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Pan-Africanism and African Unity: Any Prospects?

Conrad John Masabo, Mr.



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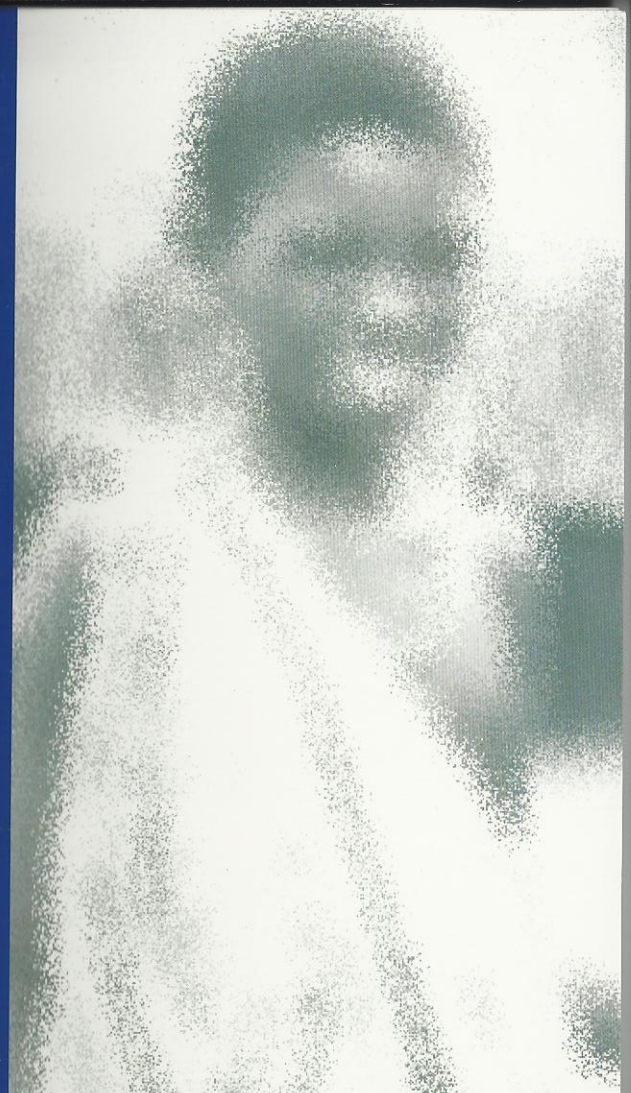
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ECCLESIA IN AFRICA, 62

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THE REFLECTION MEDIUM

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Ecclesia in Africa, 62

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Pan-Africanism and African Unity: Any Prospects?

Conrad John Masabo

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Introduction

The intertwining of the ideas of African unity, freedom, Pan-Africanism and African nationalism are so close and organic that it is not possible to conceptually and historically disentangle them into discrete concepts or areas. African Unity is an object of Pan-Africanism; African nationalism – or Africanism – is an ideological tool for the achievement of mass-based democratic solutions to the Pan-African challenge, in as far as diverse areas of social life like culture, economy, religious life, education and politics are concerned. Thus, these notions conceptually merge into one another and can be best understood as dimensions of the same phenomenology. The understanding of one directly influences our understanding of the other. What is however remarkable is that in the modern history of Africa, over the last 150 years, the historical implementation and realisation of these ideas have varied in import, both in space and time. Succeeding generations of Africans both on the continent and in the Diaspora have set different practical goals around the same concepts, and the materialisations in practice of these ideas have yielded different measurements of results. In Africa today Pan-

Africanism debate is back on the historical agenda.[1] In this "rapidly changing world"[2], Pan-Africanist ideas and activities are continuing to find their place in public and international discussion day by day. It is evident, therefore, that the today's Africa needs Pan-Africanist or Pan-Africanism activities more than ever as it struggles to break the chains of imperialism, poverty, wars, politicized ethnicity, impunity, and diseases. Thus Africans need an organisation to guide them "if they are to orientate themselves in a rapidly globalizing world."[3] As globalisation entangles the continent in its web, there is resurgence of African nationalism, as a form of both resistance to and reconciliation with imperialism.[4]

As from 1950s to 1970s, "Africa's philosopher-kings as they have come to be known made a huge contribution in highlighting … the need for a united Africa as enshrined in the spirit of Pan-Africanism."[5] Today in the 21st century, "African politicians are trying to reclaim the mantle of Pan-Africanism to gain legitimacy for their projects, whether it is {former} President Mbeki of South Africa with his initiatives on NEPAD {New Economic Partnership for African Development} or President Mummar Gaddafi of Libya with his mission for the USA (United States of Africa) or President Museveni of Uganda with his 'fast-tracking' of East African Federation."[6] In principle, Pan-Africanism as a movement is "opposed to small-scale regional integrations and it, therefore, calls for African unity."[7]

Thus, this essay sets forth to discuss the factors that triggered the Pan-Africanist Movement. In undertaking this task this essay

[1] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism or Pragmatism? Lessons of Tanganyika – Zanzibar Union*, Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers 2008, xiii.

[2] M.M. MAKUMBA, *Introduction to African Philosophy*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 2007, 11.

[3] Cf. Ibid.

[4] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, xv.

[5] M.M. MAKUMBA, *Introduction*, 153.

[6] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, xvi.

[7] G.P. MPANGALA, *Ethnic Conflicts in the region of the Great Lakes: Origins and Prospects for Change*, Dar es Salaam: Institute of Kiswahili Research 2000, 144.

is comprised of seven parts. The first part devotes its attention to define the phrase 'Pan-Africanist' or 'Pan-Africanism' with its related terms such as Africa and African. This part is followed by a part that traces the background and development of Pan-Africanism or Pan-Africanist movement. The third part presents some aims or goals of Pan-Africanist or Pan-Africanism movement; forth part presents the contending views of various African unity theorists and their approaches to realise this unity. The fifth part which is the central part of this essay discusses the factors that triggered the Pan-Africanist movement. This will be followed by a part presenting the challenges facing the Pan-Africanist/Pan-Africanism movement and African unity. The last part concludes by making a call for continued efforts to unite Africa.

