

A Theory of a Pan-African Unification-Nation for the Structural Transformation of Africa

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ABSTRACT

It has been said that, if one wants to hide a leaf, one should put it in a forest. Similarly if Africans want to liberate themselves for good, they have to undertake a root-cutting project from the hegemonic power that has cast in stone for over five hundred years their historical and contemporary status of oppression. They can stay as isolated leaves outside the forest and face the music of oppression and continue to do themselves in or join the dense tropical forest that can hide and protect them inside a liberated Africa- unification-nation founded on a radical Pan-African historical imagination.

In this paper, I shall develop conceptually the idea of the African, with the idea of the Africa- Unification Nation and link both to Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance to bring about Africa's rapid structural transformation. By this combination I shall hope to make a theoretical innovation by reframing African nationalism to deal with a neo-liberal world where international law has been replaced by the law of war by the major power of the 21st century.

Africa's agency cannot flower without building a counter-hegemonic Pan-African ideal. Pan-Africanism is not a territorial aggregation of a pot pourri of post-colonial states, it is above all a movement and ideal projection that drives home the need to evolve Africa's own resources and the necessity and desirability to acquire the power of self-definition, discourse, ideology, narrative, myth and metaphysics to deal with and overcome the imperialist-colonial domination that continues to confine its historical possibilities to become free, empowered and attain comprehensive agency.

Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance and the Africa- unification Nation are Africa's counter-hegemonic project for instantiating and inscribing the will to freedom and unity by Africans not to remain isolated leaves but part of a dense network that the metaphor of the tropical forest symbolises. Pan-Africanism has to be resurrected as the logo embedding free and united Africa. Bring back Africa's agency is the same thing as saying bring back African nationalism by building Pan-African (African-Renaissance) movements to become the grand narratives to define Africa's new counter-hegemonic project.

Over five hundred years has passed since the system of slavery scattered Africans to the New World. Hundred years have passed since the Pan-African movement began. Nearly sixty years has passed after the end of World War II, when in 1945 in Manchester, England, Africans from the Diaspora and the continent met and united to defy the colonial system by declaring solemnly that they will use armed resistance if the colonial powers stood against the African national liberation movement. Forty

years has passed since many of the existing states in Africa acquired formal political independence.

Africa has been passing through reversals, compromises, forgiveness and forgetfulness during its longest walk (still unfinished!) to national liberation. It could not run as the methods chosen to claim its national identity disallowed speed and making the right turns to reach the goal. After receiving the crown of formal political independence, Africa surrendered the economic jewels to the internal structure left by the colonial powers in the interest of serving colonial hegemony over Africa. The colonial powers fought tooth and nail African nationalism and its key nationalist proponents. The pact between the new syndicate-local African elite and the former colonial- powers created a discourse of economic development and misdirected Africans from establishing Pan-Africanism as the ideology of African liberation. Africa entered a period of sabotage and technicist and economic tinkering abandoning largely the Pan-African ideal in its radical version to establish concepts, discourses and practices to free Africa. Decolonisation became false decolonisation. Africa was forced to lose its way. The elite to serve this loss of way recruited paradoxically and somewhat offensively pan-Africanism itself! The latter got watered down to the point that external and internal elites triumphantly proclaimed through their policies of structural adjustment the end of Pan-Africanism as the death of the emancipatory project.

However disconcerting to admit it, this elite dilution continues to bite. That means despite all the sacrifices paid over half a millennia through a history of prolonged African resistance, Africa's national liberation is still in process, not completed. It is here to stay, it is on the agenda; in fact, it is the agenda.

Africa's ordeal of struggle is not over. In the neo-liberal mean and disorderly world, the struggle has become also a very complicated process. Having suffered many abortions due largely to externally induced miscarriages and sometimes also due to self-inflicted activities, free or emancipated Africa is yet to be born. African nationalism has to create and liberate what I describe the Africa- unification nation. The debate to revive Africa's national rebirth is all the more urgent as the so-called dot.com era is upon the world imparting a turbo -generating logic to the world economy with Africa still remaining at the bottom of the pile with any measure of indicators one cares to use for passing judgment. The dominant neo-liberal discourse imposed on the world equates: privatisation+deregulation+globalisation= dot.com driven turbo capitalism=prosperity expected to trickle down to ordinary population... Africa is told to enter into the competition or stay, stumble or fall behind. Given it is not in the race, it is hard to see how Africa's prosperity would lie in joining the turbo capital generating dot.com new economy without redressing first its untenable position in the international system of production and distribution.

Africa needs to build its own national house and protect itself from this discourse, ideology and what for Africa will not produce wealth and prosperity but poverty and ill being, notwithstanding the few that will benefit and become prosperous. If the point is to make every African to have collective entitlement, joining the existing race (even if it were possible) will not deliver the goods. Africa has to create its national house first in order to benefit from the dot-com era by challenging its ruinous, current dis-equalising and marginalizing competitive thrust.

Africa's formula should be:

Build and expand public economic space + regulate casino/speculative capital+ Pan-Africa unification-nation= Build a healthy society of well being/not well having= happiness for all Africans, i.e., freedom all of Africans from ill being at one with their fellow human beings and their environment.

There are those who claim the current situation is the best of all possible worlds for Africa! By proposing to conceptualise a new Pan-African national ideal for developing Africa's agency, I am suggesting that Africa's best of all worlds has to be made yet. The idea of the African and Africa-nation to anchor the African renaissance and provide the historic Pan-African imagination current and future relevance will assist to mobilise the latent native internal energy in the continent and Diaspora while building the foundational principle to challenge outside interference. Africa as the most interfered continent can challenge that by re-instating a Pan-African national project. The African national project gives primacy to the concept of centring rather than continuing to peripheralise African perspectives and voices in international relations. It assists in providing the historical imagination and ideational resources to capture the power of Africa to define its problems and solutions and challenge the often-uninvited outsiders who use their money and other temptations to misdirect Africa's striving to reveal its agency. The disempowering external domination can be challenged only with an African national project.

The African national world is still to be made. Pan-Africanism provides the logo for the re-launching of the counter-hegemonic emancipatory project. The state of fragmentation and the systemic arrangement that has trapped Africa to the addictions of loans, grants and debt have liquidated Africa's striving to manifest a unified voice. Freedom for Africa lies in forging a unification-nation. The African Union has to be such a unification -nation in order to keep all on board free from the temptation to play the prisoners dilemma game, very often when those who wish to keep them fragmented and divided dangle external funds to them. Divide and rule has to be replaced by unite and be truly sovereign. That can be achieved only when fragmentation and the unholy trinity of loans, debt and grants give way to unity and self-reliance spearheaded by an African national project.

The national liberation movement has to be re-launched afresh in these mean and disorderly times.

In this paper I propose to suggest new avenues for refreshing Pan-Africanism to bring Africa's time. I shall use the two books that I was involved in editing as the major sources to present the case for African nationalism to both deal with and respond to a particularly unattractive neo-liberal world.

References:

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