLEDGE
ENTERPRISE
FEDERALISM
DISCIPLINE
PROSPERITY

Neo-Awoism

Analysis and recommendations on the draft doctrine paper

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Well made, readable, coherent — but it reads more like a modern development strategy carrying Awolowo's name than a doctrine grown from his thought.

In this intervention I suggest needs three things to deepen the concept note:

01

A stronger Awo foundation

02

Sharper choices

03

The main gaps filled

ASSESSMENT

What works

ARCHITECTURE

Five words people can use

Knowledge, Enterprise, Federalism, Discipline, Prosperity is memorable and usable.

BEST IDEA IN THE PAPER

The Federalism Test

Devolution without accountability relocates inefficiency; accountability without fiscal capacity keeps states dependent.

OPERATING LOGIC

The development loop

Human capital → productivity → tax → social investment.

ANTICIPATION

“What it is and is not”

This page heads off the obvious objections well.

WEAKNESS 1

The ideological label will be the first fight in the room

AWOLOWO

A democratic socialist

The framing that ran through *The People's Republic* and the UPN programme.

THE PAPER

"Not socialism"

Places itself between social democracy and developmental capitalism.

This is the author's opinion in 2026 that needs to be debated: **what we keep, what we revise, and why.** For Pa Awolowo, his ideological position was reasoned from first principles and derived from historical analysis. It was not a label that can be changed whimsically. Will Pa Awo change in 2026? Will his views have evolved?

WEAKNESS 2

It anchors on the wrong history

THE PAPER LEANS ON

Second and Third National Development Plans

Awo's role there was real, but shared and short.

A RISKY EXAMPLE

The Third Plan's capital programme was projected at ₦30bn, revised to ₦43.3bn in 1976 on oil revenue, and is widely seen as over-ambitious. The paper's ₦32bn figure should be checked.

The strongest evidence is missing: the Western Region record, 1952–59

1955	Free primary education
—	Farm settlements
—	Industrial estates
1959	WNTV — seizing frontier technology early
—	Cocoa-funded development through the marketing board

WEAKNESSES 3–6

Choices, routes and loose ends

3 · A FACTUAL SLIP

“Rare earth minerals” as an Awoist revenue source

Western Region development was financed mainly by cocoa.

4 · TOO CONSENSUS-SHAPED

Could sit in any World Bank or AfDB strategy

No choices others wouldn’t make, no targets, sequencing or costing, no “first 100 days.”

5 · THE FEDERALISM ROUTE

Destination named, road missing

Needs constitutional change: revenue allocation, the exclusive list, possibly policing.

6 · SECURITY BOLTED ON

Last bullet, not a pillar

Integrate it properly, or leave it for a separate paper.

WEAKNESS 7

Other gaps

HEALTH

Reduced to a “minimum floor”

Free health services were one of the UPN’s four cardinal programmes.

FULL EMPLOYMENT

Absent

Another cardinal programme, missing entirely.

POPULATION & ECONOMY

Missing

The informal economy, land tenure, youth demography, women’s economic participation.

ENERGY & OUTWARD LINKS

Missing

Energy transition and climate, diaspora capital, monetary and FX policy.

PROPOSED ADDITIONS

Four additions to make it a doctrine

1 **Awolowo’s Economic Philosophy** — put it first

2 **Rural Industrialisation** — a full pillar

3 **Nigeria in the Age of AI: the New Intelligence Divide** — a full pillar

4 **Advanced Human Capital** — a distinct track under Pillar 1

ADDITION 1

Put Awolowo's economic philosophy first

DRAW ON HIS WRITINGS

- *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947)
- *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (1966)
- *The People's Republic* (1968)

AND HIS IDEAS

- "Mental magnitude"
- The UPN's four cardinal programmes: free education, free health, integrated rural development, full employment

This fixes weaknesses 1 and 2 at once. A short table of what is **retained, reinterpreted and revised** gives the doctrine legitimacy, and makes the move away from "socialism" honest rather than quiet.

13 CORE AWOLOWO PRINCIPLES

Retained, reinterpreted, revised

5

Retained

Carried forward as they stand, extended for today.

5

Reinterpreted

The commitment kept; the delivery modernised.

3

Consciously revised

Changed openly, with reasons given.

