



## **The National Project as a Public Administration Concept: The Problematic of State Building in the Search for New Development Paradigms in Africa<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

In the centre of the debate regarding the values and importance of decolonisation, development thought, and the post-colonial state-building in Africa, the question of the national project is central. In theory, a national project, as either an imaginary concept of the political elite, a tool of political domination, or a real complex embodiment of the mobilisation of ideas and thoughts; it is about governance. It implies the existence of some dimensions of political, economic and cultural nationalism both in its policy framework and political basis. At the time of political independence, most of the African political regimes, regardless of the nature of their ideologies, history of their state formations, and how they gained political independence, adopted and/or created some forms of national projects as the foundation of their social and economic platforms. However, it is generally known that African states have produced a relatively weak, fragmented, individualised and personalised public administration based on ambiguous and confused national projects. In Africa, even the reactionary regimes have claimed to be nationalistic. Why has this consistently been the case?

There are various interpretations of African national projects, which became the policy blueprints, through which the African political elites and the people were, in principle, supposed to be connected with one another in exploring new developmental models. Although many studies have been conducted on some aspects of the role of national projects and public administrations in projecting social progress in Africa, so far there have not been enough studies that historically examine the notion of national projects and their relationship with public administration. I intend to critically examine the historicity of the concept of national

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project as defined and projected through various selected types of African political regimes and social movements, identify their common similarities, if any, and compare their ultimate political ends. Secondly, using historical structural and comparative perspectives, I analyse how the notion of public administration was built in, and developed within, the national project. It is argued that no contemporary state is able to effectively render services that, in the long run, can be translated into solid infrastructures without building a public administration that is relevant and appropriate as part of the state's national project. Public administration should be an apparatus of the public space in which integrative ideas, public management, societal values, and collective citizenry are articulated.

I am also interested in understanding the nature of the relationship between the national project as an ideology of the state and the public administration as the functional foundation of the state in Africa and see how this relationship can foster the thoughts about the notion of public agenda or the public space. Behind this analytical reflection, the broader issue is the idea that the concept of the 'political public' defined through the relationship between national projects, public administrations, and the civil societies should be viewed as the cement for the collective political culture.

### Résumé

Au centre du débat autour des valeurs et de l'importance de la décolonisation, de la pensée développementale et de l'édification de la nation postcoloniale en Afrique se trouve la question du projet national. En théorie, un projet national est un concept imaginaire de l'élite politique, un outil de domination politique ou l'expression réelle complexe de la mobilisation d'idées et de réflexions ; il concerne la gouvernance. Il implique l'existence de certaines dimensions de nationalisme politique, économique et culturel, tant dans son cadre stratégique que dans son assise politique. Au moment de l'indépendance politique, la plupart des régimes politiques africains, indépendamment de la nature de leurs idéologies, de l'histoire de la formation de leurs États et de la façon dont ils ont obtenu l'indépendance politique, ont adopté et/ou créé certaines formes de projets nationaux en tant que fondements de leurs plates-formes sociales et économiques. Cependant, tout le monde sait que les États africains ont produit une administration publique relativement faible, morcelée, individualisée et personnalisée, basée sur des projets nationaux ambigus et confus. En Afrique, même les régimes réactionnaires se sont prétendus nationalistes. Pourquoi cela a-t-il été systématiquement le cas ?

Il y a diverses interprétations des projets nationaux africains, qui sont devenus les projets de politique en principe supposés lier les élites politiques et les peuples africains les uns aux autres dans l'exploration de nouveaux modèles de développement. Bien que de nombreuses études

aient été réalisées sur certains aspects du rôle des projets nationaux et des administrations publiques dans la projection du progrès social en Afrique, il n'y a pas eu à ce jour suffisamment d'études qui examinent d'un point de vue historique la notion de projets nationaux et leur relation avec l'administration publique. Ainsi, dans cet article, je me propose en premier lieu d'examiner de façon critique l'historicité du concept de projet national tel que défini et projeté à travers divers types de régimes politiques et de mouvements sociaux africains choisis ; d'identifier leurs similitudes s'il y en a et de comparer leurs finalités politiques. En second lieu, utilisant des perspectives historiques structurelles et comparatives, j'analyse comment la notion d'administration publique a été incorporée et développée à l'intérieur du projet national. Il a été soutenu qu'aucun État contemporain n'est capable de rendre effectivement des services qui, à la longue, peuvent être traduits en infrastructures solides, sans développer une administration publique qui soit pertinente et appropriée dans le cadre du projet national de l'État. L'administration publique doit être un appareil de l'espace public dans lequel sont articulées les idées intégratives, la gestion publique, les valeurs sociétales et la citoyenneté collective.

Je cherche aussi à comprendre la nature de la relation entre le projet national en tant qu'idéologie de l'État et l'administration publique en tant que fondement fonctionnel de l'État en Afrique et à voir comment cette relation peut favoriser la réflexion sur la notion d'agenda public ou l'espace public. Derrière cette réflexion analytique, la question plus large est l'idée que le concept de « public politique » défini à travers la relation entre les projets nationaux, les administrations publiques et les sociétés civiles devrait être considéré comme le ciment de la culture politique collective.

### **Introduction: Issues and Objectives**

No contemporary nation-state has historically been able to progress significantly without constructing an ideological blue-print, a political framework, or a guideline called a national project. The national project is not an abstract notion from the ideology of the African state formation or nation-state building, its mechanisms of self-preservation, and its public administration. The societal and political values expressed and situated within any public administration are located in the sphere of a national project. It is here that the political philosophy of what a given nation-state is or ought to be is enunciated. It is in, and/or through, the public administration that this philosophy is pragmatically actualised. Thus, the national project should be a reflection *par excellence* of the values and the functioning of what is going on in the public space called public administration.

The intellectual debates on this institutional space in the West have been dominated by the classical Weberian scholarship, which looks at the public administration as a formal, ideologically neutral and rational organisation called bureaucracy. This is conceptualised to function with efficiency toward the ultimate objective of increasing productivity based on technical knowledge and the rules it offers for the benefits of a greater number of people (Weber 1978). This perspective is challenged in the light of the complexity of the forces and factors that have shaped the state formation in Africa.

This article is not making any systematic classification<sup>2</sup> of the national project according to each political regime in Africa. The effort here is to understand the meaning of this concept in identifying how it has been defined within the selected major political ideologies in Africa. This is basically the work of reflection with a combination of a synthesised historical structural analysis with a theoretical constructivism,<sup>3</sup> which projects Africa not as a passive and unimaginative social and political entity, but rather as a dynamic complex actor that has to synthesise its experiences in order to produce its various dimensions of the national project. Although some illustrations are discussed about specific national projects and forms of public administration, this particular work is mainly theoretical. It is conceived as a theoretical foundation for recommending policy and political shifts. My main objectives in this work are:

- To revisit the notion of national project that was relatively popular in the 1960s but disappeared in the 1970s and 1980s;
- To re-examine and compare selected major ideologies that have been debated in Africa over the years upon which national projects were built. Some of these ideologies include: African socialism and humanism, nationalism, Marxism, and capitalism; to analyze broadly and comparatively the content of various types of the national project; and to identify and define the major characteristics of the public administration in Africa in which various national projects should be implemented as parts of policy articulation of the states.

In short, I am interested in making a contribution toward the re-conceptualisation of the national project as part of the public space called public administration. To be able to do this, I discuss the claimed policy content of the concept of national project and its economic and political implications in relationship to the practices of the public administration in Africa as public space. Furthermore, because the concept of a national project implies that in a country there exists a law of nation, a national political culture, a national language, a national government, and a loyal citizenship, I define and discuss the common characteristics of the African nation-state

and those of pan-Africanism. My preoccupation is: to what extent does or does not the functioning of the public administration in Africa reflect the ideology and value associated with the national project?

