

Pan-Africanism and African Citizenship: The Way Forward

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Abstract

This paper critically analyses Pan-Africanism as an ideology for the liberation of Africa, with a view to assessing the possibilities of a common African citizenship. This paper argues the claim that the focus of Pan-Africanism should shift from activism, agitations, and struggles to a univocal platform that will define authentic African identities by crystallizing a common nationality for Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora. This claim is known to be rooted in the age-long African values of brotherhood, complementarity, and family hood (*Ujamaa*) that make Africans see other Africans as brothers who share the same humanity. This is different from the Africans of today who have assimilated western values of individualism, which are divisive and exclusive in nature, which in reality is a negation of authentic African personhood and society. This has given rise to ethnic agitations, xenophobic attacks, populism, and hatred against "outsiders". Therefore, it is in the forging of common identities for Africans that African citizenship can be made possible. It should be the way forward for Pan-Africanism in the 21st century. Thus, in this paper, we employ the philosophical method of critical analysis in carrying out our investigation of the various issues that necessitated this research work.

Keywords: Pan-Africanism, Identity, Citizenship, African Brotherhood and Nationality.

INTRODUCTION

Pan-Africanism is an ideology for African liberation from all forms of colonialism, neo-colonialism, western supremacy, and racial discrimination (Kessi, et al., 2022). It draws its inspiration from the intellectual works and activism of Africans who suffered from the evil of colonial subjugation and racial segregation both at home and in the diaspora. It has attracted global attention to African problems during the era of colonialism, and today it has climaxed in the formation of the African Union. Pan-Africanism sees the unity of Africa as the solution to many of the problems facing the continent today (Biney, 2022). This is the reason why it is calling for greater African unity in all spheres of human engagement, both politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Although the way to foster this unity has generated debate among pan-Africanists, with some subscribing to total unity, others uphold gradual unity. The quest to unite the various independent states that form the continent remains a task for pan-Africanism and Africans both at home and in the diaspora. There is almost a consensus among Pan-Africanists that African Unity is a task that must be fulfilled. But there is disagreement on how the unity should be. While some hold radical views on African unity, others hold gradualist views. The debate on African unity has been polarized into two camps, which are radicalism and gradualism. Radicalism is represented by Nkrumah and Gadhafi. While gradualism is represented by the views of Nyerere and Azikwe,

The gradualists maintain that African unity is in a process which will take time to actualize. On the other hand, the radicals maintain that, for Africa to enjoy her full independence from her colonial masters, the various states must unite and form one state under one government with one constitution. This is a bold submission with which the gradualists disagree but maintain that Africa can be one without forming one state.

However, the above claims can only make sense if Africans see themselves as one with one identity. This is where Pan-Africanism will create the needed platform for this to happen. This will lead us to the question of African citizenship, which is tied to the question of identity. This question is located in the quest to foster a collective identity for Africans. African citizenship is a dream which is unfolding at various stages of African development. Currently, there are many artificial obstacles in the way of achieving this dream for Africa. These include borders and boundaries; ethnicity and race; nationalism as against pan-Africanism; and political considerations. These are the obstacles that are limiting the emergence of African citizenship.

Thus, in this paper we shall be attempting to answer these questions: what can pan-Africanism do to foster a common citizenship for Africa? What do the various African states stand to gain in recognizing a common citizenship for Africans? Why is Africa divided along many lines when compared with her counterpart? What authentic African identities should be carved in order to carve a common nationalism for the emergence of a mega African state?

METHOD

The present study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. This paper seeks to give a critical analysis of Pan-Africanism with the view of assessing the possibilities of a common citizenship for Africa. The paper will argue that Pan-Africanism's focus should shift from activism, agitation, and struggles to a univocal platform that will define authentic African identities by crystallizing a common nationality for Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora. This claim is known to be rooted in the age-long African values of brotherhood, complementarity, and family hood (*Ujamaa*) that make Africans see other Africans as brothers who share the same humanity. The paper aims at using Pan-Africanism and the narratives that it has generated to discuss the place of African citizenship amidst the various fragmented notions of citizenship in Africa today.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pan-Africanism