What is Pan-Africanist Movement?

The phrase 'Pan-Africanist movement' comprises of two words; one "a compound word comprising of a Greek prefix [Pan] and an English suffix [Africanist],"[8] the second word is an English noun [movement] from the English verb [to move]. It is not an easy task to provide a simple and precise definition for this phrase. Any attempt to define it owes a lot to the understanding of the related concepts such as Pan, Africa, African, Africanism and Africanist.

The Greek prefix 'pan' can be used to mean: – all, every, completely, involving all, whole, complete coverage in not only political parameters but geographical entities too.[9] And the English suffix 'Africanist' is from the noun 'African' which means 'a person from Africa' or 'a native of Africa' and thus Africanist can mean 'of African'. In this regard a broader understanding of the suffix 'Africanist' requires one to have a picture of who is an African? The comprehensive answer to this

[8] Cf. C.J. COMORO, *DS 101 Lecture One Notes on General Introduction: A Definition of Key Concepts Used in Module II,* Iringa: Mkwawa University College of Education 2008, 1.

[9] Cf. A. OKOTH, *A History of Africa, Vol. 2: 1915-1995,* Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd. 2006, 311.

question will capture the meaning of this term 'Africanist'. But answers to this question 'who is an African?' always differs from people to people especially when used to mean people living in or people from Africa.

The question 'who is/are an African/Africans' has to be addressed especially in the context of the African continent. In some African countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, just mentioning a few, the majority populace is made of Arabs, and countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe have a considerable population of whites. However, the question at stake is thus: are Arabs and whites living on the African continent Africans? In one of Nyerere's description of who is an African or who are Africans the answer is 'yes'. For him "an African is anyone who has made Africa his/her home and fights for the rights of the country and equality."[10] The yes answer to this question poses another question: do Arabs and whites who have made Africa their home accept that they are Africans? And what about the majority blacks living in Africa in relation to Arabs and whites, do they accept them as their fellow Africans? To this Nyerere gives a different answer from the former; he explains:

> Africans all over the continent, without a word being spoken either from one individual to another or from one African country to another, looked at the European, (whites and Arabs) looked at one another, and knew that in relation to the European (whites and Arabs) they were one.[11]

Nyerere's two contending views of who is an African summarises two processes described by Mazrui on how Europeans Pan-Africanised Africa. The former comprise the first process and the latter the second process. In Mazrui's views, the understanding of who is an African or who are Africans requires one to be conversant with the main processes that have shaped or

[10] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 240.

[11] J.K. NYERERE, 1960, 149 as quoted by A.A. MAZRUI, "Introduction", in A.A. MAZRUI – C. WONDJI, ed., *Africa since 1935: General History of Africa Vol. VIII*, unabridged ed., Oxford: James Currey Ltd. 1999, 11. (Emphasis in brackets is mine).

served as the stepping stone for understanding the concepts under review. He explains,

> … it remains one of the great ironies of modern African history that it took European colonialism to remind Africans that they are Africans.… Europe's supreme gift was the gift of African identity… In fact a number of inter-related processes were at work. First and foremost was the triumph of European cartography and mapmaking in the scientific and intellectual history of the world. … The second process was the process of racism in history.… The racially-inspired humiliation and degradation of black Africans across the centuries contributed to their mutual recognition of each other as 'fellow Africans'.[12]

With advanced technology especially in cartography and mapping these Europeans took advantage in naming continents, oceans, lakes, great rivers, countries, and deciding boundaries of continents and countries of the world. And with their racist view over Africans, they gave the people who live in this landmass/continent today referred to as African an identity. However, it is not "Europeans who invented the name Africa but they did play a decisive or instrumental role in using it to refer to this landmass called today the African Continent.[13] Over the origin of the word Africa, the Sierra Leone poet and diplomat Davidson Abioseh Nicol, writes;

> You are not a country, Africa,
> You are a concept,
> Fashioned in our minds, each to each
> To hide our separate fears,
> To dream our separate dreams.[14]
>
> You are not a country, Africa
> You are a concept…'
> You are not a concept, Africa,
> You are a glimpse of infinite.[15]

[12] A.A. MAZRUI, "Introduction", 10.

[13] Cf. Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 9-10.

[15] A.A. MAZRUI, – *al.*, "The Development of Modern Literature since 1935", in A.A. MAZRUI – C. WONDJI, ed., *Africa since 1935: General History of Africa Vol. VIII*, Unabridged ed., Oxford: James Currey Ltd. 1999, 581.

This is how he describes the origin of the word Africa with paradoxical explanation of the word. Whether it is a concept or not, glimpse of infinite, factual or imaginary in the context of this paper, the explanation to the answer of the question who is an African – 'a person from Africa' by Maurice Makumba captures the context of this essay. He explains to come from Africa as follows:

> ...to come from Africa can be understood in three ways: firstly, those who come from Africa and are actually living in Africa; secondly, those who come from Africa and are actually not living in Africa, because for one reason or another they find themselves in the diaspora; thirdly those not coming from Africa but who are actually living in Africa and, therefore, involved in African life and can authentically contribute to the development of Africa, even to its thought.[16]

In the context of this essay, the meaning of 'Africanist' to mean 'of African' is based in the triple explanation by Makumba of what it means to come from Africa. In that regard the meaning given to the term 'Africanist' fits the one of 'Africanism' as used thus in most literature. Thus the terms are normally used interchangeably to connote the same thing. Thus having surveyed the roots of the words making up the compound word 'Pan-Africanist' and Pan-Africanism and the word Africa as well as the phrase African/African, an attempt to define the phrase 'Pan-Africanist movement or Pan-Africanism movement' is possible. For example, Assa Okoth defines the term Pan-Africanism as "a belief in the uniqueness and spiritual unity of black people and acknowledgement of their right to self-determination in Africa, and to be treated as equals in all parts of the world. It is a movement aimed at unifying all the peoples of African descent in the world."[17] Esedebe gives a cultural and political implication to the term. He defines (Pan-Africanist) Pan-Africanism as "a political and cultural phenomenon which regards Africa, Africans, and African descendants abroad as a unit, and aims at regeneration and unification of Africans and the promotion of

[16] M.M. MAKUMBA, *Introduction*, 34.
[17] A. OKOTH, *A History of Africa*, 311.

a feeling of solidarity among the people of the African world.[18] Edward Wilmot Blyden regarded also as the progenitor of *Pan Africanism* conceived [it] not as a provoked black racism to oppose the arrogant white racism' but rather "as an opposition to any form of racial prejudice and social chauvinism and as a catalyst to a constructive solidarity among all Africans."[19] Thus, Pan-Africanism was (is) the ideological framework for uniting all Africans in the world and for waging a struggle against all forms of racial discrimination, domination, *apartheid* system, and exploitation.