This article is divided into the following sections: the first section is this introduction; the second section is on nationalism and the question of building of the African nation-state; the third section addresses the nature of relationship between the national project and the notion of African public administration; the last part is the conclusion.

African people and their political leaders reacted differently to the European invasions, their military violence, and their institutions of control. They also adopted different strategies and followed different paths toward their political decolonisation from the colonial period to the post-colonial era. Whether these various reactions against colonial powers to advance decolonisation were originated from the working class perspective, Marxism or Socialism, populist and social movements, or from accommodationist approaches, they constitute broadly some core ideas where to locate the genesis of nationalism. However, the concept of national project is more complex than the vague and general ideas related to various resistances waged either to challenge the oppressive forces or to make some accommodation with the power systems.

Many people have argued that one of the reasons African societies and states, and their economies, have not been able to consistently progress or have not taken off as deserved and desired by the majority of the African people since they acquired nominal political independence has been that most African states or political leaders or ruling classes have had either too many weak projects to manage, or they have had no relevant projects to manage at all. I advance the argument concerning the nature and causes of the failed leadership as reflected in the national projects in Africa from a historical-structuralist perspective. As Claude Ake stated:

African leaders insisted that development needs unity of purpose and utmost discipline that the common interest is not served by oppositional attitudes. It was easy to move from there to the criminalization of the political opposition and establishment of a single party system (1996:9).

Claude Ake (1996) argued further that the main problem is not that development has failed in Africa, but it was never on the agenda. He maintained that political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development. He strongly believed that the authoritarian structure of the African states inherited from military colonial rule created a political environment that is essentially hostile to development.

Although I agree with Claude Ake's position above, the claim that Africa at large has not formulated any development project is not historically correct.

The point is that African states and their political leaders have not taken any project toward achieving developmental objectives seriously. For instance, they produced Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, which was not implemented. The relevance of any African development project should be assessed within an analytical framework of its significance in relationship to independence in Africa. Things are not static. Even if development has not taken place yet, 'the transfer of power from its indigenous counterpart heralded the transformation of the local order' (Bathily 1994:60).

It should be noted that some advocates of liberal globalisation, neo-Marxism, and the world system might perceive a research project focusing on the national project in Africa as being intellectually narrow and politically parochial, as it deals with specific class interests in time and space. However, if one looks critically and closely at contemporary history of the state formation, it is clear, in my view, that the national project has, in most cases, been the outcome of class struggles, the challenges related to development of the bourgeois state, the appropriation and claims of scientific and technological advancement, and the dynamics of the world economy. As I have stated elsewhere:

The struggles against the feudal economies, monarchical and strong states in their militaristic and personalized forms contributed to the creation of welfare states in Europe. The industrial revolution of the 1870s and early 1880s led to the development of social insurance in many parts of Europe as most workers received low wages and were also working under hazardous conditions. Thus, many workers did not or could not afford to live a relatively productive life (Lumumba-Kasongo 2006:22).

Since the Westphalia Peace Accords in 1648 in Prussia, which led the Western European political powers, and their subjects and supporters to agree to halt a 30-year war, known also as a religious war, between the reformers (protestants) and the orthodox Catholics, all the nation-states which were either forced to be formed after the European model or those which were inspired by it, advanced or expressed their political causes and social progress projects on some form of nationalism and sovereignty. Qualification of such a model requires a well-defined or precise territoriality, a loyal population, a common language as a means of unification, and governmental institutions. However, historically, no contemporary nation-state, no matter where it is located, has been able to fully mobilise its human and physical resources and convert them into policy requirements and political organisation without developing some forms of national projects. African states, despite their historical specificities and different missions as compared to those of the European nation-states, are not exceptional cases from this ideological

imperative. Furthermore, the permanency of the crisis of the African nation-states, the extreme underdevelopment of the African conditions, and the notoriety of the African leadership incapacity led us to raise the issue and pose the question about what the sociological, economic, cultural and political significance of the national project is for both the majority of the people and the African state. And how has it been conceived, formulated, and projected into policy? As Samir Amin wrote:

The nation-state ideology is, however, so powerful that when, in the aftermath of the Second World War, all the countries of the world were bidding for independence, they constituted as a system of would-be nation-states. But at the very moment when the nation-state was proclaimed everywhere, it was entering a crisis everywhere, even at its centres of origin, a crisis from which there seems no escape (1990:84).

African nation-states have been almost permanently in some kind of crisis, which is manifested in various forms: weak identity, instability, bad management, lack of confidence, dependency, corruption, etc. Before the 1990s, the management of this crisis at large was based on 'the universal and unilateral perspectives' of the global institutions and their prescribed policies. Furthermore, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as a socialist superpower representing the socialist world in international power struggles, the explosion of the claims of the so-called victory of global capitalism, and the rise of multiparty democracy, the intellectual and political debates on development in Africa has gradually moved away from nationalist-based kinds of paradigms and liberation struggle perspectives. On various levels, the issues of the analyses have included bio-diversity, child soldiers/workers, conflicts/peace-keeping, cultures, diasporas, drugs/mafias, ecology, export processing zones (EPZs), fundamentalisms, gender and social justice, globalisation(s), structural adjustment programmes, governance, guns/landmines/small arms, migrations/refugees, terrorism and, recently, liberal democracy, multipartyism and elections. However, although these issues are very relevant and pertinent in the search for new development paradigms in Africa, I am of the view that the issue of nationalism is as vital as that of the role of the state in determining the guidelines in any development process. The political vision guided by nationalism should be the engine of social progress in Africa. Thus, it is imperative that we revisit this issue within different social, economic and political conditions. Contrary to what is being projected within the end of history of paradigmatic shifts of the well-known Francis Fukuyama, his disciples and the Washington Consensus (White House, Pentagon/Military Industrial Complex and Corporate interest/World Bank/International Monetary Fund), believing that ideology either is dead or has become totally



dysfunctional, in my view, as reflected in the current power struggles in world politics, it is still a relevant concept and an analytical instrument that can mobilise people and the state to produce change. As I have noted elsewhere:

Not to recognize the role of ideology in a social science analysis would lead to ignorance of the essence of understanding the factors that shape the process of building social life, which is based on convictions about power of the belief systems in Weberian or Marxist perspectives. But not all ideas can form or can constitute the foundation of an ideology. Ideology is rather a conscious defined expression than a collection of some general and vague ideas about the self, collective self, and others (Lumumba-Kasongo 2005:163).

In short, either as 'a set of core philosophical principles that a group of leaders and citizens collectively hold about politics' (Kegley and Wittkopf 2000:12), or the thought that reaffirms 'the unity of ethics and politics' (Nelson 1996:360), or, as a 'rationalistic ideology', a system of bourgeois ideas of Engels (German Ideology, 1846), or a Marxists' notion of scientific ideology, which ought to be a 'comprehensive system that has clearly articulated laws, agencies, and material interests' (Lumumba-Kasongo 2006:159), ideology matters in world politics. Thus, the concept of the national project in its pragmatic dimension, as an ideological framework of the state, has to play a role in defining the public space.

While I have enthusiasm to revisit an examination of the national project in a broad sense as central to the debate on development, it is also important to pose the old question: what went wrong in the past African national projects, which, as the basis of policy formulation, failed to significantly improve social, economic and political conditions of the majority of the African people in most parts of the continent? Has the concept of national project been politically and economically a myth? Not only should we ask what went wrong with the past projects but we should also raise the issue of whether or not these projects were 'national enough'. Did they project people's interest and needs? As stated elsewhere:

The national project is one of the most important dimensions of the state building in Africa. This dimension is about creating new institutions and agencies, and defining new culture and citizenry in pragmatic manner. It includes formulating policies and political frameworks to address people's demands and their expectations to try to institutionalize, to a certain extent, the idea of sovereignty of the state. Even the most reactionary African political leaders like Joseph-Désiré Mobutu in the Democratic Republic of Congo or Omar Bongo of Gabon or Bokassa in the Central African Republic, claimed to have Africa in their heart and politics (Lumumba-Kasongo 2007:5).