It is difficult, if not impossible, to provide a clear-cut and precise definition of Pan-Africanism. Nevertheless, for the reader's general understanding, it is important to consider the definitions given by some scholars. Maimela (2013), avers that Pan-Africanism emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as an idea and later an action programme by Africans in colonial territories as a response to slavery, imperialism, colonialism and racism. From the onset, pan-Africanism became an antithesis to European imperialism, domination, and racism. This definition of Maimela only shows us the historical antecedents that gave rise to Pan-Africanism, which include slavery, colonialism, and racism. But it does not give us the essential contents of the ideology. For Potekhin (1964), pan-Africanism is therefore a reaction to colonial enslavement in Africa and racial discrimination against the descendants of African slaves in America; it is an ideological and political means of fighting racialism and colonialism. This definition sees pan-

Africanism as an ideology and a means to fight racism, slavery, colonialism, and imperialism as ideologies. Thus, as an ideology, it has its own visions for Africa and its own means of achieving them (the visions). Kapere (2008) opines that it has become evident in the recent past that two types of Pan-Africanism have emerged. Firstly, there is the branch that addresses Pan-Africanism as the political unity of states on the Continent. This definition, of course, includes Arab states as well. The second and perhaps more fitting branch views Pan-Africanism as the unity of black Africans in Africa and their descendants in the Diaspora. This racial coloration of the movement is one element that some critics have levelled against it. The concept of Pan-Africanism is subject to interpretation based on the context and epoch in which it is discussed. The movement has evolved over the years to be a global force that encompasses all Africans from all walks of life in defence of a collective African patrimony. What is the assumption of Pan-Africanism?

The underlying assumption of Pan-Africanism is that all African people have common ties and objectives that can best be realised by united effort. All Africans around the world have a common future based on a common past of forced dispersal through the slave trade, oppression through colonialism and racism, economic exploitation, and denial of political rights. All Africans also share a common history, culture, and social background, all of which are denied by white racism. These assumptions form the narratives of Pan-Africanism as it attempts to unify the people of African descent in order to form a front to confront a common enemy. The pertinent question now is how Pan-Africanism has evolved over the years.

Pan Africanism has evolved through various stages of development, and in each stage the focus has always been a reactionary orientation against Western institutions, ideals, and ideologies. Pan-Africanism as an anti-slavery agitation; Pan-Africanism as an anti-colonial, neocolonial, and racial segregation agitation; Pan-Africanism as a brand of socialist thought and policies in Africa; and Pan-Africanism as a form of Afrocentrism today. In each of the stages of its development, pan Africanism has asserted resistance to all forms of subjugation that the African people are experiencing at any point in time. In so doing, Pan-Africanism has achieved a lot for African emancipation, both politically, economically, and culturally. Since almost all African countries have achieved political independence and the world has come to uphold the imperatives of fundamental human rights of individuals and communities, it is very pertinent that Pan-Africanism change its outlook as we enter fully into the global era. In other words, we are saying that Pan-Africanism should shift from being a reactionary ideology to being a proactive ideology. Today, the real problems of Africans are not colonialism or imperialism but how to catch up with the world in terms of human and socio-economic development. There is a need for a new type of thinking around the ideology and the movement of pan-Africanism.

Furthermore, we are making this case based on the fact that resistance ideology is incompatible with the global era. The global era is calling for collaboration, cooperation, and tolerance in managing the diversities of our common humanity. Today, the concern is: what can you bring to the global stage that can improve human conditions? It is in this area that Pan-Africanism is lacking. However, there is still a ray of hope in the pan-Africanists' agitations, particularly in their call for African unity. It is in this call for unity that African citizenship can find expression. We shall now look at African citizenship.