Evolution of Pan-Africanist / Pan-Africanism Movement

The evolution of the Pan-Africanism movement as the reaction to the European that "dates as far back as the time of slavery in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,"[20] but got its real form as a movement in the late 19th century and became popular in Europe in the early 20th century. In Africa, the movement began to spread among the elites in 1930s. The discourse of Pan-Africanism or Pan-Africanist was firstly initiated by Africans "in the Diaspora by such great Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans like Henry Sylvester Williams, George Padmore, W. E. Du Bois, C. L. R. James and others."[21]. Its history in Africa "falls into three distinct phases: the colonial phase from 1935 to 1957; the independence phase from 1957 to the 1960's which has been described as the heyday of Pan-Africanism as a movement of liberation; and the third phase since the 1970s"[22] to the present. Harris and Zeghidour explain that "the late 1930's – Italy's aggression against Ethiopia (1935-1941) and the rise of fascism in

[18] P.O. ESEDEBE, 1980, 14, as quoted by S.K.B. ASANTE – D. CHANAIWA, "Pan-Africanism and regional integration", in A.A. MAZRUI – C. WONDJI, ed., *Africa since 1935,* 724.
[19] D.A. MASOLO, *Africa Philosophy in Search of Identity,* Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd. 1995, 12.
[20] Ibid., 11.
[21] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism,* 235.
[22] S.K.B. ASANTE – D. CHANAIWA, *Pan-Africanism and regional*, 724.

Europe – greatly stimulated the Pan-Africanism and Pan-Africanist activities especially in Europe and the Americas culminating first in the Manchester Pan-African Congress in 1945 and partly in the independence revolution and overthrow of the colonial system in the 1950s and 1960s."[23] It is during the "fifth Pan-Africanist Congress in Manchester held in 1945 that explicit political demands beyond anti-discrimination and racial equality which had hitherto been the main concerns of earlier Pan-Africanism"[24] were made and spelt out. From then, Pan-Africanism was/is used as a unifying force/tool for all black people in Africa to end colonialism and its new form of colonialism – neo-colonialism manifesting itself today in the so-called globalisation. Hence the birth and development of Pan-Africanism ideology has a direct link to black Africans in the Diaspora who had the desire of bringing to an end the humiliation, segregation, looking down upon, and oppression of the black race worldwide.

Aims of Pan-Africanist/Pan-Africanism Movement

From its genesis, Pan-Africanism aimed at opposing oppression, racial segregation, and discrimination. When it shifted its attention and centre of operation from the USA and Europe in 1945 to Africa, the decolonisation question was at stake. Nationalist leaders like Nkrumah saw the struggle for independence of their countries as part of the Pan-Africanist project and as a step forward towards the African Union or the United States of Africa.[25] In this project by newly elected African leaders, "anti-colonialism, anti-racialism, and non-alignment"[26] were three main aspects reflecting the grand vision of Pan-Africanism and they "become the strongest bonds for Pan-Africanist unity among independent states and among liberation

[23] J.E. HARRIS – S. ZEGHIDOUR, "Africa and its Diaspora since 1935", in A.A. MAZRUI – C. WONDJI, ed., *Africa since 1935,* 708.

[24] PINNIKAR, 1961, as quoted in I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 235.

[25] Cf. I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 235.

[26] E. KODJO – D. CHANAIWA, "Pan-Africanism and Liberation", 766.

movements."[27] When independence was attained by most of the African countries the new threats of neo-colonialism, ethnicity and boarder conflicts, dismantling of some countries into tiny countries, and bad leadership by some African leaders became the new main challenges that were calling for united efforts to fight against them. The problems of neo-colonialism were discussed extensively by Nkrumah in his three books, *"Africa Must Unite", "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism",* and *"Challenge of the Congo".*[28] In a special way and for the time demands for unity of all African countries thus became another major aim or goal of Pan-Africanism. In all Pan-African Conferences of December 1958 in Accra Ghana, in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania in 1974 and of Kampala Uganda in 1994 the need for African continental unity was emphasised.[29] To be specific it is thus argued that this Pan-Africanist project of the 1950s and 1960s rested on four major pillars. Shivji identifies these four major pillars of the Pan-Africanist project of the 1950s and 1960s and describe them as to have rested and been aiming at and fulfilling the following:

> Firstly, the recognition that African nationalism had to be Pan-Africanism; that 'territorial nationalism' built within the countries which had its boundaries artificially drawn by colonial masters was both unreal and unviable. … Secondly, Pan-Africanism was consistently anti-imperialist. … Thirdly, the Pan-African project was conceived as a political project. … Finally, the Pan-Africanists were persistent in their stand that African unity would be a voluntary act and that it could not be imposed.[30]

These four major pillars of the 1950s and 1960s Pan-Africanist project identified by Shivji can help in understanding the aims of Pan Africanism. From these pillars it is thus evident that the ultimate goal of Pan-Africanism was the African Continental

[27] E. KODJO – D. CHANAIWA, "Pan-Africanism and Liberation", 766.

[28] Cf. K. NKRUMAH, *Africa Must Unite,* London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1963, 173-193; *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism,* London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. 1965, 239-254; *Challenge of the Congo,* London: Panaf Books Ltd. 1967.

