DEBATES

A Theory of an Africa as a Unification Nation: A Re-thinking of the Structural Transformation of Africa

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Motivation

Get Africa moving; collaborate in its organisation, its re-groupment, on revolutionary principles. Participating in the coordinated movement of a continent that definitely, is the task I had chosen... Having taken Algeria to the four corners of Africa, we now have to go back with the whole of Africa to African Algeria, towards the north, towards the continental city of Algiers. That is what I want: great lines, great channels of communication across the desert. To wear out the desert, to deny it, to wrong way and hurl a continent into assault on the ramparts of colonial power.[1] – Frantz Fanon.

At the time of Ethiopia's invasion, Nkrumah had just arrived in London to pursue his university studies. Nkrumah relates the moral outrage he felt when he first learned of the invasion while walking down a London street: 'At that moment it was if the whole of London had declared war on me personally. For the next few minutes I could do nothing but glare at each impassive face wondering if those people could possibly realise the wickedness of colonialism, and praying that the day might come when I could play my part in bringing about the downfall of such a system. My nationalism surged to the fore; I was ready and willing to go through hell itself, if need be, in order to achieve my object'.[2] – Kwame Nkrumah.

My mind and my knowledge of myself are formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandhlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the Desert. I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas, who sees in the mind's eyes and suffers the suffering of a simple peasant folk: death, concentration camps, destroyed homesteads, and dreams in ruins. I am the grandchild of Nongqause... I come of those who were transported from India and China, whose being resided in the fact, solely, that they were able to provide physical labour, who taught me that we could both be at home and be foreign, who taught me that human existence itself demanded that freedom was a necessary condition for that human existence. Being part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion I shall claim that I am an African.[3] – Thabo Mbeki.

[Structural transformation] is not for a people who do not know who they are and where they are coming from, for such people are unlikely to know where they are going.[4] – Claude Ake.

... I anticipate an insurrection of second nationalism.[5] – Issa Shivji.

1. Introduction

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 face a common challenge: 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. The choice is that stark and simple: remain fragmented and fall easy prey to divide and rule or unite and respond to and deal with the juggernaut of resurgent imperialism. Africans can stay as isolated leaves outside the forest and face the music of their historical oppression under the variety of guises it takes, or join the dense tropical forest that symbolises African unity in order to hide and protect themselves inside a liberated Africa – a unification-nation founded on a radical Pan-African historical imagination.

In this paper, I shall develop an integrated conceptual framework combining in a single dialectic: the idea of the African, with the idea of the Africa – Unification Nation and both the African citizen and the nation – to Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance to make good the hitherto elusive search for discovering a reliable trajectory for bringing about the accelerated structural transformation of Africa's-social economy in the 21st century. A radical break from the cumulative and continuous history of slavery, outright and direct colonialism, and indirect International financial Institution (IFIs)-driven colonialism representing great power domination, policy and interest in the context of the Cold War, and the current colonialism from globalisation requires that African intellectuals re-emerge once again as a cooperative community of resistance, community of discernment and community of commitment and re-dedication to articulate a new and reliable direction to bring about a big bang burst of Africa's free and united future. If this and the coming generations of African intellectuals are not to be a burden but a help and prop to the liberation project of a fully and uncompromisingly de-colonised Africa, they have to live up to the expectation of learning to be humble and humane and come together without excluding anyone to re-launch a great debate on the African national question in order to discover a self-reliant path to Africa's quest to shake off dependency whilst engaging constructively with the rest of the world. The formation of a cooperative Pan-African community of intellectuals will go a long way to the formation and provision of distilled and ventilated ideas to the policy community in Africa.

2. Background to the African National Project

Over five hundred years have passed since the system of slavery scattered Africans to the New World. A hundred years have passed since the Pan-African movement began. Nearly sixty years have passed since 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 would use armed resistance if the colonial powers stood against the African national liberation movement. Forty years have passed since many of the existing states in Africa acquired formal political independence.

In spite of these great struggles and notable and worthy achievements, Africa's history of resistance is not over yet. The Pan-African quest remains as yet to be fully fulfilled and there is a need to project this ideal with the challenge to provide the institutional force to organise deeply and broadly the structural and integrated transformation of the fragmented and often still perverse African political, cultural, economic, communication, infrastructure and educational order.

We must begin with the recognition that the road for African liberation has been rough. 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, the African states, intellectuals, businesses, labour and other stakeholders, could not refashion and redesign the African economic system. The African position of dependence on the former colonial powers has remained. Its position in the international capitalist economy is still unproductive and unbeneficial to Africa's search to radically transform its social and economic systems. The early Pan-African ideas: 'Africa must unite', and 'Ye shall seek the political kingdom first', were sabotaged by both internal and external political actors.