Every revision concerns **means** — ideology label, ownership, financing — **not ends.**

PRINCIPLES · 5 RETAINED

What we suggest to keep

Awolowo principle	Where it comes from	Neo-Awoist form
Investing in the human mind (“mental magnitude”)	Free primary education (1955); later writings	Pillar 1 stays first, extended with Advanced Human Capital and AI literacy
Integrated rural development	UPN cardinal programme (1979); farm settlements	Elevated to a Rural Industrialisation pillar, on the TransComs model
Prudent public finance	Federal Commissioner for Finance, 1967–71	Fiscal rules; borrowing only for productive assets; published returns
Early adoption of frontier technology	WNTV, 1959	A new pillar on AI and the New Intelligence Divide
A disciplined, incorruptible public service	Western Region civil service record	Meritocratic, digital, measurable government (Pillar 9)

PRINCIPLES · 5 REINTERPRETED

What we keep, delivered differently

Awolowo principle	Where it comes from	Neo-Awoist form
Free education at all levels	UPN cardinal programme (1979)	Free, quality-measured basic and secondary; tertiary via merit and means-tested support
Free health services	UPN cardinal programme (1979)	Primary and maternal-child care free at point of use; wider care via national insurance
Full and gainful employment	UPN cardinal programme (1979)	A published national target, met through enterprise, SMEs and rural industry
Comprehensive economic planning	The People’s Republic (1968); national plans	Data-driven plans with published targets, indicative for the private sector
Federalism on ethno-linguistic units	Path to Nigerian Freedom; Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution	True federalism kept; the unit becomes the competing state, judged on results

PRINCIPLES · 3 CONSCIOUSLY REVISED

What we change — openly

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

The ends stay

Equal opportunity, a welfare floor, a just society. The means shift from state control to regulated markets and private investment. Say so openly.

STATE ENTERPRISES (E.G. WNDC)

Ownership the exception

PPPs and private capital lead. Subnational investment vehicles survive as minority co-investors, not operators.

PRODUCE-SURPLUS FINANCE

Broader revenue base

Internally generated revenue and capital markets, without the heavy implicit tax marketing boards placed on cocoa farmers.

ADDITION 2 · A FULL PILLAR

Rural Industrialisation and the Eradication of Mass Poverty

Why

Integrated rural development was a UPN cardinal programme, and it is where mass poverty actually sits.

The paper's corridor table is zonal and urban-industrial: **the village never appears.**

The pillar would

1. Tie agro-processing to commodity clusters
2. Put enterprise and power into rural towns, not only metro corridors
3. Treat rural productivity, not handouts, as the anti-poverty strategy

Proof of concept: TransComs, developed through FTID, draws on Chief Awolowo's Optimum Community (OPTICOM).

ADDITION 3 · A FULL PILLAR

Nigeria in the Age of AI: the New Intelligence Divide

The paper's biggest blind spot for a "21st-century" doctrine.

AWO'S PRECEDENT

WNTV in 1959: seize frontier technology early rather than wait.

1

Universal AI literacy from secondary school

2

Public compute and data infrastructure

3

Nigerian-language data and models

4

AI in public services: agric extension, primary healthcare, tax

5

A labour-transition plan for jobs AI will disrupt

6

Governance and data sovereignty

7

The power supply all of it depends on

ADDITION 4 · A TRACK UNDER PILLAR 1

Advanced Human Capital

The paper covers the universal floor but not the frontier — and the two need different instruments. A selective, merit-based pipeline:

DOCTORAL PIPELINE

Funded PhD and postdoc places

In AI, semiconductors, biotech, materials and energy, with return or service obligations.

CONCENTRATION

A few world-class centres

Centres of excellence, rather than spreading money thin.

DIASPORA

Brain circulation

Structured, two-way movement of diaspora talent.

Historical anchor: the Western Region overseas scholarship schemes.

FOR THIS ROUNDTABLE

Five contested questions

1 **The ideological foundation.** Is it still Awoism without democratic socialism?

2 **The road to real fiscal federalism.** How do we get there?

3 **Rural industrialisation** reconceptualised as the anti-poverty strategy

4 **Pa Awolowo and education** in the age of AI and advanced human capital

5 **The Theory of Mental Magnitude:** leadership, good governance and enlightened followership — then and now

THE WAY FORWARD

We hope this Roundtable will lead to a revised *discussion draft*, with a short note listing the proposed additions — and build the conversation around the questions that matter.

The goal: a doctrine with legitimacy in Awolowo's thought, the courage to make choices, and a programme for an egalitarian society built on justice and equity — the People's Republic he envisioned.

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