[29] G.P MPANGALA, *Ethnic Conflicts in the region of the Great Lakes*, 146.

[30] Cf. I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 239-340.

Unity of Africans and African countries. In short, one can thus assert that "the aim of the Pan-Africanism movement was not to achieve political decolonisation, cultural and racial recognition, economic decolonisation and economic integration and ultimately uniting Africa; but it also had to do so at regional, continental, and extra-regional (that is Africa and the European Economic Community) levels."[31] Some views of Mwalimu Nyerere seem to present cultural and racial aspects as final and ultimate goals of African unity as he once commented that, "unity will not make us automatically rich … but it can make it difficult for Africa and African people to be disregarded and humiliated."[32]

Theorists and Approaches for African Unity Realisation

While Gaddafi, Mbeki and Museveni appear to be great visionaries or theorists who subscribe to the current Pan-Africanist/Pan-Africanism debate for the African Union, Nyerere and Nkrumah on their side were the great visionaries or theorists who subscribed to the 1950s and 1960s Pan-Africanist debate and project for continental unity. Though "they differed on how to achieve this goal"[33], Nyerere and Nkrumah "shared vision and genuine Pan-African commitment."[34] Whereas Nkrumah arrived at the ideology of Pan-Africanism from a continental perspective, Nyerere arrived at it from the perspective of territorial nationalism.[35] Nkrumah was for immediate and continental unity while Nyerere was for gradual, regionalist and a step-by-step unity.

These contending views of Pan-Africanism and African Unity amongst the main theorists had a detrimental impact on the realisation of African unity. It "vindicated the position of many African leaders who felt Nkrumah wanted to undermine their

[31] Cf. S.K.B. ASANTE – D. CHANAIWA, *Pan-Africanism and Regional*, 725 and 741.

[32] J. K. NYERERE 1997, as quoted in I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, xvii.

[33] G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere,* 296.

[34] Cf. Ibid., 302.

[35] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 236.

governments and replace them … while professing African unity to hide his real ambition."[36] The impact of colonialism is thus becoming the point of departure. The "unsolved problem of colonial-created boundaries remains a cause of tension among African states … they also stand as a barrier to African collaboration and unity."[37] For Tom Mboya, one of the Pan-Africanist and nationalist, "African unity can only become a reality when national self-interest and continent-wide unity come together"[38] He seems to disagree with Nkrumah's idea and proposal for continental unity. He contends that:

> When the first few states in Africa became independent some people thought that continent-wide unity could be achieved overnight. It was naïve to think that African could escape the internal squabbles over boundaries and loyalties of a kind that existed since nation states were created. Experience has shown us that unity will come slowly and through careful planning.[39]

Based upon the arguments of various theorists of whom Nkrumah and Nyerere were part and left a considerable mark on this debate, two approaches can be advanced as main trends under which the forging of African unity could be seen. These are the radical approach which was for the immediate continental unity and government, of which Nkrumah was the main theorist. He presented his ideas and arguments on how to unite Africa in his book '*Africa Must Unite*' published in 1963. He was opposed to a regionalist or gradualist approach for the realisation of African unity. In contrasting the regionalist approach, Nkrumah contends as follows:

> … a regional approach towards continental unification would not only benefit enemies of Africa as they continue to exploit the weakness of the divided continent. It would also make it impossible

[36] G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere*, 298.

[37] L. MAGESA, "Africa Renaissance: 'The Jubilee and Africa's Position in the International Context'", in P. KANYANDAGO, ed., *Marginalized Africa: An International Perspective,* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 2002, 14-15.

[38] M.M. MAKUMBA, *Introduction*, 147.

[39] T. MBOYA, *The Challenge of Nationhood: A Collection of Speeches and Writings*, Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books 1970, 4.

for the whole continent to unite. And time is critical. Africa must unite now.[40]

He did not believe in the creation of the economic blocs preferred and suggested by regionalists theorists. For him, regional unities and blocs would not only be an obstacle in the path of continental unity but regional blocs would become a pawn on the imperialist chessboard.[41] The second was the gradualist or regionalist approach for African unity. Its defenders were Nyerere, Senghor, and Tom Mboya, though Nyerere was instrumental in advocating this approach. In his article entitled "A United States of Africa" published in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* of March 1963, Nyerere presented the main points of this approach for the realisation of African unity. He "sought a regional approach as the more realistic way to eventually achieve continental unity under one government, and became the strongest proponent of an East African federation as a step towards achieving this goal."[42] Despite his approach, "in that article Nyerere advocated continental unification but, unlike Nkrumah, took a regional approach as the most practical way to achieve the goal.[43] This approach laid the basis for the formation of various groups like PAFMECA which later became PAFMESCA, the Monrovia group, and the Casablanca group. Despite the opposition by Nkrumah that this approach supported various groups in Africa during the second summit of OAU in Cairo July 1964, Nyerere won the majority support for his approach towards continental unity.[44]

This heated debate among the major African Pan-Africanist Unity theorists ended with or in the long run resulted in the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The OAU Charter was signed on 25 May, 1963, in Addis Ababa, by

[40] G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere*, 302.
[41] I. G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 237.
[42] G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere*, 297.
[43] Cf. J. K. NYERERE, 1963, as quoted in Ibid., 301.
[44] Cf. I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 238.

representatives of 32 governments. A further 21 states gradually joined over the years.[45]

What Triggered-on the Pan-Africanist Movement?