Philosophically and politically, the concept of the national project has been one of the most questionable topics in terms of its origins and its intended objectives within the current African conditions and Africa's role in international relations and world economy. Samir Amin, for instance, views the concept of national project as a reflection of the national reality. What consists of national project should be interpreted with inconsistencies and contradictions of various ideologies of political regimes and people's struggles to positive change in Africa.

Thus, in my view, with the exception of the studies on social movements, some anthropological perspectives and, recently, some studies on democracy and the state, one of the weaknesses of the studies of development and its multiple dimensions in Africa has been the absence or the dismissive attitude toward a critical understanding of the meanings of the concept of 'public space' or the *agora*. It is assumed that 'public space' is in the African centre of development discourse. However, it can be noted that institutions, agencies, and processes of change have been taken more seriously than the target: the people. That is to say that through the studies of the national project, I will be able to re-locate the essence of developmental studies within the framework of people's projects.

How have the African governments and public administrations projected the notion of national projects in their practices? In many developmental studies in Africa, we have dealt with issues such as the state, economic development and globalisation.

Thus, on the basis of the existing conditions of liberal globalisation policies and their socio-economic consequences, extreme underdevelopment, political instability and uncertain democratic liberalism in most parts of Africa, what does the concept of the national project and its policy and political implications mean for the majority of African people and for the African political leaders? Does the notion of national project matter any longer in the current conditions in which global capitalism has been expanding in articulating the dogmatic claims of a world with less or no borders based on ethnicity, geography, religion and history? Is this notion still relevant in our attempt to reconceptualise new or alternative perspectives on the African political and public space?

## **Nationalism and the Building of the African Nation-State**

### ***General Conceptual Issues and Assumptions***

As Irving Leonard Markovitz (1987:13) noted:

At the time of Africa's "nationalist movement," every regime, no matter how conservative, seemed bound to do something, if not about the misery of the mass of the population then at least about the fact that fewer and fewer

people seemed willing to accept their “historical lot” and threaten to rise in rebellion. However, prediction of progressive policies did not, in most cases, turn out to be true. Organizations and bureaucracies designed in the interest of the poor serviced only the technicians and civil servants. These new organizations did, however, strengthen the state; they buttressed, reinforced, and institutionalized the power of the organizational bourgeoisie. They co-opted the most vocal critics and expanded the intermediary layers of well-paid allies into the cities, towns, and villages.

I have to reiterate that the ideas of a national project were influenced by the complexity of internal and external factors, of which the most important are reflected in the way colonisation came about and the various mechanisms and processes used toward decolonisation. It is the dialectical interactions between these two related power relations which produced national projects in Africa.

Through the articulation of the national project, various political regimes claimed to have attempted to Africanise capitalism, socialism, or project African socialism or politics of ‘authenticity’. The African states with strong national projects were perceived as prerequisites for producing strong nations. As Kwame Nkrumah wrote: ‘On achieving independence, almost every new state of Africa has developed plans for industrialization and rounded economic growth in order to improve productive capacity and thereby raise the standard of living of its people’ (Nkrumah 1971:6).

African states had the mission to create new nations even where old nations existed. It was believed that the national project was going to accelerate the processes of building these nations. The new African elites embraced this mission with force and enthusiasm. Through a combination of naivety and superficial understanding, they thought it was possible to transform the colonial states and appropriate them.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the majority of African countries gained their nominal political independence from European domination through armed struggle as well as negotiation. Zimbabwe and Namibia finally gained independence in 1980 and 1990 respectively, and South Africa adopted majority democratic rule in 1994. With strong convictions and faith in their state-building mission, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d’Ivoire, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Patrice Lumumba of the Democratic Republic Congo (DR Congo), Léopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Milton Obote of Uganda, and Gama Abdel Nasser of Egypt formulated policies which they believed would be beneficial to the majority of their people. They literally or figuratively worshipped the African State (Lumumba-Kasongo 2004:63).

What was the philosophical foundation of the national project as articulated at the time of independence? What kinds of African societies were intended through the political decolonisation? The main parts of this article address these questions.

All African political leaders attempted to pursue some forms of independence/autonomy. They did so either in exercising their own new power (based on the notion of sovereignty of the nation-state) through which they accommodated the interests of colonial masters without asking the old powers what should be done or in changing structurally the nature of power relations between them and these powers. But between the imperatives of satisfying the needs of relative freedom and colonial powers concerned about their place in the new political independence, they sought their 'immortality'. Thus, within the notion of the national project, some aspects of this political 'immortality' were maintained. As Ali Mazrui indicated:

In French-speaking Africa, the doctrine of 'colonialism' by consent assumed concrete, if brief, realization with the De Gaulle referendum of September 1958. Except for Guinea, the whole of the French speaking Africa consented in a popular referendum to a continuation of French imperial rule. It was a modern French version of Queen Victoria's treaty of protection with tribal chief. But there was one difference – this modern aberration did not last much more than a year. French-speaking Africa was soon asking for complete independence. It got it in 1960 (Mazrui 1967:39).

As to how Britain colonised Africa and the process of decolonisation, Martin Meredith summarised the ideas of what is well known as follows:

Each of Britain's fourteen African territories was governed separately. Each had its own budget, its own laws and public services. Each was under the control of a governor powerful enough in his own domain to ensure that his views there prevailed. Britain's West African territories were the most advanced. In Gold Coast, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, the black professional elite – lawyers, doctors, teachers and merchants – had been given some role to play in ruling institutions since the end of the 19th century. During the Second World War, Africans had been admitted to executive councils advising governors and, in the case of Gold Coast, a few had been elevated to senior ranks of the administration. After the war, new constitutions were introduced for the Gold Coast and Nigeria, providing for elections for a handful of members of legislative councils. These constitutions were expected to satisfy political aspirations for the next decades (Meredith 2006:11).

Within the above generalised characterisation, the ideas of a national project located in the African elite to found a strong state, later to create a nation, were based, in principle, on gradualism, cooperation and technical capacity of self-governance.

But, political willingness to build a contemporary nation-state goes beyond gradualism and pragmatism. It implies also imagining a new society, new rules and new paradigms of change to satisfy people's expectations. One will have to pose the question of the philosophical foundation of these rules. This imagination has to include new innovative ideas, a belief system, and a critique of the past and the claims of self-identification. There is no nation-state that has succeeded to progress without constructed self-identification, which is one of the core elements toward building a nation-state. It should be noted that the complex process of building is not a random one. It requires an elite consensus, a popular agreement, a revolutionary dictum, or accommodations. Thus, the concept of the national project can be examined from any of the above phenomena. It also implies that people recognise that they are part of the larger community in which they share some common values and identities. It also may imply the existence of some kind of psychology of unity and pragmatic politics.

The idea of the nation-state, apart from its policy dimension, can be considered as abstract for many people in Africa. In the 1960s, at the time of political independence of the majority of the African countries, national sentiments were mostly personalised and ethnicised. Despite the fact that the personalisation and ethnicisation had projected some negative connotations in the definitions, conceptualisation and the functioning of democracy, they contributed to bringing those ideas closer to the ordinary masses of people who were not ideologically effective parts of political parties. It is through the ideas of the so-called founding fathers that the majority of the African people associated themselves with the African nationalisms, even if they identified with the struggles for freedom and independence.

However, although the new African nation-states were produced through the complex processes of either national revolutions or political negotiations, they had common or similar characteristics with those of the European nation-states. The major differences should be based on the nature of the national projects that the new African leaders produced and how the nation-states were going to be actualised. The new political actors and their nation-states were subjected and/or exposed to two sets of rule. Ali Mazrui defined them as follows:

One set of rule is international law, a code which is intended to govern relations between the states in general. The other set of rules is what one might call 'pan-Africanism law,' a code intended to govern relations between African states themselves. The two sets of rules overlap in their demands and are connected in other ways as well. But they, too, are worth distinguishing for certain purposes of analysis...One important characteristic of international law as it now stands is that it is a law which was born in Europe and was originally intended to guide inter-European relations. Today, that law remains

essentially Western in its conception of the world and in the rules of behaviour which it lays down. And yet, the international community now no longer primarily consists of Western countries (Mazrui 1967:36-37).