The colonial powers fought tooth and nail against African nationalism and its key nationalist proponents. The pact between the new syndicate-local African elite and the former colonial powers through their control of the post-colonial state created a discourse of fragmented and foreign-serving economic development models and misdirected Africans from founding a national or Pan-African identity to provide the unified strategy of Africa's comprehensive liberation. Africa entered a period of sabotage and technical 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 or neo-colonisation. Africa was forced to traverse the road of fragmentation, fracturing and conflict. The elite through the OAU recruited paradoxically and somewhat offensively a rhetorical 'Pan-Africanism' that tried to ennoble the fraternity of post-colonial heads of states as an expression of Pan-African celebration and solidarity. Pan-Africanism as a people-centred movement, that was alive as a concept until the peoples' conference in 1958 in Accra, Ghana, was weakened. The state-driven process took over and occupied the historical centre stage in its much watered down version in the interest of accommodating imperialism or

any other foreign power that managed to influence this or that post-colonial state for a time.

The state-driven process through the OAU has gone its course from 1963 to 2001 and another state-driven process has emerged through the AU/NEPAD process. There was no reason for the peoples-centred movement to have retreated after 1958. It should have been strengthened in order to provide an independent base for reducing the state-centred dependence on imperialism. The role of intellectuals would have been pivotal to make sure the steam of the people-centred Pan-African movement continued to gather momentum. It is not too late now. Intellectuals can pick up the challenge as the internal and external problems confronting AU/NEPAD are as onerous, if not more so, than before.

The state-based elite is likely to choose the worn-out strategy of cowering before imperialism.

However disconcerting to admit it, this state-elite dilution of the Pan-African ideal through the official process will continue 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 not settled. The national question cannot be entrusted to officialdom. The people and intellectuals should rededicate themselves to spearhead the Pan-African national agenda. That means Africa's ordeal of struggle to defeat colonialism, racism and much else is not going to stop soon. Gains can be reversed. Every step forward taken in Africa unfortunately has been joined with very often a many steps backward dialectic. In this neo-liberal mean and disorderly world, the African national liberation 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. The fullness of African nationalism is still waiting to be harvested. The reduction of African nationalism to the pathetic goal of merely inheriting post-colonial structures by chasing European and American colonial/imperial powers is a gross caricature. African nationalism is inalienable and inseparable to and with Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism and not the 'nationalism of the current post-colonial state' defines both the form and substance of the African national question and/or the anti-colonial and anti-globalisation question.

3.   Historical Roots for Pan-African Resurgence

Karl Marx once said history is the queen of the sciences. The particular or peculiar way in which African history has evolved as part of world history provides the primary data for advancing the theses that Africans must forge a collective identity to deal with the challenges threatening their collective well-being. If Africa wishes to come out of the prison of history, it must write a new autobiography and history of liberty. It must take a hard look at its past in

order to project a new ideal to transcend and overcome its many fractures, fragmentations, sores and wounds.

One of the ironies of history is this. European colonialism has long packed up its wares and left Africa. That assertion is a big claim. It does not reflect wholly the current reality on the ground. Africa has not yet fully owned the power to design its free future without European interference, either through charity or conditionality. Whenever Africans aspire to capture their destiny or future in their hands, they seem either to distract themselves, or elements and institutions from the Western hemisphere will impress upon them the importance of their presence for managing African affairs. Consider for example the European Defence Force is now in the Congo, not the one envisioned by Nkrumah in the late 1950s as the African High Command. Even if Africans were not to invite them, they will force their participation in one form or another. Africans are never left alone either through their own weakness or the incentives that they are unable to resist from the West. Consequently, they cannot design a free African future without the western input. Often that combination of Africa and Europe is never innocent. It results in continuing Africa's bondage and benefit to Europe rather than creating a free Africa. The issue of how Africa can shed its dependence while trying to design a new engagement with a world economy that has been known not to benefit her from a foundation of self-reliance remains the burning challenge of our time. The right and opportunity to design Africa's de-colonised futures, in fact, is the greatest intellectual challenge that faces African thinkers throughout the world.

To be sure the form of the European contact with Africa is never the same or is not static. It has changed over time but the essence of that contact still retains the gaze and power of European political-military and economic expansion to Africa. That paradox is reflected in an unending schizophrenia in Africa. Not only does Africa suffer from the oppressive European gaze, but even those who could be natural friends to Africa for suffering European imperialism historically themselves relate to Africa with the model, assumptions and prejudice of the dominant European discourse on Africa.

Like the fall of Adam, the world-historic fall of the African came in 1434. Since that hideous time, the world has seen the rise and fall of three hegemonic powers: Portugal – 16th century, Netherlands (17th century), Britain 18th and 19th centuries). The 20th Century belonged to the US despite the challenges from the ex-USSR and to some extent China: and during the 21st Century – right now – the US is struggling to retain its hegemony. Others are in the wings. At the moment, the situation remains in a state of flux.

Thus the hegemonic powers have changed, but the hegemonic control over Africa has not. Successive hegemonic powers created and enforced a rule of the game so that by the end of the 15th century, hunting and selling African slaves was legitimised as normal as a tool of inter-imperialist rivalry and political-military and economic expansion. We had the Atlantic Slave Trade

(European), even the much older Trans-Saharan slave trade, the Red Sea slave trade, the Swahili coast slave trade (Islamic). The estimated 11.7 to 15.4 million Africans were uprooted forcibly in the European slave trade, whereas 14 million were uprooted by the Islamic slave trade. It takes a long time for those who have been perceived as slaves to be treated with respect and equality. One can see that wherever there are many African populations from Brazil to the USA, despite legal equality, sad as it is to admit it, their social and economic status still remains unequal. The treatment of the African remains mirrored through race and biological attributes. Slavery has been done away with, in the main, but the slave conception of Africans cannot be said to have been expunged from world human consciousness. It is an intellectual challenge to confront this affront with open candour in order to undo an evil vermin that continues to diminish African humanity and liberty.