Colonialism, foreign rule, domination, and invasion were among major impediments that limited Africans from enjoying their humanity. Thus, during the Pan-Africanist Congress in Manchester England in 1945, the war or struggle against colonialism was broadly emphasised as one of the priorities of the Pan-Africanist activities and movement in Africa. Prior to this Manchester Pan-African Congress was the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Thus, among other issues, the Ethiopian question was one of the factors that triggered the Pan-Africanist movement in Africa. Following Italy's aggression against Ethiopia (1935-1945), various Pan-Africanist organisation and movements were formed. In 1936, for example, in England, C.L.R. James and others founded the International African Friends of Ethiopia (IAFE) which used lectures, petitions, and demonstrations to win support for Ethiopia. In 1937 the International African Service Bureau (IASB), a broader-based militant organisation, was formed which became effective in connecting local issues to the Ethiopian crisis and in the same year, the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) was formed, which among other things, aimed at instilling black pride in the black world."[46] It was Italy's invasion that set Ethiopia and its friends on a vigil to defend the country's sovereignty. These formed organisations co-ordinated various liberation campaigns on behalf of Ethiopians. For example, "when Italy invaded Ethiopia, many African-Americans expressed eagerness to join the Ethiopian military… more significant than military was the Diaspora's moral and material support."[47] These groups did fund-raising, disseminated information about Ethiopia, used lectures, petitions, and

[45] Cf. I.G. SHIVJI – H.I. MAJAMBA, ed., *Constitutional and Legal System of Tanzania: A Civics Sourcebook*, Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd. 2004, 127.
[46] Cf. J.E. HARRIS – S. ZEGHIDOUR, *Africa and Its Diasporas*, 708-710.
[47] Cf. J.E. HARRIS – S. ZEGHIDOUR, *Africa and Its Diasporas*, 709.

demonstrations to defend Ethiopia's freedom. The activities of these organisations later culminated in "the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England in 1945... under the chairmanship of Du Bois that really launched Pan-Africanism as a liberation movement in Africa rather than in Europe and the Americas."[48] The support from Pan-Africanist friends helped Ethiopia to defend its sovereignty.

Years later, Ethiopia became the leading nation in mobilizing other countries to fight and regain their lost independence. In that regard Ethiopian leader Emperor Haile Selassie is renowned by the title "*Apostle of Pan-Africanism.*" After he was restored to the throne, he made a remarkable contribution to the Pan-Africanist movement. He spearheaded the movement toward African emancipation. He was at the forefront using media and Orthodox Christian faith and prophesied the emancipation of Africa and the African Continent to be a leading continent in providing leadership and inspiration to other continents in science and technology. Such aspirations became the driving motives to Africans in their countries to struggle for emancipation. The role thus played by Ethiopia was vital to the rising-up of the Pan-Africanist movement in Africa.

The question of South Africa is the second factor that trigged the Pan-Africanist movement in Africa. Other aims of the Pan-Africanism movement in Africa were to end or to overthrow the *apartheid* regime in South Africa which was at the forefront in dehumanising and oppressing the black race in South Africa and its neighbouring countries. The question of ending the *apartheid* rule in South Africa was vital for the decolonisation of other southern African countries such as Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and Southern Rhodesia. In world history, "the year 1948 marked the rise of a new version of fascism and racial repression in Africa – a version called *apartheid.*"[49] The term simply means separateness and as a policy was introduced following the 1948 election victory of the Afrikaner dominated Nationalist Party.

[48] Cf. J.E. HARRIS – S. ZEGHIDOUR, *Africa and Its Diasporas*, 714.

[49] D. CHANAIWA, "Southern Africa since 1935", in A.A. MAZRUI – C. WONDJI, ed., *Africa Since 1935,* 251.

Tracing the roots of *apartheid* policy and its imposition, Assa Okoth observed the following:

> In 1947, a group of Afrikaner intellectuals had met at Stellenbosch and formed Die Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse Aangellethed (the South African Bureau of Race Relations or SABRA). ... they set to work to formulate a programme for the Nationalist Party, taking as their principle that races 'different fundamentally and naturally must be kept apart from each other to the advantage of both' The result of their discussion was the theory of apartheid, calling for complete segregation of each racial group enabling them to 'develop along their own lines.' ... Apartheid then, as a policy, was not defined, and came to mean a number of things from social and racial separation.[50]

The imposition of the *apartheid* policy and the rule by the *apartheid* regime worsened things and made the life of blacks in South Africa unbearable. It ranked Africans the last and considered them as outcasts or dogs. They were humiliated, and their African and human dignity looked down upon. With such a state of affairs there was no way the Pan-Africanism movement could close its eyes to the humiliation, segregation, and oppression which Africans were put under. It was evident that when the OAU charter was signed in 1963, the question of South Africa and the rule by the *apartheid* regime received the utmost attention. The question of dismantling the regime was brought home. An organised venture of the Pan-Africanist movement under the OAU liberation committee set out to dismantle the regime and it was calling for independence — a majority independence as opposed to the 1910 declared minority independence. *Apartheid* became a major stimulus that activated the Pan-Africanism movement. The years following the formation of the OAU in 1963, witnessed a great concern for the fight to end the *apartheid* regime in South Africa. As a fruit of Pan-Africanism, the OAU was very much concerned with the issue of South Africa. The founding nations expressed their desire by the establishment of the African Liberation Committee. Explaining this Pan-Africanist venture to end colonialism and *apartheid,* Shivji puts it this way:

[50] Cf. A. OKOTH, *A History of Africa*, 160-161.

> Indeed, as the continental organisation the OAU provided an effective forum that enabled all Member States to adopt a coordinated position on matters of common concern to the continent and defend the interests of Africa effectively. Through the OAU Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, the continent worked and spoke as one with undivided determination in forging an international consensus in support of the liberation struggle and fight against apartheid.[51]

Liberation and fight against the *apartheid* regime in South Africa was a matter of common concern. It was in this spirit, that the *apartheid* regime of South Africa triggered-on the Pan-Africanist movement in Africa. As we may know, the liberation process of South Africa was under the auspices of the OAU and at its founding, the "Summit Conference in Addis Ababa, the members adopted a special resolution on *apartheid* and racial discrimination in South Africa"[52] It is evident, therefore, that the continental liberation was a Pan-Africanist movement desire that was set by the founding fathers of the OAU who wished the total liberation of the Continent from colonialism and settler minorities.