The notion of the national project can also be interpreted on the basis of a common assumption upon which it is argued that in order to build a nation-state in Africa, there is a need to have a strong collective belief system upon which policies and political efforts can be set up. The collective belief system implies recognised, acceptable or accepted ideological choices or dispositions of given political leaders to push for given political projects. Thus, national project is an attribute of the nation-state building. However, in contemporary political history of Africa, the assumption of having a functional collective belief system cannot be generalised, despite some efforts toward pan-Africanism by some leaders. Most African elected or imposed political leaders have claimed to have various types of national projects as the basis of their policies. However, these claims have been erroneous and confused in many cases, reflecting the crisis of the African states. Furthermore, various struggles between the state and society through social and popular movements and civil societies have directly or indirectly shaped the concept of the national project.

I argue that one cannot define and fully appreciate the concept of the national project without defining the kinds of African nationalisms that were articulated behind such a concept. What is interesting is that all the African political leaders have claimed to have produced some form of nationalism at different periods in consolidating their relative or absolute political regimes or their systems of power. And yet, they also produced different social results or consequences in their respective countries. Some of them, such as Mobutu of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Doe of Liberia, Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, Bokassa of the Central African Republic, etc, produced the most reactionary regimes considered as the least nationalist and leading to the worst underdevelopment in Africa. Within the logic of the national projects, and in relationship to their definitions of nationalism, what do the African leaders like Amin of Uganda, Biya of Cameroon, Bongo of Gabon, Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire, Gaddafi of Libya, Machel of Mozambique, Kasavubu of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mandela of South of Africa, Sékou Touré of Guinea, Tubman of Liberia, Nyerere of Tanzania, Nasser of Egypt, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Nkrumah of Ghana, Kaunda of Zambia, etc., claim to have had in common that can be described as national?

In the search for model(s) of social progress, institutions of political stability, and new methods of people's participation, the concept of the national project has very much been intellectually appealing, but within the broad

world politics, it also has been political and economically controversial in Africa. It has had various interpretations depending on how a given country was colonised; how it obtained its nominal political independence, the nature of its political leadership and its relationship with its former colonial powers, the country's level of industrialisation and economic development, its natural resource base, the country's geo-political location, and its political culture. As indicated earlier, these internal and external factors have influenced the political and social framework through which the national project was formulated as the basis for policy in Africa. For instance, decolonisation processes, which took different forms as they were conditioned by the consciousness (or its fragments) of political leadership and that of social movements, have direct relationships in the way the concept of national project was framed and projected in the national political debates. Despite controversies due to its definition, interpretation, and incorporation into policies, I am convinced that there are philosophical and political lessons that one can learn from the contradictions related to how this concept has been developed and used in Africa.

What have been the major principles of the national projects? Depending on the period, these principles include: non-alignment, which had two sides, to seek to keep Africa out of the Cold War as an external conflict, as well as to keep the Cold War out of Africa (Mazrui 1967:45) and *rapprochement* among the countries in the Global South; self-determination, which implies political independence or political sovereignty; new modernisation and industrialisation; and establishment of new cooperation. It is through nationalism and Africa's regional organizations that the philosophy of national projects was more clearly articulated.

### **Nationalism**

#### *General Perspectives*

In this section, I reflect on the notion of nationalism as a political concept. That is to say that I analyze how the thoughts about nationalism have directly or indirectly shaped political and social guidelines of the processes for building an African state and how those ideas have contributed not only to defining the state itself and its role in the global system but, more importantly, how they define the nature of the relationship between the state and the society as part of the national space.

Contemporary African politics contains many stories about, and/or episodes of, nationalism. Some of these stories and episodes reflect progress in some aspects of the African life, while others emphasise failures. Each African

country has had some elements of these two dimensions at a given time in its efforts to become a nation-state. Furthermore, the African people have resisted, in different forms using various approaches and strategies, the oppression of European colonisation. As it has been established, people used their cultures: languages and religions, and political organisations to fight the invasion of the West (Mazrui 1977). However, the West imposed itself on Africa through complex systems and practices, such as the monopoly and control over the sophisticated weaponry systems, psychological intrigues with the weakening of African political systems, political division among the Africans, corrupt and cooptation practices and, above all, the brutal expansion of capitalism.

The concept of nationalism in its various forms and from different perspectives has been extensively studied. The intent is not to reproduce previous debates, the outcomes, and discussions in this article. However, it is necessary to summarise its meanings in a brief discussion on its major characteristics with the main objective for identifying the basis of its dynamism both epistemologically and politically.

Nationalism as a political concept has been generally defined within Western literature as emotional feelings of belonging to a cohesive social group, wherein people share common characteristics including linguistic, political, religious and geographical characteristics. These characteristics, in most cases, are functional; and they create and/or impose a consensus on goals and purposes of a given political community (Lumumba-Kasongo 1994: 87). In a pragmatic practicum, 'the instruments of the bourgeois national state include: centralized national monetary, customs regulations, network of physical infrastructure of transport and communications, unifying education around "national" language, unified administration' (Amin 1990:78). Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as follows:

Nationalism is primarily a political concept, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling or anger rounded by violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is actuated by a sentiment of this kind (Gellner 1994:280).

In many aspects of the Western European countries, for instance, from Medieval to Renaissance and Modern period, nationalism was strongly associated with the efforts and claims of constitutive small nations toward the building of viable strong capitalist states. Nationalism was set up in the service of capitalism, its culture and its politics. Nations through the political leadership, power and class struggles were mobilised and forced by wars,



reforms, and popular and bourgeois revolutions to advance the states. In Europe, the national project was essentially the product of struggles between the absolute monarchy and emerging bourgeoisie as the peasants had a narrow concept of the world.

In the contemporary period, world politics and history have produced varieties of nationalism at the state, regional and international levels. Some of the well-known nationalisms have been: fascist nationalism, religious nationalism, separatist nationalism, individual ethnicities or countries, reform nationalism, revolutionary nationalism, and political nationalism (John Breuilly 1985). Despite their differences, they have some common characteristics, as indicated above, such as linguistic, political, religious and geographical.

There cannot be any nationalist movement without a national consciousness (Lumumba-Kasongo 1991:21). The claims for advancing nationalism can use universalistic themes such as universal human rights or self-determination, etc., but the ontology of nationalism itself or its ultimate end is about constructing some kind of particularism often expressed in cultural, religious, geographical, economic or political terms. It is about the search for a particular identity around which some types of rights and obligations can be articulated. In this article, we are concerned more about political nationalism or the state nationalism in Africa than any other form of nationalism because such nationalism cannot function without some kind of national consciousness. The state's nationalism concerns mainly the efforts toward the building of the state.

#### *Pan-Africanism and its Significance*

Pan-Africanism is considered the most important form of nationalism in Africa with strong connections with international relations theory. Its dynamic is essentially international. All the African countries and their leaders in different periods have been influenced directly or indirectly by Pan-Africanism. Thus, some aspects of its expressions have been part of the classical notion of the national project as it has shaped the African political agenda in many ways. As this author has stated elsewhere:

As an ideology and intellectual discourse among African scholars and political activists, Pan-Africanism is not new in terms of its intellectual positions as to what directions Africa should take and the kind of projects that should be developed to allow Africans to set up institutions of societal transformation. But at the policy level, Pan-Africanist advocates have not seized or created any real opportunity for its actualization. Pan-Africanists have not succeeded in capturing state power and actualizing Pan-Africanism in public policies and development projects. In other words, they have not been creative, imaginative, and daring enough to translate this ideology into political actions (Lumumba-Kasongo 2003:87-88).