Whilst slavery destroyed African institutions and dispersed African populations, colonialism arrived with the civilising mission and imposed European politics, economics and culture on Africa. Africa continues to suffer not only from the aftermath of slavery but also from colonialism in its varied guises, depending on the historical time in which the world economic and political co-ordinates move.

Of the major political and economic consequences of colonialism, the following remain critical to the shaping Africa's future still in the 21st century.

– Colonialism imposed the European nation-state system on the varied African political systems that existed in the pre-colonial era. Even those that were independent (e.g. Ethiopia) have been heavily under the pressure of the colonial model.
– The nation-state did not evolve from the pre-existing traditions of African systems of rule.
– It did not free Africans and their resources; it locked them up for external transfer and exploitation.
– The arbitrary and casual tearing up of the continent left territorial disputes. The post-colonial state inherited conflict left by the European powers, which used to settle territorial disputes in Africa literally with leaders standing on a map with a ruler and drawing lines without any recognition of the Africans inhabiting the territories.
– The post-colonial state was imposed on communities that are not related ethnically, linguistically or any other basis of common attributes (leading to conflicts such as irredentism), and/or on communities that have no common attributes (leading to conflicts of secession).
– The colonial state dismantled traditional systems of government except as a means of control for its own rule. The traditional systems of harmonising conflicting interests with checks and balances have been undermined in Africa.

- The colonial authoritarian legacy has been infused and transmitted to the post-colonial state, and the instability of these states is related to their alien structures and coercive apparatus.
- The post-colonial state was seen more as a sign of enrichment and accumulation. It distorted political development in Africa, turning it into a major prize for political contest.

The post-colonial state continues to mismanage the African economy. After forty years, the economic structure inherited from the colonial period remains largely unaltered. For example:

(i)   The creation of closed/enclave economic arrangements where the logic of distant from neighbours and yet near to metropolitan capitals still continues.

(ii) The destruction of regional economic ties.

(ii) Mineral extractive and agricultural monopolies dominate African enclave economies.

(iv) The export-oriented, mono-crop or mono-mineral economies perpetuate African dependence on the external world and reduce the opportunities to create, interlink and diversify an all-African economic and communication and training structure.

(v)   A perverse political, perverse economic and perverse educational structure feeds into a perverse communication and infrastructure development.

(vi) Labour in Africa is threatened and insecure; jobs are difficult to create and hence wages are largely determined by the mainly external and public employers.

These problems still are with us. The imposed nation-state came from 1648 Treaty of Westphalia to end the Thirty Year War in Europe between 1618 and 1648. It is a case of inheriting a perverse political system as a burden on Africa. The enclave economic system is also perverse. Colonialism thus continues to live in Africa through its political and economic legacies that it left behind. We have in Africa colonial powers without the need to be physically present in Africa for the purpose of ruling and controlling it. The longer Africa fails to manifest a clear strategy for shaking off its dependence, the more the ex-colonial powers can relax as long as Africa does not threaten them by challenging its mono-crop and mono-mineral status in the existing world economic division of labour.

There is a need to reject intellectually, politically, morally and economically 500 years of such continued and unending perverse injustice from the imposed European model. We must say with courage and anger that even if the heavens fall, Africa must have justice. That means reviving and positioning

Pan-Aficanism as the national emancipatory project to recompose Africa on a fresh basis.

There is a need to build a united identity to a common form of oppression. It is such a resistance identity that the first generation of independent African intellectuals and leaders tried to articulate by thinking through a Pan-African national liberation identity in the 1960s. Much of the history of Pan-Africanism is a history of a resistance to oppression. It has been a necessary resource but not sufficient to build a fully decolonised future. We need to sharpen Pan-Africanism for our time and locate it in re-articulating the economic and political environment locally and in order to thwart the plans of the current muscular, unilateralist and resurgent imperialism.

A Pan-African resistance identity can build consciousness and a common approach to deal with an environment hardly attractive to build Africa's decolonised future. The sufficient condition comes when Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance and the concept of making the Africa-nation come in to put Africa first. The making of the Africa-nation povides the keystone that the foreign builders rejected, which can become the cornerstone of a free and united arch to house Africans in a common home and destiny. The making of the Africa-nation is not a mere dream. It is the way to freeing Africa from the control of its politics, economics and humanity by others. It is the answer to the call of history, the call of completing its emancipation and fully becoming free and fully decolonised. It captures best the project identity that the African renaissance has been grappling to revive. I suggest that the concept of the Africa-nation can provide a locus and focus to the ideas of Pan-Africanism and African renaissance.

4. The African for Free and United Africa

The making of Africa requires a prior making of the African. We have Africa as a geographical reality, but Africa as a social reality has yet to evolve. Over the last forty years, Pan-Africanism has been associated with trying to make the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) work. However, the yoking together of an assorted constellation of Africans and non-Africans to forge a union with discrete interests, aspirations and differences, can and will hardly make for a stable union. It is people that wish to deal with common problems and challenges by building a shared purpose that can unite. It is by recognising themselves as free peoples that Africans can forge free Africa. It is free Africans as Africans that have to make unity. That presupposes an irreducible minimum of shared values and the existence of a shared African identity or purpose.