Citizenship

Citizenship is a concept that is rooted in republican ideas and can be approached from various dimensions. It has political, social, and legal connotations. The concept has generated debate in the history of philosophy, with many philosophers giving their opinions on what the concept should be and who should be admitted as a citizen of the state. Thus, Aristotle, in his book *Politics*, sees citizenship as a status which can be accorded to those whose parents are citizens; to those who hold an office or are in some other way participating in the deliberative or judicial administration of the state (Lija 2011). Aristotle sees those who are directly involved in the administration of the state as citizens, while artisans and others are not. This excludes a certain majority of the people from the class of citizenship. Although this submission of Aristotle forms the classical Athenian notion of citizenship, which has changed in recent times. In giving a modern understanding of citizenship, Lija (2011, p. 4) opines that "the concept of citizenship includes the legal status and the political recognition as a member of a community as well as the specific rights and obligations associated with membership." This modern notion of citizenship works within the framework of a state-centric world. The state ascribes the status of citizenship to those who are within its territory and expects certain obligations from them; in turn, the citizen demands the protection of his rights from the state.

Having said this, we need to note that citizenship is one of the features of the state because you cannot talk about the state without talking about its citizens. It is the citizens that give the state a tangible expression in the world of other beings. We need to look at who an African is?

According to Kanu (2013), the question of who is an African is an attempt to solve the problem of identity. Identity is a problem in Africa with many claims and counterclaims about who is an authentic African. Thus, Kanu (2013) submitted that there are approaches which can answer the question of who is African. These include: Africa's geo-numerical-based identity; Africa's black civilization-based identity; Africa's black backward-based identity; Africa's color-based identity; Africa's pragmatic recuperation-based identity; and Africa's community-based identity. These various identity domains are at the heart of defining who an African is and how he/she should be known. Apart from the above domains of identity, which have formed the various conceptual understandings of some researchers, the paper maintains that Africans are those who are living inside or outside Africa and can trace their origins to the African continent. Also, we need to note that Africans are not living in a homogenous society because the continent is populated with about one thousand (1000) ethnic groups or tribes who are asserting themselves as independent nations. Suffice it to say that amidst these ethnic, linguistic, or traditional divisions in Africa, Africans still share similar cultural traits. One of them is that Africans are communalistic people who understand the imperatives of *ubuntu* or *ibuanidanda* (another word for this is communalism or complementarity). It is this cultural mindset that sets the people of Africa and their descendants apart from other people in the world. It is within this principle that we can accommodate the possibility of a common African citizenship. This implies that African citizenship is an ideal waiting to be realized in the Africa of the future. What is African citizenship?

African Citizenship

After defining citizenship and African, we must define African citizenship and the benefits it will bring to Africa in the future. African citizenship is premised on the Pan-African vision of a United States of Africa, when all the states in Africa will be united under a strong federation with

one constitution under a single government. The current artificial borders that separate Africans will be dismantled and all Africans will be bound together based on the ideal of *one people, one continent, and one destiny*. This is where we can talk about African citizenship. African citizenship implies that all Africans are brothers who share the same conditions and are subjected to the same oppressions as a result of an oppressive global capitalist system built to Africa's detriment. It is this notion of African brotherhood that Nyerere (1968, p. 12) opines thus:

For no true African socialist can look at a line drawn on a map and say, 'The people on this side of that line are my brothers, but those who happen to live on the other side of it can have no claim on me; every individual on this continent is his brother. It was in the struggle to break the grip of colonialism that we learnt the need for unity. We came to recognize that the same socialist attitude of mind that, in the tribal days, gave to every individual the security that comes from belonging to a widely extended family, must be preserved within the still wider society of the nation. But we should not stop there.

According to Nyerere's submission, the lines of border and countries drawn in Africa by colonial masters are not African in nature, and in order to claim authentic African personhood, we modern Africans must dismantle, or better yet, deconstruct this colonial legacy. This may not be achieved in a day, but it can be. This is because for Africans to enjoy their independence, they must necessarily unite along common fronts and ideologies to be a voice in global affairs. We shall look at the possibility of African citizenship within the ideals of pan-Africanism. Before we dovetail into that, let us look at the African identity crisis and what pan-Africanists should do to crystallise common identities for Africans both at home and in the diaspora. It is only through the forging of common identities for Africans that African citizenship can be made possible.