The above citation raises some fundamental issues concerning the real functioning of Pan-Africanism in the Black world, especially in Africa. Why is it that Pan-Africanism is still, in general, an intellectual and artistic concept, which has not reached the public or the majority of the African people yet?

In contemporary world politics, Pan-Africanism has been one of the expressions most used<sup>4</sup> by African scholars and the black scholars in the Diaspora but, at the same time, it has been less understood and less tolerated by the African states and the capitalists in the North (Lumumba-Kasongo 2003:89).

I do not wish to expand on the historicity and intellectualism of Pan-Africanism, as they have been fully published by so many African scholars in Africa and the Diaspora, and the Africanists in the Diaspora. However, a summary of what has been agreed upon by scholars and political figures as the main common characteristics help elucidate my points about the intellectual vibrancy and political values of Pan-Africanism as a way of defining the new public space in Africa.

A contradictory phenomenon that has been occurring in African politics since the 1960s has been that while the African states have been talking more about Pan-Africanism and building the so-called Pan-African institutions within the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the African Union, at the same time, the same states and their leaders have become less Pan-African in their actions, behaviours, and policies and more antagonistic vis-à-vis each other in making the Pan-African practices real and pragmatic.

The African Union (AU) was created in 2002 with enthusiasm and high expectations, continuing the efforts of the Organisation of African Unity (Mutume 2004:19). By 2009, the African Union has not been able to consolidate itself in most countries because, for obvious reasons, it has not reached, at policy and political levels, the majority of ordinary African masses.

African states and their political leaders seem to have become more suspicious and less trusting of each other. Some leaders continue to perceive and/or accuse others as potential or real threats to the stability of their countries or their sub-region as they did during the Cold War era. The continuous wars in the Horn of Africa as well as in Central Africa are partially a testimony of a deep lack of trust among the African political leaders. Within the existing domestic and international laws against the so-called international terrorism, job market scarcity, and the domestic political violence, African geographic boundaries are becoming more tightened today for different reasons than 30 or 40 years back. The more African economies become less productive with low growth, the less optimistic people might become about any possibility of sustaining Pan-Africanism. It is argued that despite the fact that the African

Union and a new African Parliament were created in 2002 and 2004 respectively, the African economies of conflict, the African psychology of survival and the African structures of the state cannot and will not soon produce any functional and productive Pan-Africanism as an ideology of social transformation. As Lumumba-Kasongo stated:

Despite the existing fragile economic organizations, which have been responding more to the imperative of globalization than any African national economies, and the creation, by imitation, of a European Union, the Pan-African agenda has become weaker than ever before. One cannot talk about Pan-Africanism when our land, water, and air have been almost totally sold to the foreign investors and multinational companies within the context of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) or neo-global liberal globalization. In my view, African Union is founded on the flawed historical principle of 'one size fits all,' the so-called Adam Smith invisible hand, and the massive selling of African resources as the only roads to industrialization and development cannot structurally and philosophically advance the cause of Pan-Africanism (2003:89).

If the concept of African unity is approached without the romanticism that tends to accompany arguments for it, then the concept of 'realist' Pan-Africanism, as a different interpretation of nationalism, is transnational and also should rehabilitate the state, ethnicity, cultural identity and the African economies as they are. This kind of Pan-Africanism should be global in its political economy and cultural in respect to African histories and languages. Thus, it is also a potential to address the contradictions related to capitalism, the structures of the African state, and the exigencies and conditions of the localism. It should be noted that I do not think that ethnicity as such is responsible for political violence in Africa.

I do not consider ethnicity to be a primordial phenomenon. It is a social construct with constantly changing functional objectives. Ethnic conflicts are generated mostly by the competitive pressures from political parties, business/corporate interests, and the structures of the states or how power is defined within the formal institutions. It is the instrumentalisation of ethnicity or excessive politicisation of ethnicity both by the colonial administrations and neo-colonial political leaders within a peripheral capitalist economy that has led to political violence in many parts of Africa.

Despite the claims of global liberalism and the contradictions related to capitalism and liberal democracy, I am strongly convinced, based on the current African objective conditions, the power struggles at international relations, ethnic alienation, state fragmentation, and the state's fruitless

approaches to produce positive change, that only political Pan-Africanism in its realist forms can contribute to produce the national projects needed for mobilising human and material resources for genuine social and political integration and progress in Africa. This conviction is also rooted both on the well-known extremely poor policy performances and undisputable political zigzagging that the current African states, in most cases, have produced and also on the assumption of optimism, which is related to the dynamics of the African societies, people, social and political movements. As has been stated by this author:

Despite enormous contradictions, colonialism has intentionally produced the disastrous policy and political implications of its systems and subsystems; in the long run, this author is not a partisan of a conspiracy theory in which Africa is perceived as having singularly been targeted to be totally destroyed, and its people and its cultures to be eliminated on the face of the earth. Although this theory can be easily adopted as a result of continuing degradation of Africa, conspiracy theory embodies some epistemological elements of passivism, inertia or disengagement. Such a theory would be based on defeatist attitudes that may not reflect any constructive testable historical ground among the African people (Lumumba-Kasongo 2007:6).

For this author, the most important question is: what kind of Pan-Africanism would be transformative and transnationalist at the state and public administration levels with the potential to address critical issues related to the local conditions of poverty and endogenous social systems?

Much has been extensively written and said about the complexity of Pan-Africanism.<sup>5</sup> The issues about political Pan-Africanism still come and go depending essentially on the dynamics in African politics and social movements in the Diaspora, which tend to revive the calls for more unity in Africa and more *rapprochement* among the African people the world over. For instance, the national liberation struggles and the struggle against Apartheid did unify Africans, including the reactionaries, to fight the White rulers and their supporters in Africa. As referred to elsewhere in this article, under the Pan-African movement with its various interpretations and branches in Africa and the Diaspora, Africans succeeded to dislodge European colonial powers from their powers in Africa. Godfrey Uzoigwe wrote that: 'The new Pan-African ideology should also demonstrate how Africa and its Diaspora in America could cooperate mutually to become a formidable economic powerhouse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' (Uzoigwe 2008:284). Let us discuss some of the major claims of Pan-Africanism at large.

Pan-African ideas and movement did not start in a linear fashion in Africa. They started in the Diaspora, especially in the United States among the former African slaves. These ideas were used as historical references to Africa. From Edward Blyden, Marcus Garvey, W.E. Dubois, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, George Padmore, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Thomas Sankara to Kwame Touré and many other prominent figures such as Adebayo Adedeji, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, the aims of Pan-Africanism include, the search for common cultural specificities and affinities among African people the world over, and for intellectual liaison among them based on ethnicity also called 'race' and 'Africanity'. All these objectives were supposed to lead toward fostering an understanding and appreciation of African culture in a historical context.

Many conference summits and research projects have been organised throughout contemporary history to promote and maintain a productive link between Africans in the continent and African-Americans with the main objectives of making Pan-Africanism a real or functional idea.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Pan-Africanism embodies a racial, cultural, or continental unity of some kind.<sup>7</sup> While historically in the United States, Pan-African ideas were used as intellectual and cultural tools for articulating unity among Black people and strong cultural attachment with Africa, in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, Pan-Africanism was more of a political idea to be used for fighting colonial powers and building new nation-states.

Pan-African advocates, moderate and reactionary African political leaders produced the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) on 25 May 1963, with the participation of all independent African countries, while most of the nationalist political organisations sent the delegates to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. As is well known, the OAU was created as an ideological and institutional compromise among various political tendencies that developed among African nationalists in the 1950s and the 1960s. 'With the creation of the OAU, Kwame Nkrumah's ambition to realize the formation of the continental union government as a political reality and a monumental dream were defeated by the African leaders' (Lumumba-Kasongo 2003:104).