Neither a shared conception nor a shared reality can be taken for granted when it comes to describing or explaining the current unity projects in Africa. There is no shared idea of the African yet. Nor is the idea of Africa something that is settled. To date, this lack of shared understanding has made all

well-intentioned attempts to unite and make Africa speak with a recognisable and distinct voice unstable. The conversion of the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union has not resolved this dilemma. It has, in fact, brought it forcefully on the agenda. Who is uniting? What is the unity for? How should the unity proceed? These are questions that have not been answered yet.

After forty years of the OAU, the basic concept for bringing 54 post-colonial states in Africa and the historic and contemporary Diaspora to form the AU remains subordinate to the overriding need of the heads of states to maintain their largely hollow sovereignties. The key challenge remains to this day: the creation of *Africa as a sovereign entity*. That can only happen if all sovereignties are pulled together and emerge with the synergistic effect of a distinct African voice. That requires that all those joining together evolve common positions not so much about the fluctuating issues of the day, but also on the enduring ideas about who they are, why do they need to come together and the shared basis for making common cause and evolving a common purpose.

Perhaps what has been missing most in all the efforts to unite Africa has been the lack of a concept or the idea of the African as a universality going beyond specific identities. Others recognise the African, but *Africans shun self-definition and self-recognition as first and foremost Africans*. Only those scattered by slavery in the Diaspora add their African connection as a hybrid to their current settlement in Brazil, Cuba, America, and the Caribbean and so on. On the continent, Africans seem to hold their other identities derived from blood or affiliation, location, clan and attachment to the post-colonial state more important than the existential fact of being Africans. A living people build for the future, but a living people must know himself or herself first to forge ahead and forestall becoming a hazard to themselves and others.

There is a contradiction between the claims and assertions of specific identities and attachments and the lack of appeal to a universal African expression of identities and attachments. The concept of the African conveys the meaning, logo and significance of the coming of Africans by sharing a universal identity. It comes up against a number of specific identities that African people can and should express in their lives. Whilst specific identities accentuate difference, the universal identity gives license to a shared citizenship by promoting the construction of a shared purpose to deal with or respond to the environment. Some see universality as diluting their specific identity. Others see adherence to specificity as an unsettling and an un-housing experience in any journey to unite Africa. There is a need for questioning the African national unity project based on the affirmation of specific and discrete interests and the desire to bring them together. Any partial get-together is by its very nature limited. Forming regional blocs may be a step but it is not sufficient. Describing geographically-based connections that a number of states or other entities make is to dilute and disabuse the concept of Pan-Africanism. For the latter to come into being, there must be a shared principle anchoring the

connection, and that principle must be a shared African national identity. It is better that those that share such principles associate than 54 odd states that can be tempted easily to break ranks for the sake of acquiring external aid. We have seen that such unity efforts from the OAU to the Arab League to consist largely of a formula to continue ineffective and episodic get-togethers.

The right to carry out specific connections and interests is not constrained by the affirmation of differing specific identities. Any national unity project requires the affirmation of a universal common bottom line that can legitimise the aspirations to forge common connections and purposes. The idea of the African is universal. It is the least common denominator – the atom or nucleus of the African national project. The right to come together rather than remain different is built from the fact that there is the African as a being and conscious self. All who are potentially African are not yet there, but the work to instantiate an African consciousness bearing the content of African humanity and liberty through resistance and defiance against old and current forms of oppression must be relentless and urgent.

An objection can be anticipated: How can the concept of the African as a universal attribute exist given Africans speak different languages, worship different religions, come from different races, express different interests, inhabit different ecosystems and are ruled by different political arrangements and so on? If one casts the shopping list gaze on Africa, the differences that exist in Africa can be seen as unwieldy and bewildering. But the shopping list framing of Africa is a relic of a 19th century anthropological type classification that reduces people and their essence to the phenomenal attributes that they share. It does not describe their essence, their heart, their existential being and soul. To start with, no matter how many items one records or buys from the shop, it does not prevent one from putting them on one shelf or cooking them to add value and meaning to the purchase. The fact that Africans appear in a variety of ways, speak different languages and worship different religions should not in principle be an argument for making them suffer under the regime of specificity by rejecting the construction of a consciousness of universality. The right to the universal or the African does not have to challenge the right to remain different, speak different languages and worship different Gods. It can complement it and in fact it can enrich it provided that the dialectic between specificity and universality is resolved in favour of producing the national nucleus for creating a sustainable unification of Africa.

Indians speak hundreds of languages and worship different religions, but this has not prevented them from overcoming their specific attributes and proclaiming an Indian national identity. The success of the national liberation movement in India has been to create the idea and reality of the Indian nation in spite of communal and other disaffections. Like India, there is no reason why Africans cannot transform into a nation by overcoming the tyranny of speci-ficity and constructing a universal future. In Africa, Tanzania has achieved the

ideal of a national universal-African-Tanzanian by beating and overcoming ethnic self-assertions.

