

PAN-AFRICANISM AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE THROUGH THE APRM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pan-Africanism has historically played a crucial role in shaping the foundations of African institutions, and continues to do so today. Divergent opinions on the structure of African institutions raise the question of how these ideologies should be approached in the 21st century. Drawing on interviews with various stakeholders in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), this policy briefing examines the extent to which pan-Africanism can be institutionalised. It concludes that pan-Africanism has evolved as a philosophy without a stipulated African model; hence, it should be based on ensuring total ownership through learning and localisation.

INTRODUCTION

Pan-Africanism started as a political movement in the Caribbean and US at the end of the 19th century.² Propounded and popularised by Marcus Garvey and WEB Du Bois, this movement was a strong rejection of the mindset that defined Africa and Africans through slavery, racism and colonialism.³ It led to the establishment of regional institutions and took a new form, that of the African Renaissance, in the late 1990s.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** The AU and its institutions should readdress what adopted norms mean for Africa; statements on good governance appear generalised, without a definite African stance.
- 2** Involve Africans in the diaspora in institution building, reformation and implementation. They are an asset and not a threat to pan-African ideals, and should be seen as such.
- 3** The AU should implement its decision to utilise revenues from import duties on non-African goods to allow for a move away from donor funding, and the APRM should develop a timetable for states to meet their dues in funding these institutions.
- 4** The AU and other African institutions should learn from the successes of similar global institutions to further correct the weaknesses of African institutions. The Universal Periodic Review undertaken by the [UN's Human Rights Council](#) every five years shows how this might be achieved.

The African Renaissance, popularised by South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki, first gained attention in his 1996 speech 'I am an African'.⁴ This new form of pan-Africanism prompted the reformation and establishment of African institutions driven by the need to unite the people and collectively tackle challenges facing the continent. Wiseman Nkuhlu, one of the architects of the APRM, alluded to the fact that the African Renaissance was based on the need to find African solutions to African problems.⁵

This policy briefing addresses the divergent views of stakeholders on the institutionalisation of pan-Africanism in current African institutions, focusing on the APRM. It traces the narrative from the inception of African integration to the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 and the APRM in 2003. It is crucial to address this discord if African institutions are expected to be effective.

FROM PAN-AFRICANISM TO THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

There is no single definition of pan-Africanism; rather there are several ideas that have emerged as different thinkers related the concept to their particular contexts. However, the underlying theme is the political, economic and social liberation of the continent, and to unite a divided Africa.⁶ The pan-African movement spread from the Caribbean and the US to Africa and was quickly adopted and reformed by African leaders. The ideology was used to free the continent from the shackles of colonialism and, later, apartheid. Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, one of the first proponents of pan-Africanism and a protégé of Du Bois, spoke of 'the urgent need for a new strategy to combat imperialist aggression and this must be devised on a continental scale'.⁷

The African continent formed two antagonistic blocs on the issue – Casablanca and Brazzaville. The Casablanca bloc appeared more radical as it pushed for a political federation, a United States of Africa. The Brazzaville group moved for more gradual integration through economic cooperation. A third grouping, the Monrovia bloc, remained neutral and uncommitted.⁸ In the end, economic integration through economic cooperation was favoured and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) came into being on 25 May 1963. Grant Masterson traces how this debate shaped pan-Africanism on the continent, noting, 'there are elements of both in what Pan-Africanism has become'.⁹

UNITED VS UNION

In the early 21st century the battle of ideologies resumed as two opposing blocs – under Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi and South Africa's Mbeki – tried to steer the process of transforming the OAU. Gaddafi proposed the formation of a federal African body following the path of Nkrumah. He stated that 'Africa must unite or die', with the assumption that he would be the supreme ruler of a united Africa.¹⁰ On the other hand, Mbeki's ideas supported the incremental Union of Africa; to harness Africa's potential, remove sources of conflict, restore its self-esteem and turn it into a zone of economic prosperity, peace and stability.¹¹

In view of this, plans were developed to realise the idea of an African Renaissance. In January 2001 Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade presented his Omega Plan at the Francophone Summit in Cameroon, while Mbeki presented his Millennium African Recovery Plan at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Following these developments, a single document merging the two was prepared for the OAU Summit in Lusaka and renamed the 'New African Initiative' in July 2001.¹² This initiative transformed into the establishment of NEPAD and the APRM as its flagship governance promotion and monitoring programme.

AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

The first time the term African Renaissance appeared was in Cheikh Anta Diop's series of essays entitled *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in Culture and Development, 1946–1960*. He argued that Africa was poised for a renaissance.¹³ Nelson Mandela gave resonance to the concept when he used it in a speech at the OAU Summit in Tunisia in June 1994.¹⁴ Later it was further popularised by, and associated with, Mbeki.¹⁵ He promoted it as a new social imperative, making it a critical component of change and recovery in Africa.¹⁶

INSTITUTIONALISING PAN-AFRICANISM IN NORMS AND DESIGNS

Pan-Africanism has played a crucial role in the development of African institutions. However, there are divergent opinions on the institutionalisation of this ideology. Some contend that there is nothing African about institutions such as NEPAD and the APRM.

While Salim Latib, former political advisor to the Commissioner of Political Affairs at the AU Commission,

agrees that NEPAD and the APRM were not born out of hegemonic coercion but rather through an internal determination for change, he supports the view that pan-Africanism is not institutionalised in the APRM. He states that 'it claims to be African, it is least African'.¹⁷ Patrick Bond, a professor at the Wits School of Governance, describes the APRM as a neo-colonial strategy by the North to control the South.¹⁸ These perceptions have been backed by arguments that norms adopted by these institutions are Western and in no way African.

Others disagree. Nkuhlu addresses this concern by outlining the origins of norms: 'This is the wisdom of humankind and we have participated in the generation of ideas ... let's take what we believe is relevant, and would work for us.'¹⁹ MacBride Nkhalamba, head of the Thematic Research and Coordination Division of the APRM, drives this point home in his statement:²⁰

For any part of the world to claim that they have fashioned the entire spectrum of ideas on governance and that everyone else is mimicking is absurdity of the most repulsive form. It is claiming that all other societies except themselves had no form of polity or political community.

Differences in geography, historical experiences and other changes over time have led to the generation of some universally accepted norms in the international community; what may differ is their implementation. Regardless of how universal these norms may be, institutions need to explicitly define what these norms mean for Africa.

This same subjectivity also applies to the question of the model for or design of African institutions. In the case of the APRM, it is claimed that it is an African innovation; yet the members of NEPAD asked the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for ideas on how to bring peer review to their region.²¹ Most stakeholders confirm that they learned from the OECD and adapted it to the African context. In supporting this position, Masterson maintains:²²

The OECD was clearly a model that the APRM was based upon. Yet it's not like the Chinese went to London and saw the Mercedes Benz and then went back to China and made the Mercedes Benz but with just the Chinese label and inferior parts. The APRM's scope and ambition went well beyond the scope and ambition with what the OECD sort of reviews does.

One of the contributors from the partner institutions of the APRM affirms that the executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa sent a delegation to observe how the OECD performed its peer review. But these factors do not make these institutions any less African. Even if African institutions decide to follow Africanist designs, what then is an African model?

AFRICAN RENAISSANCE – WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

In as much as pan-Africanism is a key pillar of African organisations, the ideology was not developed with specific African models to follow or a particular African mode of governance. It does not say much as a strategy for institution building. In the 21st century the African Renaissance reflects Africa's conscious need not only for political independence, regional integration and the improvement of living standards, but also for liberation from the economic dependence and democratic stagnation that have reversed the short-lived prosperity of the independence era.²³

As there are no African models to follow, institutionalising the African Renaissance should be through ownership as emphasised in the ideology; ownership in execution and in principle. This ownership should be in the form of ensuring that Africans are in charge of the entire process. Africans trained abroad should not be viewed as an obstacle to institution building but rather an asset; exposure to foreign institutions could shed some light on where the continent goes wrong.

Total ownership also includes economic control of institutions. Nkrumah said that 'political independence without economic independence would be superficial'.²⁴ In a 2017 interview the South African Deputy Minister of Public Service and Administration Ayanda Dlodlo said she wants to see an APRM that does not rely on donor funding, because with donor funding comes certain conditions.²⁵ Funds should be sourced from within and not without, and one consideration could be levying import duties on non-African goods. The APRM should have a clear-cut schedule for member states, which could give them ample time to meet their dues.

In terms of an African model to follow, Jeggan Grey-Johnson, an advocacy officer with the Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project, advises that 'the model we should be using is what best suits Africa'. He argues that the African traditional approach, found in villages or

clans, is akin to the processes of the APRM, which makes it a suitable choice for Africa.²⁶ Learning is a cost-effective strategy for institution building; the learning process needs to continue in institutions in order to correct flaws. Norms should be localised to add an African perspective to African institutions.

CONCLUSION

Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance are ideologies upon which African institutions are founded. They do not provide explicit strategies on how to go about building strong African institutions. However, they can serve as a check on how African institutions should be managed to avoid any form of neo-colonialism.

There are no African, European, Asian or American norms. Norms and models have become universal through constant evolution, but differ when localised. Pan-Africanism should always remain at the core of African institution building, and institutionalising it can only be achieved through the localisation of norms and models.

ENDNOTES

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