African Identities Crisis and A Case for Common African Identities

The individuation and substantiation of beings give them an identity which will make that being known to other beings. This is the reason Kanu (2013, p. 1) opines that "The principle of identity is a value expressed by one of the first principles of being." It states that every being is determined, one with itself, and consistent with itself. Thus, every being is one with itself and divided from others." A being can only be known through its identity, which can be substantial and accidental according to traditional ontology. Substantial in the sense that it has an essential core that distinguishes it from other beings, and the accidental is what is attributed to the being. Kanu (2013, p. 1) further states that, "if being does not have an identity, then everything would be everything, giving birth to one thing since nothing can be differentiated from the other. In this case, there would be no subject and object relationship. This would create a causal traffic in the order of being and knowledge. Thus, the question of identity still leads to the problem of being as the first principle of philosophy. How do all these relate to the question of African identity?"

According to Baldwin (1965), the quest for an African identity, as a historical and intellectual discourse, emerged from the frame built by racial discrimination, slavery, and colonialism. It was an attempt to reaffirm their heritage and personality, which were collapsing before Western bias. Africans wanted to accept and define their responsibility to assess the riches and promise of their culture and also to open dialogue with the West. As part of the process of self-affirmation and identification, a group of intellectuals created images to project an African

identity. Apart from these, there are current trends of categorising Africans along different lines, which has posed the problem of who is an African? This pigeonhole perception of Africans is at the root of the crisis of identity that Africans are experiencing today.

These categories include skin pigmentation; tribes; countries; religion; language; and traditions. Consequently, the overemphasis placed on the above categories has led to a loss of collective identity in Africa (Ndubuisi, 2013). Today, it is very common to demarcate between Negro-African and Arab-Africans. The Negro Africans are black-skinned and are located in sub-Saharan Africa. The Arab Africans are brown-skinned Africans who are located in the north of Africa. This distinction among Africans based on the pigmentation of their skin poses a problem among Africans, which has led to wars, genocide, and racism. This way of viewing Africans isolates only the accidental part of the African, not the substantial part, and thus cannot form an authentic domain of African identity.

Furthermore, due to the diversity of tribes in Africa, many Africans identify themselves mostly with their tribes or ethnic groups. The rise of tribal consciousness is one of the causes of ethnicity, which is undermining mutual co-existence in Africa today. Tribal sentiment is the cause of the Rwanda genocide and secession movements in Nigeria. Tribal identity is a minimal way of looking at humanity, which is caused by narrow-mindedness, especially in the allocation of social or economic values. There is no doubt that tribal living is one of the mechanisms of mutual preservation in man's primitive stage of development, which is based on the maxims of "the nearer the safer," can no longer hold in this modern globalizing world. The modern world calls for a new pattern of living that transcends tribal bias and ethnic affiliations. As a result, tribe in Africa is a man-made construct in a historical context that no longer exists, and it cannot be the domain of an inclusive African identity.

More so, religion, especially Islam and euro-Christianity, is now an element used in defining Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora. Religion is a divisive element in any society due to its quest to monopolize supersensible realities, which existence is still in contention. On the one hand, Muslims see Christians as infidels who are doomed to hell, and on the other hand, Christians see Muslims as unbelievers who are not candidates for heaven. This religious rivalry is fueling many divisions among Africans. Both Christianity and Islam did not originate in Africa, but were introduced to Africans by European missionaries and Arab Judaists, respectively. Since both religions are not African in origin and ideology, they cannot be used in defining an authentic African identity.

Historically, the so-called countries that make up the African continent today are colonial creations, which started with the Berlin conference of 1884–1885. The various colonial masters partitioned African people into colonies for easy exploitation of resources and the resolution of conflicts among themselves on the basis of who had what and where. Thus, at independence, these colonies metamorphosed into independent states or countries. According to Thiong'o (2004, p. 132), "African identities as nations were mapped, marked, and named for Africa by European nation-states, the former colonial overlords." This implies that the clinching on to a false sense of nationalism that is constructed by colonialists for Africans is an insult to our collective psyche. It is sad to note that the African elites of various countries have exploited this false sense of identity to divide their people. It is on this note that Thiong'o (2004, p. 132) opines that "the postcolonial African independent state was simply a nationalization of the colonial state, with the inherited territorial boundaries now sanctified by necessity and, more significantly, by the inability of the

new classes in power to imagine a different form of the state". This inability to forge a new sense of identity is at the heart of the crisis of African identity. Today, Africans prefer to be known as Nigerians, Ghanaians, South Africans, Kenyans, etc. as different from Africans. This fragmented sense of identity based on territorial nationality will only lead to nationalism, which is making it impossible for some African states to live together (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009).