Thabo Mbeki has come up with a remarkable suggestion of how to escape from being trapped into the shopping list condemnation of Africans into 'uniteable' items. He suggests that we acquire universality as Africans through our history of resistance, consciousness, challenges and the problems we face, including our desire to become renascent. It is an important idea for finding the missing national common denominator to unite Africa.

Unless Africans inside and outside Africa see themselves like Thabo Mbeki as an African first (see his remarkable statement above), making plans for unity and freedom may not deliver a united and free Africa. Africa cannot be made or transformed without the making of the African. The making of the African, in turn, is inseparably bound up with the making of Africa-nation.

By proposing the concept of *making an Africa-Unification Nation,* I would like to question the existing way of uniting disparate post-colonial states and propose an alternative and integrated vision to the process and social practice of nation-building in Africa. The fragmented pattern of nation-building bequeathed from the post-colonial condition has proved a monumental disaster. It has turned Africa into a region of protracted conflicts and violence. The integrated pattern of nation-building has not been tried. It remains the alter-native vision Africa was never allowed to forge. It is time the vision was converted into a reality. It is high time that African nationalism is organised to make an Africa-unification nation and sustain it. This enjoins that philosophies, principles and rationales for bringing together Africans in Africa and the rest of the world have to be revisited. There is a need to debate Africa's unity project fearlessly to inject new hope and ambition to the construction of free Africa's voice in international relations. Fragmented and confronted with a one-way street go-go globalisation, Africa will lose out to others unless it strives to recompose and reconstitute itself as a one-nation society by building the Africa-unification nation as the expression of its counter-hegemonic resistance against imperialism and project identity to build a fully free future.

Pan-Africanism began as an intellectual movement and turned into a worldwide peoples' movement primarily as a protest and resistance against the degradation of the African. On the one hand, it is a protest and rejection of the historical experience of slavery, colonialism and racial discrimination, and on the other, it is an ideal to overcome the past and build a living future based on a free and united Africa. Some people see Pan-Africanism merely as a resistance movement, forgetting that this is only one dimension to it. The more important dimension to Pan-Africanism is the ideal and the project for providing the intel-lectual, political and moral reasons for making the Africa-unification nation. It is the latter aspect – Pan-Africanism as the projection of an ideal for uniting and freeing Africans and Africa that provides transcendence to its signifier of resis-tance against colonialism and racialism. Whilst rooted in the African historical

experience, Pan-Africanism goes beyond it and escapes that degrading, negative and humiliating experience by projecting a vision of a resurgent and renascent Africa. African renaissance therefore can become Pan-Africanism's current representation or manifestation. I suggest that Pan-Africanism/African Renaissance, when conceptualised as the intellectual and political principle for organising a programme of liberation, requires the concept of an Africa-unification nation that can cope with the pressures of the imperialist world economy which none of the states as they are today can possibly do. The Africa-nation concept is thus Africa's striving to repudiate and transcend internal fragmentation through an alien nation-state imposition and burden and to deal with the dependence on the unending imperialist hegemony over it since the fifteenth century. It gives locus and focus for Africa's striving to create counter-hegemonic national project identity to reveal independent agency in the 21st Century.

What Pan-African thinkers have not dared advance to date is this thesis of *the Africa-unification nation as Africa's counter hegemonic project identity or the thesis that the pan-African ideal cannot be achieved without the concept and reality of the Africa-nation.*

This concept of the Africa-nation requires another concept: the making of African citizenship. It is difficult to claim that the largely disenfranchised population of Africa are full citizens at the moment. There are certainly legal and constitutional instruments in the many states in Africa that accord citizenship rights. These are mainly procedural and legal. Real and substantive citizenship is yet to be made. It can be made if there is a conceptual, legal, political and moral strategy to anchor citizenship rights by freeing the population to form self-defining and cellular communities as African citizens within a framework of an Africa-unification nation. The creation of the unification nation and the making of the citizen can go in tandem. Most of the current post-colonial states are not able to support their populations. They have mostly confined Africans in artificially and arbitrarily manufactured boundaries. The African citizens aware of their full civic obligations and rights will emerge along with the making of the Africa-unification nation.

It is crucial to repeat that the Africa-nation does not refer to any of the current 54 odd post-colonial states. Nor can it come into being by using definitions derived from genealogy, biology, region, language, religion or any other discrete attribute. The Africa-nation is defined by an African conscious-ness-identity based on Africa's prolonged history and culture of resistance against dehumanising beliefs, prejudices and practices. The nation represents the logo of that consciousness and living resistance. Africa-nation conveys powerfully the notion that the nation is Africa and Africa is the nation. Geographical boundaries should not limit the Africa-unification project.

The African continent is the territorial base for the Africa-nation, but the Diaspora is also part of the same nation. The concept of the Africa-nation is not

exhausted by the territorial principle. It is a civic concept that is anchored in history, culture, resistance, experience, consciousness and a shared project identity. It is above all consciousness and the knowledge, aspiration and courage to make Africa free, humane, prosperous, peaceful, stable, happy and united that the logo of the Africa-nation concept embodies and spreads at the same time.