The post-independent Africa was/ is impeded by a number of problems that were/ are calling for a united venture to fight them. This was/ is another situation that re-kindled the Pan-Africanist Movement. "Political instability, economic decline, endless civil wars, suppression of civil society…emergence of military regimes, economic mismanagement, corruption, and lack of commitment on the part of political leaders and civil servant"[53] were and still are the main features of independent Africa. In East African countries, for example, "the post-independence era was marked by intense efforts to consolidate national unity and to initiate rapid and balanced social and economic development. In almost all African countries "economic underdevelopment and political disunity and instability are the two problems carried over by

[51] I. G. SHIVJI, – *al.*, *Constitutional and Legal System of Tanzania*, 129.
[52] E. KODJO – D. CHANAIWA, *Pan-Africanism*, 752.
[53] A. TARIMO, *Applied Ethics And Africa's Social Reconstruction,* Nairobi: Acton Publishers 2005, 88.

African states from the dawn of independence.[54] The former Nigerian president, Obafemi Awolowo, by looking at independent Africa and its problems, summarises them into four major categories as follows:

(1) The problem of underdevelopment- which includes
   a. economic under-development,
   b. disease
   c. economic exploitation
   d. underdevelopment of the subject mind.
(2) The problem of individual freedom
(3) The problem of constitutional-making
(4) The problem of African unity. [55]

These can be grouped into economic, social, and political post-independence realities which were and are calling for united efforts to address. Reporting these contemporary post independence African realities, Gbadegesia explains:

> Under contemporary African economic realities we have poverty and hunger, low productivity in the midst of wealth and natural abundance and economic exploitation of individuals and nation … Africa is a paradox which typifies poverty in the midst of plenty… These realities of economic nature have created social problems in large dimensions… including robbery with violence, drug pushing, suicide and other kinds … of anti-social behaviour In addition to the aforementioned, there is another group of realities not fundamentally different from them. These are the realities of the political climate of African societies. These include political violence, election rigging, political intolerance and racial discrimination. Democratically elected leaders detest opposition while dictators hate criticism. … racial prejudice and segregation is mounting high… killings, maiming arson all politically motivated are the unfortunate realities of contemporary African societies.[56]

After independence, Africa finds itself caught-up in the same web of imperialism – neo-colonialism. All the aspirations and hopes of Africans about independence are not realised. What is witnessed in post-independence of most African states is the

[54] S. GBADEGESIA, *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities,* New York: Peter Lang 1991, 200.
[55] Ibid., 200.
[56] S. GBADEGESIA, *African Philosophy,* 140.

growing of civil, ethnic, and tribal wars, coupe d'etat dictatorial regimes, increasing levels of extreme poverty, disease, and ignorance. Deaths are the rule of the day; Africa is stagnating and there is little or no progress at all except toward a new form of colonialism – neo-colonialism. That is independent Africa! "Although … Africa is endowed with abundant resources, [A continent blessed with natural resources and good climate, it continues be the poorest continent in the world]; its people continue to suffer from abject poverty… It is a situation that discourages people, especially the youth who see no hope for their future as they seek security in religious movements and drugs. [And] at the national level, the economic crisis is evident in foreign debt, unemployment, illiteracy, ethnocentrism, civil wars, and so forth."[57] This is outrageous and unacceptable! African leaders become international beggars at the IMF, World Bank, and at the doors of their former colonial masters, thus making Africa a continent of beggars!

Why Pan-Africanism/ Pan-Africanist Movement Have Failed to Unite Africa and Africans for More Than a Century of Its Existence

Having discussed what triggered Pan-Africanism/the Pan-Africanist Movement, the following part will critically discuss why Pan-Africanism has failed to unite Africans and African states for over a century since its existence. Although Pan-Africanism achieved to push forward some aspects of its objectives, like ending *apartheid,* promoting African culture as well as accelerating and attaining the main goal, i.e. independence, yet it failed to unite Africans and African states due to many reasons though not limited to the following:

Firstly, nationalism. Since the time most the African states attained their political independence from the colonial powers, and since the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.), Africa has failed to unite. This is because each country continued to protect its own independence: that is national,

[57] A. TARIMO, *Applied Ethics,* 108. (emphasis in brackets mine)

territorial, and national sovereignty. For that reason countries were/are not ready to submit their sovereignty to other states. Each country continued safeguarding and protecting their own territories and independence. Commenting on the issue of nationalism, Mwakikagile observed the following:

> Africa has failed to unite because of nationalism more than anything else. Countries on the continent jealously guard their independence and do not want to surrender their sovereign status to a higher authority for the sake of African unity.[58]

With such a strong sense of nationalism, Pan-Africanism to this day has not been able to bring about the desired unity among Africans and African states under one strong government. The post-independence era was marked by intense efforts to consolidate national unity and to initiate rapid and balanced social and economic development.[59] On the other hand, African leaders concentrated much on their newly achieved political independence rather than on paying attention to continental unity. Sharing on these views Asante and Chanaiwa observed as follows:

> The newly independent leaders become pre-occupied with immediate territorial problems of the unification of ethnic and regional groups, the consolidation of their own parties and power over the masses and against opposition leaders, the fight against poverty, disease and ignorance, as well as the defence and security of their nations. … these internal priorities, tensions, and conflicts made it rather difficult for some leaders … to engage in Pan-Africanist affairs outside their own borders or implement Pan-Africanist resolutions within their states.[60]

Secondly, the different views of African leaders on how to go about uniting. This is one of the factors that has attributed to the failure of Pan-Africanism to achieve its goal of uniting Africans, partly due to the different views among the African leaders who advocated African unity but with different approaches. On March 6, 1957 Ghana attained its political independence under Kwame Nkrumah and on December 9, 1961 Tanganyika achieved its

[58] G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere*, 304.
[59] A. OKOTH, *A History of Africa*, 292.
[60] S.K.B. ASANTE – D. CHANAIWA, *Pan-Africanism*, 726-727.