Nevertheless, language is not only the means of communication; it is now a mechanism that promotes a sense of identity among a language community. The language community has a deep sense of identity among its members who speak the community language. It is a fact that Africa as a continent is home to over 1000 languages and 4 national languages: English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic. Today, Africans are now identified as either Francophone, Anglophone, or Lusophone Africans. This sense of identity based on language is limiting interactions, trade, and commerce among Africans. It is a fact that intra-African trade is low when compared with the trade between independent African states and their former colonial masters. This is facilitated by language as a symbol of identity among people. Language is an important part of culture that shapes and changes people's identities in Africa and all over the world.

Therefore, the crisis of identity in Africa hinges on the narratives of ethnicity, countries, languages, religion, and beliefs, which have cultivated various ways of viewing and categorizing Africans. These narratives are rooted in the psychology of the people, and it is now a stronghold that is making the total integration of Africans practically impossible. The trajectory of these narratives is playing out in the way Africans see their fellow Africans. It is now causing serious ontological and existential problems in Africa. Ontologically, Africans cannot hold onto those things, whether tangible or intangible, that are uniquely African. And existentially, Africans are socially, politically, and legally divided, which is exacerbating various xenophobic attacks on the continent. This division has made it impossible for Africans to travel to other African countries without restrictions based on territorial nationality. Africans cannot transact with fellow Africans without taking into consideration legal and political differences. This is where pan-Africanism needs to carve a new sense of identity for Africans that can supersede the narratives of ethnicity, tribalism, religion, countries, language, and tradition. Though there are emerging trends such as African Free Trade Zones, which are changing the above narratives, much needs to be done. It is the gradual and total integration of Nigeria that is the ideal. It is within this ideal of pan-Africanism that we can talk about African citizenship.

Discussion

The Possibility of African Citizenship Within the Ideals Of Pan-Africanism

The tasks of Pan-Africanism are the liberation of Africa from all forms of colonial rule; neocolonialism; imperialism; and racism; and the unity of Africa. Despite the fact that Pan-Africanism has liberated Africa from colonial oppression and rule through agitations, activism, and armed struggle. Consequently, the climax of this achievement is the end of official colonialism in 1994 in South Africa. This signalled the end of colonialism and the commencement of a new era for Africa. Today, Africans are free to administer their own affairs and determine their own destiny, but the problem now is how to unite Africa into a strong, formidable bloc that can be respected in the world. Hence, our problem is not colonialism but how to unite the various territorial nationalities or independent states into one United States of Africa, which is one of the visions of Pan-Africanism. So far, there has been African cooperation, mostly at official state and

economic levels, but no real unity and integration has taken place in a manner that realizes the Pan-African dream of one continent, one people, and one destiny (Maimela, 2013).

Furthermore, there is a new phenomenon of stateless people who are victims of war, displacement, and natural disasters; these people are refugees who have lost touch with their states of origin and are having difficulty assimilating into their states of residence (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2015). This phenomenon has raised a new kind of problem for Africa, which has to do with citizenship. Just as we have stated before, citizenship confers certain privileges and rights to people who are members of a particular state. These privileges and rights can be political, social, or legal and are fundamental to everyone who lives in a state. Therefore, in the era of stateless African people, there is a need to redefine our notion of citizenship in Africa.

Africans, wherever they find themselves, are brothers and sisters who share similar life experiences of deprivation, colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism, racism, and poverty (Rodney, 2019). The above life experiences form part of the African story as it stands today. This African story is told wherever the African happens to be. It is a story of economic, political, and social woes that characterizes life in Africa. However, the story should inspire us as a people to better our lot rather than cripple us. Since our stories are the same, we need to forge together as one people, and to achieve this, it is imperative that we dismantle all forms of exclusivist identities that divide us, such as territorial nationalism that is fueling the emblem of tribalism and xenophobic attack among Africans. This implies that we need to foster a high sense of nationalism that will cover the whole people of Africa, both at home and in the diaspora. This is where Pan-Africanism is needed in charting the course for Africans through the engagement of all segments of African society.