The notion of the Africa-nation complements and deepens the theories of Pan-Africanism and African renaissance. Researchers need to engage in the debate of making systematic conceptual links between Pan-Africanism, African Renaissance and the Africa-nation.

Like Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance is not new. The striving for a new beginning has always accompanied major historical breakthroughs affecting the destiny of Africans. Renascent Africa, reborn Africa, renewed Africa, revolutionary Africa – these desires have been expressed from time immemorial. When Apartheid, the last oppressive system that held Africans back collapsed, it was inevitable that a resurgent South Africa and a governing party like the ANC with a hundred years' experience, and its outstanding leadership, should come up with the idea of African Renaissance. It brings home forcefully the willingness to enlist South Africa's resources to renew the African world. It was appropriate and timely and strongly underlines the country's desire to further the cause of African unity.

African Renaissance complements rather than substitutes for Pan-Africanism. It is not a new idea, but an old one, which is renewed to deal with current challenges Africa is confronted in the global conjuncture. Like Pan-Africanism before it, the African Renaissance as it has been expounded by its leading proponents has not explicitly been tied with the making of the Africa-nation either.

We propose the thesis that efforts to free and unite Africa should integrate the idea of the African with the idea of making the Africa-nation; and both with Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. Only then can the problem of comprehensive structural transformation of the continent be seriously under-taken. Unity, freedom, development and structural transformation in Africa require a re-conceptualisation of the African in relation to the building bloc of the Africa-nation providing a climax and a concentrated expression to the Pan-African and African renaissance aspirations and projects.

There are those who claim the current fragmented situation is the best of all possible worlds for Africa! The post-colonial states may not be nations and/or states, but they have been there now for forty years, and they will not go anywhere. I suggest that intellectuals must discover how to transcend them without having to repudiate them. As they are constituted today, they are not fit to generate democracy or development. They will remain sites for competition by elites and it is very difficult how they can be reworked to reflect popular aspirations and popular power.

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 in mobilising 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 empowering resurgence of a new identity in the form of the expression of a determined African-unification nation project. Africa's 'insurrection of second nationalism' can be realised by the making of the Africa-unification nation *tout court*. This national project will release the creative energies of the popular groups whose ability to organise around livelihood and existential circumstances will increase many-fold. The Pan-African framework will release them from the confines of the current artificial and imposed state system. People who choose to stay within the existing state system will have their wishes respected, as long as this is the expressed wish of the people living under the existing state arrangements.

5.   Why an Africa-unification Nation?

There are a number of reasons why we think the making an Africa-unification nation is desirable, necessary, right, possible and feasible.

The first is to do with the continued alienated position of the African population under the jurisdiction of the post-colonial state.

The second is related to the need to provide locus and focus to the debate on Pan-Africanism and the African renaissance.

Let us take the first point first.

The combined economic size of the current 54 post-colonial states of Africa is a little less than that of the economic size of a medium-sized European nation state – Spain, three times less than another country, France, and a little bit more than Holland Whilst Spain, Holland and France have evolved as nation-states, Africa with a larger population, land and resources has not yet evolved into a unification-nation-state.

I have alluded to the fact that the post-colonial state is a perverse imposition on Africa. The continuation of a perverse tyrannical regime, largely derived from a legacy of colonial domination of the African economy, rural structure, physical communication, production, consumption, infrastructure, education

and all other activities, remains a big problem. The politics of Africa are a burden. The state is a burden. The economy is a burden. Communications, infrastructure and education are more of a burden rather than a help to the ordinary people of Africa. Politics, economics, the state and so on are not burdens to the rich in Africa (both local and foreign).

The state system that was imposed on African social entities is a European invention. In Africa it has been imposed without any consideration for communities that should be together, and those that are put together when they should be allowed to associate as self-defining communities by themselves. This has made the state a source of conflict rather than development, a source for authoritarian political development rather than democratic political development.

Early African nationalism was invariably Pan-African. Even under colonialism there were much larger entities than the fragmented states left behind by the colonial powers in the 1960s. The record of the post-colonial state in eradicating poverty and reducing the dependence of Africa on the imperialist system is abysmal.

It is difficult to plan economic, communication, R & D, and infrastructure policies on the basis of the existing states, most of which have populations of less than 10 million people.

There is a need to plan the economic, infrastructure and education system by a system beyond the existing states to create a large African domestic market. Rail, road, electricity, telephones and telecommunications and Internet links must connect from Cape to Cairo and from west to East Africa. The current communication infrastructure retains the colonial logic and is not conducive to foster inter-regional ties and economies.

Most of the existing states need external aid to make up their annual budgets. Consequently, even if they say rhetorically they are opposed to imperialism, in reality they depend on it for balancing their budgets. They thus become schizophrenic and unable to protect the interests of their people or of Africa. The only chance of being consistently anti-imperialist emerges when Africans unite on the principle of pan-African national solidarity.

The above reasons, more or less, provide why transcending (with or without repudiation) the post-colonial fragmented state arrangement with a Pan-African national identity is paramount. I suggest that identity should culminate in the Africa-unification nation project.

I propose that Africans should evolve and develop the Africa unification-nation and bring it closer to become a reality with a big-bang strategy, avoiding the temptation to hold Africa's fate to misfortune by choosing minimalist and incremental approaches to the creation of the Africa-unification nation. It is better to correct the problems of the big bang rather than choose incremental steps and allow misfortune to divert the project and even to kill it altogether.