political independence under the leadership of J. K Nyerere. Having attained their independence these two leaders shared a vision of a united Africa under one continental government. Nkrumah preferred a more radical approach while Nyerere advocated a regionalist approach which emphasised a gradual process towards forming African unity. The two leaders continued to differ on how to achieve the goal of African unity. Nkrumah strongly disagreed with Nyerere on his approach of regional unification as the best way to achieve African unity. Nkrumah argued that the regional approach as advocated by Nyerere would delay the unification and give chance to neo-colonialism. Sharing different views than the ones expressed by Nyerere and Nkrumah, and more specifically the way Nkrumah construed Nyerere's regional approach, Mwakikagile had this to comment:

> ...regional approach towards continental unification would only benefit the enemies of Africa as they continue to exploit the weakness of a divided continent. It would also make it impossible for the continent to unite. [61]

Responding to the views given by Nkrumah, Nyerere continued to advocate his approach of regional unification. He thought first to solve the problems within the region before a continental unification. Defending his approach, Nyerere used strong language to explain his stance. He said "when you set out to build a house, you don't begin by putting on the roof; first you start by laying the foundation."[62] Hence with such different approaches by these two African leaders, who dreamt of having one continental government but with differing approaches, other African leaders were left at the cross-road and were unable to identify which approach to follow so as to have a united Africa.

Thirdly, the reason that has contributed to Pan-Africanism's delay to unite Africans and African states under a united Africa is the question of who is an African. The fact is that there are different races on the African continent. There are Arabs in the northern part of Africa, like Morocco, Egypt, and Algeria. There

[61] G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere*, 302.
[62] Ibid.

are whites in some parts of Africa, like South Africa and Zimbabwe. There are also Africans who are said to be the majority. With such differences in race, it is difficult for Africans to unite with Arabs as well as whites because they do not share the history and common ancestors. Arabs and whites are not ready to be called Africans. These two races consider themselves as superior and see Africans as an inferior race. Therefore, before talking about African unity, people need first of all to accept each other and understand that they are all human beings and live on the same Continent which is Africa. Africans, whites, and Arabs must put aside their differences in colours and work together as one. But because of these differences, a united Africa has not been achieved yet.

Fourthly, "it is important to view the current state of affairs in Africa in the light of the shattering experiences the African people have had in the past decades"[63] because African states do not share a common historical background. For example, African states attained their political independence from the various colonial masters at different times and in different ways. Having attained their independence from the colonial powers, it was true that these newly independent African states differed in many aspects, politically, socially, and economically. Politically, some African states attained independence early than others. For example, Ghana and Tanganyika got their independence earlier than Namibia; South Africa attained its independence in the 1990s. With independence attained at different times, African unity was delayed since it was impossible to have African unity under one government, when some of the African states had not yet attained their independence. Socially, African states were colonised by different colonial masters, the French, the British, the Portuguese, to name a few. These African states differed considerably in terms of languages: – some – were French speaking, others spoke English or Portuguese. These linguistic differences contributed to the delay of attaining African unity. Economically, there existed large economic disparities among the

[63] H.C. UMEODUM, "Factors Inhibiting the Realization of Common Good in Africa", in *Africa Tomorrow* 10 (2008) 82.

African states. The economies of some African countries were better than others. For example, one cannot compare the economy of South Africa with that of East African states like Tanzania, Kenya, or Uganda. These economic differences have contributed significantly to the delay of Pan-Africanism to achieve its goal of having a united Africa. The countries with a somehow better economy are reluctant to unite with poorer states. Commenting on how hard it is to bring together communities of different social, political, and economical historical backgrounds, Diescho states,

> ...where people do not share historical memories of the past, it is difficult for them to weave together a common future which is respected, cherished, and adhered to by all. People cannot chart a common future without a common understanding of the past with themselves or their own people in it.[64]

Fifthly, Conflicts and civil wars. Internal conflicts and civil wars in Africa are now a common occurrence which in one way or the other contribute to the dilemma that Pan-Africanism has not yet achieved its aspiration of uniting Africans and African countries under one government. Since the independence of many African states, some countries were and still are confronted by civil wars and other conflicts. For example, there was a border conflict between Tanzania and Uganda. Currently there is a border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. There are several civil wars raging in Africa at present: Angola, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Nigeria. These conflicts and wars are often caused by factors such as tribalism, religious differences, and political interests. Internal problems like ethnic wars and territorial disputes create fear in countries which do not face such problems to join and form one continental government. This is yet another reason why Pan-Africanism has not been able to bring about a united Africa.

Sixth, lack of true democracy in Africa is yet another factor that has contributed to the failure of the Pan-Africanism movement to produce a continental government. The problem facing the Pan-Africanism movement is that some of the African leaders are power hungry. They like to be leaders of their states

[64] H.C. UMEODUM, "Factors Inhibiting the Realization", 83.

and are unwilling to yield some of their power to others to rule. Some African leaders have changed their national constitutions to increase their time in office. In addition to this, there is sometimes a tendency of existing ruling parties to manipulate elections in order to favour the party and the candidate in power at the time of a general election. Some African leaders are not willing to give up their power that easily. The general elections of Kenya and Zimbabwe were a good example of this. The insistence of some African leaders to rule until their death makes it virtually impossible to achieve the goal of 'under one government.'

Furthermore, neo-colonialism and globalisation have also contributed to a great extent that African countries until now have been unable to unite under one strong government. One may say that many African states attained political independence by flag only, since in reality many an African country continues to be dominated and exploited by more advanced countries just as it happened before. The African states attained only partial independence and not complete emancipation because economically, culturally, socially, and politically they are still dominated by their former colonial masters and other important world players. Therefore, the idea of having a United Africa under one strong leadership has so far remained wishful thinking. Outside forces are still the ones that often times decide the affairs of state of the African states. Therefore, the Pan-Africanism movement since its formation has failed to bring about African unity under one government. Revealing how African states are still under colonialism, under the umbrella of neo-colonialism, Okoth shares this:

> Many African countries still have an attachment to their former colonial masters economically and politically. This situation is particularly true of former French colonies, which have permitted their former colonial masters to influence them. … French… have military bases in some African countries, such as the Central African Republic.[65]

[65] A. OKOTH, *A History of Africa*, 324.