Following many discussions, meetings, and consultations prior to 25 May 1963, three political tendencies emerged as African élites were trying to deal with the mechanisms of decolonisation. These blocs were: The Monrovia group, dominated by Nigeria. It included: Nigeria, Liberia and former French colonies, except Sékou Touré, who voted no to the 1958 Referendum. This bloc opposed the idea of the union and the creation of African federal system of government. The second bloc was the Brazzaville bloc, which was formed essentially by the former French colonies when they moved away from the

Monrovia bloc. The Brazzaville bloc was heavily influenced by Charles de Gaulle and Paris at large, which feared a radical Nkrumahist union government because this idea was ideologically socialist and Pan-Africanist at once. It should be noted that in 1962:

Despite the tendencies of power struggle and suspicion that had developed between Houphouët-Boigny and the Nigerian political élites, the Monrovia and the Brazzaville blocs merged into the Lagos group, which strongly rejected the idea of the union government or political integration of sovereign states that they considered to be immature at that time. Furthermore, they did not define when this idea might become mature in the political development of the African politics. The third bloc was the Casablanca bloc (Lumumba-Kasongo 2003:105).

This third bloc (the Casablanca bloc), which was composed of the North African countries under the influence of Nasser of Egypt, supported the idea of creating the continental united African government. Thus, Ghana and Guinea-Conakry were also members of this bloc. In East Africa, Tom Mboya of Kenya and Milton Obote of Uganda were also the supporters of the idea of a united African government. However, even the well-respected leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania did not at the time believe in creating a united African government.

Gradualism, accommodationism and radicalism were the approaches through which the question of unity was discussed. Thus, the national projects embodied these philosophical elements which were defined by the nature of the political regimes. These philosophical elements were also strongly influenced by the politics of the Cold War. This is to say that the Cold War politics penetrated the OAU and forced it to produce the national projects which corresponded more to the imperatives of international militarism and the expansion of capitalism than to the demands of the domestic transformation. As Lumumba-Kasongo stated:

From the time of its formation, up to the early 1990s, the OAU functioned as a symbolic institution of unity, and its function was shaped mainly by this political symbolism. It should be emphasized that all the ideological conflicts which reflected international power alliances during the Cold War were also influential in the OAU summits and political discourses. Indeed, the Western powers did influence the OAU debates and policies through the channels of client regimes of their former colonies or neo-colonial power puppet regimes. In this sense, it functioned as a microcosm of international power struggle (2003:106).

Thus, African states were polarised on ideological, personality politics, nation-state and historical differences, and the Cold War struggle. The agenda of

the Western powers to stop Africa from formulating its own developmental and political projects was always present in the deliberation processes of the OAU meetings. So, in most African countries, a national project in each country became the political expression of how such a specific country responded to the imperatives of imperialism, Americanism, Marxism or some kinds of socialism. The nature of the bloc politics within the OAU did not allow the development of any genuine national project that could challenge the existing interests of the capitalist world. While many African states were claiming to foster some national ideas in their general politics, at the policy level, most of them were becoming peripheral capitalist states with either very weak national projects or without any national projects at all.

However, despite the structural and institutional weaknesses of the OAU, it mobilised its resources to support the political decolonisation in Africa. With the independence of Namibia and South Africa, the mission of the OAU was almost terminated. All the African states had some policy aspects of this political decolonisation in their national projects.

In addition to political decolonisation, which the OAU made as its main objective, the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) for Implementation of Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa was another important nationalist platform that African heads of state created to advance the unity of Africa in its economic form. It is generally known as the most important, comprehensive and systematic statement of the vision of Africa's leaders on development of Africa (Ake 1996:22). This is the first major developmental initiative undertaken by Africans since most countries gained their political independence. It was voted in on 28-29 April 1980 in Lagos, Nigeria, and it was intended to be coordinated by the OAU and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA). As Ake stated:

To the irritation of foreign patrons, the Lagos Plan Action argued that Africa's economic problems were partially caused by African dependence and openness to exploitation; hence the necessity of self-reliance... The Lagos Plan of Action was designed for restructuring African economies on two principles: self-reliance (national and collective) and self-sustaining development (1996:23).

The plan was intended to establish an African Economic Community by 2000. It aimed at economic growth in each major economic sector in Africa, promoting self-sufficiency, self-reliance and self-sustaining development (see the Final Resolution of the Lagos Plan of Action). The functionalist approaches used were to articulate a regional economic integration. All the independent African states became members of the OAU and participated in the Lagos



Plan of Action, including Sahrawi Arab Republic (Western Sahara), which was still fighting Morocco's claim over its control.

### ***The African National Project and Its Basic Elements***

The discussion on nationalism helped locate the analysis of the African national project on a broad historical perspective. It also helped define the national project not as a static and monolithic concept, but rather as a dynamic concept that also has been changing to respond to the imperatives of time and space. It has taken various forms within different political regimes.

In Africa, as referred to earlier, nationalism was either a political accommodation to, or reaction from, colonial political mapping. Thus, it was not a natural phenomenon. Political nationalism is associated with the deep feeling of inadequacy, dislocation, and dysfunctionality. From the above perspective, a national project can be perceived as a state policy to address the political inadequacy, citizenship dislocation, and social and structural dysfunctionality. More favourably, it can be defined in terms of the search for optimal situation. It is about attempting to solve national or domestic problems or improving existing situations. However, it should be reiterated that the specific content and the ideology behind Africa's national projects vary from one political regime to another. Thus, there is a need to provide a summary of the typology of various selected forms of nationalism.

Some of the slogans of the nationalists in the 1960s, for instance, in East Africa and DR Congo were *uhuru* [independence], *uhuru tupendane* [independence with love], *uhuru na kazi* [independence and work]. Many African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta were concerned with catching up with the West in their programmes. In Tanzania, for instance, in the Arusha Declaration in 1967, Julius Nyerere tried to control the development agenda of his country. In his Mulungushi Declaration in 1968, President Kenneth Kaunda tried to do the same in his philosophy of the African Humanism. He embarked on indigenisation, nationalisation, and the 'basic needs' strategy.

Many African leaders were also preoccupied with the wealth of the nation-states – the political elites, but not necessarily the wealth of the people. The wealth of a nation-state is about how a nation-state can accumulate the wealth with which it could claim its immortality and its sovereignty. A national project embodies elements of a strong state and weak developmental objectives. To consolidate the concept of unitary state, some forms of the welfare programmes promoted such things as free education, free access to medical services wherever they were available, protection of public entitlement in the working place, etc. However, it should be noted that all the national projects

in most cases did not develop a strong development ideology. What is development ideology? As Claude Ake stated:

The prevailing development ideology, like the paradigm, sees the people as the end of development. In practice, however, they are only nominally so. That is not surprising, since people cannot be the end of development unless they are already its agents and its means, a condition that has never been true in Africa. If people are the agents of development – that is, those with responsibility to decide what development is, what it is to maximize, and the methods for realizing it – they must also have the prerogative of making public policy at all levels (1996:156).

In short, in Africa, national projects have different cultural colours, ideologies, and supportive communities, and social class base. Some of the national projects served as masks for neo-colonialism, while others were built on the genuine conviction that Africa could produce its own capitalism (albeit the neo-colonial context) – for instance, Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya; and yet others enunciated the socialism of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and the African Humanism of Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.

The debates about the national project included key dimensions of the dilemma of reconciling nation-building and Pan-African unity as necessary means for the implementation of the grand project of sustainable social progress in global Africa and some efforts toward excessive control of the state through political nationalisation and personalisation of national politics.

### **A Reflection on the Relationship between the Notion of African Public Administration and the National Project**

Public administration is the machinery, as well as the integral processes, through which the government performs its functions. It is a network of human relationships and associated activities extending from the government to the lowest paid and powerless individual charged with keeping in daily touch with all resources, natural and human, and all other aspects of the life of society with which the government is concerned. It is a system of roles and role relationships which defines in as clear and practicable terms as possible and in as much detail as possible the intentions and programmes of government; the means available internally and externally to accomplish them; where, when, and how they are to be accomplished; who is to benefit from them; and finally, it is a system that causes these intentions and programmes to be realized in real life. It is a pattern of routinized activities, involving decision-making, planning, advising, co-ordination, negotiation, conciliation, arbitration, command and data gathering, through which the government carries out its responsibilities (Nnoli 2000:44).