The pivotal link that provides focus and direction to the Pan-African movement that began in the 19th century and the re-launching of an African renaissance after the successful anti-racist revolution in South Africa in 1994 is the striving to compose an Africa-unification nation. The idea of Africa-unification nation complements the culmination of the worldwide African resistance with a tangible social-political national identity project. If Pan-Africanism embodies the history of African resistance, the African renaissance can provide the project identity to build the Africa-unification nation.

Africa's agency cannot flower without building a counter-hegemonic Pan-African ideal. Pan-Africanism is not a territorial aggregation of a discrete constellation of post-colonial states, it is above all a movement and ideal projection that drives home the need to wrest power from the exploiters of Africa's resources by launching 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 Africa's full historical possibilities to become free, empowered and attain comprehensive agency.

Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance and the Africa-unification Nation are Africa's vehicles to provide Africa's intellectual, political, moral and cultural resources to build a counter-hegemonic project for instantiating and inscribing the will to freedom and unity by Africans the world over. Pan-Africanism has been seen mainly as a resistance identity against colonialism. That is only part of the story. The most enduring aspect of the Pan-African idea is the identity it provides for building the African national project. I suggest that the Africa-unification nation can serve as the culmination and realisation of the Pan-African ideal interlinking the long history of African resistance with the new assertion to re-launch and renew an African national project. The Africa-unification nation synthesises the resistance history of the past with the challenges of the present and the building of an imperialist dominated free African future! Bringing back Africa's agency is the same thing as saying bring back African nationalism by building Pan-African (African-Renaissance) intellectual and national popular movements to become the grand narratives to define Africa's new counter-hegemonic national unification nation.

The post-colonial state may pull sovereignties together within the AU/NEPAD framework. It may be amenable to the insurrection of a second nationalism or it may not. It may resist the promotion and revival of African nationalism in the form of an Africa-unification nation. The strategy to deal with this challenge is to bring together those that wish to form the Africa-unification nation by leaving open the gate for others to join when they realise the benefit.

A caveat is in order: historically unification-nations such as Germany and Italy were also latecomers. While they were able to create unified national

production systems, they were also authoritarian and their rival relationship with the big powers resulted in two tragic wars. Other weaker unification nations like the former USSR and the Balkans have broken asunder leading to nationalism that has degenerated into ethnic cleansing. When I propose a unification nation for building an organised African economic, political system of national production, the lessons from these historical experiences must be taken on board. Africa's unification-nation is to bring about an accelerated emancipation of Africa. The African unification-nation must be participatory and emancipating, founded on tolerance, democratic principles, rule of law, and respect of universal human rights – very much as it is currently enshrined in something like the South African constitution. It is thus a democratic and constitutional African unification-nation that African nationalists must forge. It is nationalism that creates nations. The Pan-African movement as a national movement can culminate in full success only when free Africans as Africans form the unification nation, foreclosing the chapter enshrined in their history of resistance and launching fiercely and decisively the African building project identity. (Muchie, 2003b)

6.   AU/NEPAD and the Africa-Unification Nation

The African Union appears to giving way to non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. The AU's Constitutive Act permits interference in African states when:

(a)   An unconstitutional takeover of power through military coups d'état, mercenaries, armed dissidents and where an incumbent refuses to hand over power after defeat in an election. Sanctions such as suspension from AU meetings have been employed against coup makers and those who did not respect popular verdict in elections.
(b)   Any repeat of Rwandan style genocide cannot be tolerated.
(c)   Internal instability, strife or civil war that have regional or continental consequences will be dealt with by collective action.

Africa has a duty and right to fight tyranny. This has been explicitly acknowledged. The only major matter remaining is the institutional arrangements to deal with tyranny and managing effective intervention. It is real progress that sovereignty is no barrier in principle to AU intervention.

The NEPAD provides the economic arm of the AU. It has also insisted on setting up a peer review mechanism for purposes of disseminating good practice, to build self-reliance in African development strategy, engage in policy learning, and identify problems and monitor progress in constitutional and democratic process.

The ideas and rhetoric coming out of the AU/NEPAD suggest that an integrated Africa-wide political and economic unification programme is beginning to move onto the agenda.

These are worthwhile intentions. They may not be realised. The political will may not be there. Whilst the rhetoric is welcome, the practice requires independent input and pressure from the people and intellectuals. Multi-stakeholder interactions involving the academy, civil society, research NGOs, businesses, workers and farmers, government and other relevant actors need to be developed and institutionalised to create coherent systemic cooperation on common tasks as well as work on specific interests. The alignment of specific interests with the general interest in a cooperative institutional framework must be fostered as the prevailing culture.

As they are constituted, the AU/NEPAD do not sit easily with an anti-imperialist conception of a Pan-African national project or Renaissance. The likelihood that the AU/NEPAD will give birth to an Africa-unification nation is a tall order. What we can say is this. There is a need for intellectuals to engage with the official process while maintaining independence and pushing for a popular national liberation project.