Prospects of Pan-Africanism

Despite the above mentioned factors which may have contributed to the failure of the Pan-Africanism movement to achieve its goal of having a United Africa, there is hope that the idea of Africa to unite and have one continental government is going to be achieved in the not too distant future. Following the idea put forward by J.K Nyerere of a regional approach towards continental unification, African states will probably unite in the foreseeable future. African states have already begun to unite through regional grouping or integration such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the East African Community (EAC). For example, in the case of the EAC, other countries from Central Africa, Rwanda and Burundi, requested membership and have joined the community. The future vision or aim of the community is to become or form The East African Political Federation. So, if the rest of Africa continues with integrating or forming regional communities Africa as a whole may eventually unite under one continental government.

Problems Facing Pan-Africanism Prospects

In spite of the remarkable improvement of life that the Pan-Africanist movement has brought, it faces a number of internal and external problems. There exists a divide among those African leaders who were supposed to be the main supporters of Pan-Africanism; some are pro-East others pro-West; ideological differences, capitalism or socialism; ethnicity, territorial claims, diseases, poverty among its members, coup d'états and multiparty systems come into play and exert their pressure on the Pan-Africanist movement. Pan-Africanism is faced with serious challenges.

The Pan-Africanist movement has witnessed the overthrow of leaders such as Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Eduardo Mondlane and Amilcal Cabral and their places being taken by strongmen like Mobutu Sese-Seko, Samuel Doe Emperor

Bokassa Francisco Nguema just to mention a few. These are obstacles to African unity and the Pan-Africanist movement has been at the forefront to push for the liberation of Africans. Instead of fighting foreign domination, today the Pan-Africanist movement is facing its own sons and daughters as the new oppressors of their fellow Africans. This has been one of the reasons for the formation of the African Union (AU) which is now confronting ethnic fighting and wars, neo-colonialism, and puppet regimes.

The Pan-Africanist movement is also challenged by the wave of Asian countries interested in Africa. Firms and companies from China, Japan, Korea, India, Singapore are now dominating the construction sector. African markets are flooded with Asian products, often of sub-standard quality. Asia has a growing need for African raw material and oil reserves. This is an alarming trend and threatens the future of Africa; Asian countries may become Africa's new colonialists. Africa could become the fighting ground for Eastern and Western powers and we may see real war and another scramble for Africa. While the East presents itself to Africa as the partner in development, the West continues to use its multinational organs like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation to subject Africa to a neo-colonial status under the new version of globalisation. The Pan-Africanist movement has to rescue Africa from becoming a dumping ground for Eastern and Western sub-standard and out-dated technology, commodities, and ideas so that Africa may live the dream of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selasie, i.e. a dream of Africa offering world leadership in culture, science, and technology.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay continental unity has taken centre stage. But today, more than a century since the movement's inception, Pan-Africanism has not achieved African unity. Imperialism has fed on it like a vulture; power hungry elite have worsened the situation as they thoughtlessly implement their masters' military

design economic schemes.[66] In his words describing the need for African unity Mwakikagile states that:

> The quest for African unity is going to be the biggest challenge Africa faces in the twenty-first century. Without unity, all talks of an African renaissance is no more than empty rhetoric. African countries are too weak to be viable entities. They just don't make any sense. None.[67]

While admitting "the failure of the first generation of African nationalists to achieve African unity on the fortieth anniversary of Ghana's independence in 1997"[68]; Nyerere gave a moving speech that insisted on the need to work forward to unite African countries. He said:

> Africa must unite! This was the title of one of Kwame Nkrumah's books. That call is more urgent today than ever before. Together, we the people of Africa will be incomparably stronger internationally than we are now with our multiplicity of unviable states. The needs of our separate countries can be, and are being, ignored by the rich and powerful. The result is that Africa is marginalised when international decisions affecting our vital interests are made.[69]

No matter what Pan-Africanism has faced, something can be done to redress the problems. Africa can begin by uniting the existing economic blocs to form a stronger economic bloc. Thanks to the 26 Heads of African states; members of COMESA, EAC and SADC who "at a summit meeting in Kampala… made a bold move aiming at forging all three into one giant trading bloc."[70] This is a good sign and brings hope for the future of Africa. A call is made for initiatives toward the constitutionalism and democratization process; this will open up a new move to an African political federation which will help to have Africa united. There has been little improvement in the constitutionalism

[66] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, xv.
[67] G. MWAKIKAGILE, *Nyerere*, 305.
[68] I.G. SHIVJI, *Pan-Africanism*, 252.
[69] J.K. NYERERE, 1997, as quoted in Ibid., 253.
[70] J. MPINGA, "Let's kill 'Mr Nice Guy", *Daily News Politika* (27 October 2008) 2.

process and little room for democracy. These are two vital aspects that Africa has to grow in as a way to unite.

To follow this path, African nation–states need to unite and co-operate to bring about their own development and be able to rid themselves of the traps of neo-colonialism. As world forces today tend to pull individuals out of their communities to stand as isolated entities, the challenge is for personal reintegration into their own communities where people can find nurture and sense of direction in life.[71] Apart from advancing towards African unity to challenge the evils of neo-colonialism, Africans have to consider the African developmental option advocated by Thabo Mbeki, the idea of the African Renaissance, or the African rebirth.[72] Also Africans have to follow the methodology advocated by Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere who used to say "it can be done; play your part."[73] All these problems call for a united effort to transform Africa "because a force that can change the African reality, the reality of underdevelopment, will not come from abroad as a ready-made product"[74] but rather "lies in the efficacy of ideology of an appropriate kind for curing Africa's politico-economic maladies"[75] This is our duty as Africans and not someone else's concern. In so doing Africa will be fully emancipated. Long live Africa!

[71] L. MAGESA, *Africa Renaissance*, 24.
[72] Cf. Ibid., 13 - 27.
[73] As quoted by L. MAGESA, Ibid., 27.
[74] A. TARIMO, *Applied Ethics*, 100.
[75] S. GBADEGESIA, *African Philosophy*, 201.