The long citation above shows the complexity of public administration in terms of its role, its responsibility, its relationship to the state and society, and its structure of action. It should be added, as it is argued elsewhere in this paper, the delivery system of public administration depends very much on the nature of the state.

All the African states can make claims that their public administrations have been making some progress toward some kind of Africanisation of the public good, efficiency and political institutionalisation. In this section, I am not examining the questions of why studies of public administration in Africa have in the past been dominated by legalistic approaches or technocratic perspectives of transnational financial institutions or why they have been less interdisciplinary (Mhone 2003). Although these issues are important in social sciences, in this section I am interested mostly in trying to make a general reflection toward an understanding of the issue of whether or not the philosophy and the mission of African public administration in different political and cultural contexts have reflected the content of the national projects as articulated in this essay. To be able to do this, one needs to discuss the general objectives of African public administration and its major structures. Are national projects supported by the nature of the African public administration? Or does the notion of African public administration embody some elements of the national projects in ideological and technical forms?

The notion of African public administration in itself has not been well expanded outside of the state with its own norms and value system, as an independent bureaucratic variable in the studies of development in Africa. It is a part of the African system of governance. The changes of political regimes affect directly the management and the functioning of public administration in the way it does not in industrial countries, for instance. Its main objective should be to render public service within a clear articulated process with potential predictable outcome. Public administration should have regulative, distributive, responsive, judicial and symbolic capabilities. Furthermore, if it has to reflect the national project, public service must operate or be rendered within the context of a given political and social context. Public servants should make sure that the public administration effectively works for the interest and the benefit of the public. As such, the ideology of the national project should be, in principle, the foundation of the philosophy of the public administration.

In Africa, the functioning of any public administration and its efficiency have depended very much on the nature of the political system in any given country and the quality of the relationship between the bureaucrats and technocrats – generalists and specialists – and their relationship with the

political leaders and their institutions. Political leadership makes a difference in the way public administration should be run.

All contemporary African states have inherited most or all aspects of their public administrations from the European colonial experiences. Even the countries that were not formally colonised by the European colonial powers, such as Liberia or Ethiopia (though it was invaded and occupied for a relatively short period of time by the Italian colonial power), have adopted some styles or modes of administering the public domains of the Western colonial experiences or models. However, it was expected in the ideal of independence by the African people that with political decolonisation, the new independent states would be able to modify or transform the nature and the structures of the public administration to be shaped by the national projects. Thus, when we deal with public administration in post-colonial Africa, we are referring to the governmental unit that should set up infrastructures to support changes, which affect people's lives directly and positively.

In general, despite differences on how African countries were colonised and the different paths they took toward the political decolonisation, contemporary African states at the time of independence produced initially highly centralised public administration systems and styles. The claim was that unity in purpose should be the priority in building strong states. However, it should be noted that since the 1980s and 1990s, many states have modified their systems of government through legal, political and economic reforms. The main assumption here is that these reforms should improve the decision-making process for development, budget management and allocation (budget process), statistics and data collection. Thus, institutes or schools of public administration were either built, or expanded, or redefined in most African countries to teach and conduct research projects on some of the issues indicated above. But what was the ideological foundation behind these schools or institutions?

Three dominant models of public administration, namely the highly centralised model, the decentralised model and the regionalised model, have been experienced in Africa. Although the first model was articulated more immediately after the post-colonial period, and decentralisation and regionalisation have also been more associated with the era of economic reforms, these models have also been developed and used simultaneously in some countries. At the time of the one-party state, for instance, public administrations were subordinated to the ruling parties like in the extreme cases of Mobutu of the Democratic Republic of Congo or Eyadema of Togo or the self-declared Marxist regimes in Ethiopia and Benin.

Most of the federal systems, such as those of Nigeria, Cameroon and Ethiopia, for instance, have had both strong national public administration and strong local public administration. In a country like South Africa, for

instance, the local government has increased its role in the development project, despite the fact that the local traditional chiefs who are not elected do not have the same power as those people elected within a given political party. Concerning decentralisation, Khadiagala and Mitullah stated that:

Decentralization takes various forms to facilitate the transfer and dispersal of authority in planning, management, and decision making from national to subnational levels. Rondinelli's classic distinctions among deconcentration, delegation, and devolution inform much of the debate about decentralization (1994:191).

Although decentralisation has not been a popular model of public administration among the African political leaders, its three dimensions mentioned above have been experienced either on an ad hoc or temporary basis. Recent liberal economic reforms have been promoting different types of decentralisation as briefly discussed below.

While economic reforms supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) put emphasis on the 'good' governance, transparency and efficiency, their policies not only undermine the values of the national projects that many African states produced earlier, but they also weaken the importance of the public administration. Those institutions did so by privatising the agencies of the states that should provide the services to the public. As such, they contributed to the process of accelerating the degradation of the respective public administration systems. De facto, public administration has been functioning as a peripheral agency of governance with its main mission dictated from the external institutions and the global market environment. Thus, it has lost its legitimacy.

Regionalism, like the one developed in many countries in Western Europe, has also been found appealing in Africa. It has motivated Africans to look at functional regionalism based on ethnicity. Ethiopia, for instance, since 1991, has created 11 regional administrations. Objectives of regionalisation are based on the need for decentralization of effective power to the regional administration (2000:240) on a reality of peripheral capitalist economy. It has been intended to promote alliances between the national political forces and those of the region. Ghana, for instance, is known for its well-elaborated regionalism model (Ladouceur 1979). The British colonial rule established this regionalism. It was expanded by the post-colonial political leaders after Kwame Nkrumah.

Yet, public administration is a public arena where policies of a given government are localised, concretised and implemented. It is the classical governmental organisation in the centre of the state that deals with how it manages its resources, and how it distributes them. It is located in the centre of the issues of development and nation and state building.

General issues about public administration include the nature of civil society, the quality of bureaucracies, planning agencies, democratisation efforts, state agencies, state-society relations, ethnic management, economic performance, the impact of transnational companies. The values that any public administration has may inform us about the nature of the government and political regimes under study, and their worldviews and their structures. It tells us something about the history, culture and political leadership of such society.

Any public administration can be described as having a certain degree of 'openness' or 'closeness' at the same time, depending on the nature of political regime in a given social context and how the history of political development has taken place in such a society. As compared to other dimensions of African politics and society, the specific studies on African public administration have been less searched and less expanded on than topics such as African states, political parties, ethno-politics, social and popular movements, etc. John Forster's review of Ladipo Adamolekun, which is the study of public administration, stated that:

Development administration in the 1950s and 1960s, in essence as a continuity of colonial administrative training programs, and was largely focused on technical aspects of bureaucratic organization. Even as African governments were traumatized by coup d'état, personal rule, clientism, and economic decay, the study of administration remained essentially divorced from the analysis of the African politics (2000:449).

The view above was complemented by that of David Hirschmann in his review of a book on *A Decade Administration* as he stated:

Similarly, Robert Ouko, first President of the African Administration and Management, observed in his inaugural address to the 1971 seminar – not included in this volume – how frequently administrators heard of the faults of the colonial system and of the need for change: 'One could go on and on about what we have considered should be removed, done or changing these things remains a matter of debate' (1976:184).

Göran Hyden thinks that the movement of development administration in Africa did not survive long and by the 1970s lost its distinctive quality. As he stated:

The early administrative reform efforts in Africa were all characterized by the general belief that civil service structures were possible to improve through borrowed techniques from other settings. Rather than focusing on the limitations inherent in social and political environment of public administration..., most attention was paid to introducing qualitative changes that would turn the 'law-and-order' type of administration inherited from the colonial powers into development administration (1983:76).