7.   Knowledge and Research Integration

There is a need for the African scholarly community to pursue unification and cooperation in the area of its major endeavours, as the community is best placed to carry out its own specialised work: to frame knowledge production, research, teaching, and training on a Pan-African foundation and the development of new knowledge on the basis of African scholarship. This is something in the hands of existing research networks, universities and other related units engaged in knowledge creation.

I shall relate a case of a Pan-African organisation of a plan to create research and post-graduate teaching across the continent.

In Durban, South Africa at the School of Development Studies and the Centre for Civil Society, a research programme on Civil Society in and for African Integration has been initiated. The research is to carry out a continental effort to conceptualise civil society focusing and locating the degree to which ordinary people participate in shaping African integration.

There are three major questions we are looking into:

(i)   How can African integration be anchored in a pedigree of civil society and the millions of ordinary African people?
(ii)   How can multiple stakeholders be brought to undertake the task of African integration?
(iii) How best can civil society engage with the official integration driven by the post-colonial entities?

The research programme hopes to bring together research centres that are quasi-governmental, NGO-like and others, along with universities so that as a cooperative intellectual community they give their best and learn to design a

workable and practical strategy on how knowledge-producing individuals and institutions can function effectively in Africa for Africa's transformation.

The programme concentrates in developing programmes for post-graduate and PhD quality enhancing measures. The pilot effort will initially concentrate on Civil Society and African Integration. The successes and lessons learned from this effort will be used to build a model of knowledge integration, staff and student mobility and best practice uptake and transfer that could be encouraged across the continent.

The research programme plans to organise a series of workshops in every region of the continent, culminating in a final conference where the course plan and the research strategy will be articulated, endorsed and stamped with a Pan-African perspective and scope. Concept papers covering the regions including the Diaspora will provide the input and guidelines for the workshops and the conference.

This is an opportunity to organise research and education at a Pan-African level with the added benefit that student mobility will encourage student knowledge and familiarity with the continent and the problems. It will encourage people to formulate problems with relevance to Africa and Africans. It may even stimulate a reversal of the brain drain.

This is a concrete suggestion, which requires the good will of all intellectuals to rally behind and try to Pan-Africanise the African education worlds without waiting for the big-bang change towards a Pan-African national formation. The fact that intellectuals cooperate to bring about a Pan-African education direction by taking a united step based on their own initiatives will be a very good example to other sectors of society.

This is a concrete example that is on offer requiring the unity of all sectors of the academy. It is important that cooperation amongst research centres and universities is constructed on a Pan-African level. This will help also to deal with securing autonomy with donors and governments whilst engaging with them.

8.   Research Agenda

The easiest and most painless Pan-African moves will be when and if the AU/NEPAD initiatives lead to a unification nation. That may be a sound wish, but it is not realistic. There is merit in trying to work from many directions and at many levels. I have given an example of how intellectuals can broaden their work at a Pan-African level. The top will continue to exist. The attempt to influence it to take up progressive aims should be relentless. The key to that is the organisation from below. There is a need to re-launch movements on a Pan-African scale with the clear destination sign-posted as the Africa-unification Nation.

There is a need to conceptualise the principles for building this unification nation:

- The creation of a common national identity amongst Africa's diverse people.
- Creating an Africa-nation system for the playout of national consensus building amongst diverse peoples to create workable understandings and beliefs on the legitimate exercise of authority.
- Finding locally sensitive systems for the participation of the many publics of Africa for making political decisions that affect their popular livelihood.
- Organising self-association and self-government within the Africa-nation framework in order to create popular power at the base of society and economy.
- Creating a system for the management of various and often conflicting stakeholder interests with the public responsibility of the Africa-nation.
- Creating a system of balance, harmony and consensus so that Africa's manifold groups and interests learn to cooperate before or in order to compete for access of resources and political decision-making.
- Making sure the Africa-nation survives and endures by spreading a resistance and project identity and consciousness so that all Africans own their nation and defend it.
- Positioning the Africa-nation to deal with the historic injustice of the unending foreign direct and indirect control.
- The making of the Africa-nation heralds the end of such undesirable and unwanted foreign control by the strength that the end of domestic fragmentation provides.

9.   Concluding Remarks

Free Africans have to create 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 before 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 gives way to unity and self-reliance spearheaded by an African national project.

There is also an urgent demand to resurrect the national liberation movement. The times we live in are mean and disorderly. It is a time when imperialism has narrowed the space for nations to emerge as self-determining and free from domination.

The African national world is still to be made. The state of fragmentation and the systemic arrangement that has trapped Africa in 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 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

according to any indicator one cares to use for passing judgment. The dominant neo-liberal discourse imposed on the world equates privitisation+deregulation+globalisation = dot.com driven turbo capitalism = prosperity expected to trickle down to ordinary populations. 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 and ideology which 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 marginalising 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 = happiness for all Africans, i.e., freedom all of Africans from ill-being at one with their fellow human beings and their environment.

The logical destination from a Pan-African and African renaissance departure is the making of the Africa-unification nation.

Notes

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4. Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Spectrum Books, 2001, Ibadan, p.6.

5. Issa G. Shivji, 'The Rise, the Fall and the Insurrection of Nationalism in Africa', Keynote Address to the CODESRIA East African Regional Conference, October 29 to 31, 2003, Addis Ababa) p.1.

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