Can a "Realist Pan-Africanism" be a Relevant Instrument toward the Transformation of African and the African Diaspora Politics?: Imagining a Pan-African State

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Abstract

In the contemporary world of the African people, pan-Africanism has been one of the most used expressions by African scholars and Black scholars in the Diaspora. However, it is still less understood and less tolerated by the African states and the capitalists in the North. And its practical usage across multitude of cultures and political ideologies has been less attractive and at times confusing and misleading than its intellectual mobilization foundation. In its historical usage, one cannot discuss fully pan-Africanism without referring to its ethnic and geographical coded foundation. That is to say that the foundation of this ideology has been, in most cases, defined in racial/ethnic, and geo-political terms. The aims of pan-Africanism include the search for common cultural specificities and affinities among African people, and for intellectual and historical liaisons among them based on ethnicity; all these objectives were expected to lead toward fostering an understanding and appreciation of the African culture. Thus, pan-Africanism embodies an ethnic/racial, cultural, or continental unity of some kind.

In this paper, using historical-structuralist approaches strongly rooted in the relationship among the state, history, and the dynamics of the international political economy, it will be argued that despite its popularity as an intellectual concept, at the policy level, pan-Africanist advocates have not succeeded in capturing the state power and actualizing pan-Africanism into public policies and development projects. Why has it been this way?

My main objective is to examine the components of what I refer to as realist pan-Africanism and the basic arguments behind it as well as to analyze the implications that its dynamism might engender in Africa and in the African Diaspora as they are striving to survive and progress in the 21st century and beyond. Why is it that this ideology has not provoked continental changes? Using historical facts and philosophical assumptions from DuBois, Nkumah, etc., to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the newly constituted “African Union,” I will identify its political and policy tendencies and discuss them within the framework of realist politics in Africa and the African Diaspora. Realism is a political theory that focuses on the centrality of the state in international relations. State is a self-promoting entity. It sings the songs of its own immortality in all its policies. Realism is used in this context to reflect the objective social, economic, and political conditions related to the structures and rules of the state and its role in
international relations. From the realist point of view, pan-Africanism is first, an international phenomenon that must be linked to the dynamics of the state. It refers to the questions of capabilities of Africans and African states, their potentialities in their social environments, the availability of resources, and their constraints, both nationally and internationally, to formulate policies for change. How can African institutions and people connect themselves with the African Diaspora within the framework of a realist pan-Africanist basis and not in a romantic and un-productive way? How would a pan-Africanist state look like in this century and beyond?