The issue is not only about borrowing techniques from other settings as most of the contemporary societies have done, but borrowing for what purposes. The question of national project is central in the question of borrowing from the external political environment.

It should be noted that in most African societies, civil servants have, over the years, had serious difficulties developing consistent, effective and needed dialogues for better decision-making with the managers of the political arenas – politicians and elected officials. Bureaucrats have not been independent enough of the political machinery of the executive powers to foster public projects that could benefit the public directly. What are some of the important major sources of this conflict? And how have these conflicts manifested in public decision-making?

Despite reforms and/or because of the nature of these reforms, Rwekaza Mukandala (2000) also reiterated the issues raised above in identifying some of the most important challenges that African public administration has been facing at large: the crisis of institutions; continued domination of the colonial logic in public administration; poor or non-implementation of legislated policies; persistent and endemic corruption; and the articulation of structural adjustment programmes with privatisation and civil service reform.

The role of ideology (national project), and that of the state structure, and the dynamics of society (its civil society and culture) are important in the determination of what kind of public administration may be relevant in a given social context in Africa.

### **Conclusion**

Although the national project can and has offered some important guidelines toward a definition of a political and societal vision in Africa, as reflected in the crisis of the African state, this project has also contributed to the confused development agendas in most cases. Thus, its view of the public was generally state centric and not people centric. As the national project had different interpretations, and because the concept of the national project was not also translated into a developmental agenda, it was not capable of consistently supporting a new notion of public administration.

All the models of African public administration were set up mostly to respond directly to either the imperatives of the global capitalist economy, or to the ethnic forces – which, in most cases, have been manipulated by politicians and intellectuals – or to support the ambition of some political leaders to cling to power. Those models are bureaucratically rigid and personalised. These models have not been the products of the consensus based on the political philosophy of the national project. Many African people



do not have any strong loyalties to these models due to the fact that they have performed very poorly in most social sectors of the African economies.

Pan-Africanism rooted in social democracy, as another form of nationalism that has not been fully understood and appreciated yet, should be rethought for re-writing the rules of the new African political economy. To celebrate this kind of Pan-Africanism, Africans must celebrate, firstly, the dynamism of their interpretive cultures and histories and move away from intellectualism, symbolism and romanticism. It is argued that pan-Africanism as a national project has to be built on a collective political purpose, a collective memory perspective, and strong social institutions. People who live on one dollar a day will not care for Pan-Africanism. Democratising Pan-Africanism or creating a functional federalism may create opportunities to concretely reach the poor people who constitute the majority of the African population.

One of the problems to be noted is that African countries have produced some isolated and identified elements of the national projects over four decades without developing any new model of an African nation. These projects were basically about supporting the actions of the states, which have been promoting, in their essence, the interests of particular social classes.

The post-colonial Africa and post-Cold War politics have produced many wars to defend the faulty colonial boundaries, the boundaries which were set up against any possible emergence of a genuine and common national project. Africa needs a Pan-African based kind of public administration. This administration cannot be founded on either the current or confused national project or in the current African Union apparatuses. The African national projects have been highly fragmented and compartmentalised by the dogmas and the agencies of the global capitalist system in which Africa serves essentially as a peripheral or marginalised capitalist consumer. There is a need to rethink the concept of the national project in Africa within the current demands by Africans for social democracy and accountable political, legal and social institutions.

The recent development in the establishment of departments and programmes of indigenous knowledge in many African universities may provide another important source in which the issue of the nature of national projects can be addressed and studied. However, in general, these projects should be inspired by the dynamics of African history and culture, the struggles of African people for social justice, self-determination, and individual and collective good social life, and realist Pan-Africanism. Genuine national projects will not be produced without transforming the African state through democratic movements, the role of critical civil societies and appropriate and relevant national educational systems. In short, in order to redefine both the dynamic relationship between the concept of public space and that of the

national project, it is necessary to also revisit the Lagos Plan of Action, which was never implemented, as it was brutally knocked down by the structural weaknesses of the African states, the incapacity of the African leadership to envision new political society and the arrogance and the forces of liberal global economic reforms.

Africa has to invent and imagine its own national communities. Although this imagining is essentially a political project as it is about promoting a social state with a genuine political democracy, the mobilisation of human and natural resources and a policy toward a greater mobility and equality are also important imperatives in creating a national project. The policy and the politics of deconcentration of income and wealth and decentralisation in a situation that is already characterised with an extreme poverty are required to sustain the actions of a strong state – a pre-requisite for concretising a national project.

## Notes

1. This revised article was presented as a paper at the 12th General Assembly of CODESRIA, which was held on 7-11 December 2008 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. I thank very much the discussant and participants on our panel for their questions and comments that were instrumental in the process of revising the paper.
2. For more information about this classification, see Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, 'Africa's Third-Term Syndrome: A Trend Toward Authoritarianism or Unique Form of Democracy?' *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Winter/Spring 2007.
3. It is a perspective that stresses the importance of identities and shared understandings in shaping the behaviours of social actors as Keith L. Shimko stated: 'Constructivists argue that the behavior of social actors (e. g., individuals, groups, nations) is shaped by ideas, norms, and identities. As a result, they are skeptical of theories that portray certain types of behaviors as inevitable,' *International Relations: Perspectives and Controversies*, Second Edition, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008, p. 69.
4. For instance, on 24-26 March 2004, Africa Institute of South Africa organised an international conference on 'South Africa: Ten Years After Apartheid'. Among the 11 panels, with more than 40 presenters among hundreds of participants, the panel on 'Pan-African Perspectives on South African Transition' was one of the most debated panels. This author chaired the above panel. The issues raised included the nature of the African Union and its significance, immigration laws, movement of goods and people, labour laws, South Africa's perceptions of Africa, democratic and social rights, and gender and women's rights were unexpectedly discussed with passion. Generally, panelists called for re-thinking Pan-Africanism. Another important issue was a story of the failures and disappointment of the role of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in the

- search for new paradigms of social progress. The keynote speaker was Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the last Secretary General of the OAU.
5. For instance, for further information about Pan-Africanism, see my own works on the subject, Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, 'Can a "Realist Pan-Africanism" Be a Relevant Tool Toward the Transformation of African and African Diaspora Politics? Imagining a Pan-African State', *African Journal of International Affairs/Revue Africaine des Relations Internationales*, Volume 6, No. 1 and 2, (2003): 87-121 and Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, *Political Re-mapping of Africa: Transnational Ideology and the Re-definition of Africa in World Politics*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1994; Godfrey N. Uzoigwe also provides an extensive literature on many current dimensions of Pan-Africanism in his article, 'A Matter of Identity: Africa and Its Diaspora in America Since 1900, Continuity and Change', *African and Asian Studies* 7 (2008): 259-288 and the whole issue of *African Journal of International Affairs/Revue Africaine des Relations Internationales* Volume 6. Nos 1 and 2 is dedicated to the studies of Pan-Africanism.
  6. The works of the late Reverend Leo Sullivan, especially the summits and TransAfrica of Randall Robinson contributed to the debates about these linkages. For further information about the connections, see also the conference held on 10-15 January 1983 in Monrovia, Liberia, on the topic, 'The Dynamics of the African/Afro-American Connection: Dependency to Self-Reliance'. This author participated in this conference as a panel chair. One of the objectives of this seminar was to assess the present relationship between Africans and African-Americans, with the multiple effect of enhancing their respective identities (Adelaide M. Cromwell, ed., *Dynamics of the African/Afro-American Connection: From Dependency to Self-Reliance*, Washington, D.C. Howard University Press, 1987).
  7. Lumumba-Kasongo, 'Can a Realist Pan-Africanism be Relevant?', op. cit, 93 See also Guy Martin, *Africa in World Politics: A Pan-African Perspective*. Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Ethiopia: Africa World Press, Inc., 2002.

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