Nonetheless, the way things are today in Africa, the hope of common African citizenship will remain a dream if Africans still emphasize things that divide them, like ethnicity, territorial nationalism, language, and artificial borders and boundaries. Africans need to move from these fragmented pictures of reality to a more encompassing one that Pan-Africanism promises. This means that we need to emphasize those things that unite us, such as Pan-Africanism, common values of brotherhood, common philosophies, common social experiences, common histories, and a common quest for development.

Therefore, since Pan-Africanism is all about African nationalism as different from individual territorial nationalism, then it calls on Africans to adopt a new way of thinking or mindset that is Pan-African in outlook. This is because if we maintain our narrow ethnic or territorial nationalism, Africans will be unable to progress beyond where Africans are now. Africans need a new sense of nationalism that will be Pan-Africanism in orientation and that can foster new identities. Hence, it is through the creation of an integrated, complementary, and cooperative identity within the ambit of Pan-Africanism that an African citizenship can be made possible, which will find expression in a United States of Africa. The need for the various African states to evolve into a United States of Africa is at the heart of Nkrumah's contribution to Pan-Africanism (Poe, 2003). This United States of Africa will be based on the principle of confederation with perpetual existence, which will have the African nation-states (ethnic groups) as its constituent components. It is a union of nation-states that are independent states that was formed out of the need to unite Africans into one confederate arrangement. This confederate arrangement will be based on the principles of brotherhood, mutual co-existence, regulated

capitalism, existential justice, and consensus democracy. It is only in this kind of confederate arrangement that we can talk about a common African citizenship.

The ideological and intellectual foundations of the emergent United States of Africa is a task which current African intellectuals and leaders must work out before the end of this century. Today, we have witnessed the formation of the African Union, which is a Pan-African institution that will be that meeting-point where African leaders can deliberate the pathway for the actualization of a United States of Africa. Therefore, the focus of the African Union is to enthrone pan-Africanism within the consciousness and soul of the African people before the end of this century.

CONCLUSION

Just as it has been established above, that it is only in the era of the United States of Africa, which is one of the visions of Pan-Africanism, that the concept of African citizenship can be realized and made possible. The various African states have a lot to gain when they are united under a confederate arrangement that has perpetual existence based on mutually agreed terms of association. There are some Africans who may not accept this submission because they think it will undermine the cultural diversity that is inherent in Africa. This entails that nobody will naturally want to leave the known for the unknown. Well, the need to hold on to our parochial interests and fragmented sense of nationality is not a bad idea, but a United States of Africa is a superior idea. Historically, some African states have experimented with this idea, but it failed due to the parochial interests of the elites. But as the world is becoming integrated with the aid of information and communication technology, it is now possible for Africans to demand this from the power brokers in the continent.

Globally, the world is gradually moving into an era of multi-polarity and Africa needs to take advantage of this emerging new world order by positioning herself as an alternative to the current super-powers. Europe has successfully positioned herself and it is now a formidable force in global affairs because she has addressed the question of European citizenship within the context of the European Union. Similarly, Africa must do the same by developing a new template for African Unity, the ultimate goal of which should be the formation of a confederated United States of Africa. The African Union will play a great role in this regard, but as it stands now, the Union is merely an association of African states or political leaders without the involvement of the totality of the African people. But the Union is still the starting-point for addressing the issues of African citizenship both on the national and continental fronts.

In conclusion, this paper has highlighted the ideological and philosophical foundations of Pan-Africanism with the view of assessing the possibility of a common African citizenship. According to the paper, this is possible if Africa's current independent states evolve into a United States of Africa with Pan-Africanism as its nationalism. The paper sees value in that Pan-African maxim that states that "divided we are weak; united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world". This is what the African founding fathers wanted for the continent and it now rests on us, Africans of today, to make this dream a reality.

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