

***African Unification --
Museveni's call for total political, social and
economic integration:***

**DELINKING
'SOVEREIGNTY WITH POVERTY'
AND UNIFIED AFFLUENCE**

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Uganda's President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's presentation of the **Working Document for the Tripartite Meeting** (28 August 2004) between the three heads of states of the Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda that will set the tone for (East) African political, economic and social integration is indeed a masterpiece. Museveni's assertions are as follows: Museveni rightly underpins the excessive balkanisation of Africa. Nevertheless, His conviction is that it could be better if we took decisive strategic action in respect of political integration. He further goes on to ask why he thinks that "economic integration is not enough to guarantee the future of the black man even if it is successfully implemented? He asserts that "economic integration, without political integration, is slow. It will take longer for the benefits of integration to spread around evenly. There is a lot of duplication of effort with each country trying to attract investment in similar sectors.

He goes on to alarm the world on the greatest danger looming over our heads. He underlines the "fact that while Europeans and Americans are now basing themselves on Mars and outer-space, Africa has almost forgotten how to make the spear. The whole of Africa was conquered and the spectre of Slave Trade was visited on us because we lagged behind in technology. The Black race is just sitting in these micro political units created by Colonialism completely oblivious of what is going on in the World. What always amazes me is the ability of Africans to hate themselves and love their enemies. Why do we love and get mesmerised by the strength and might of others but we are indifferent to building our own?"

"We occupy one of the biggest land masses with considerable natural resources. Why can we not turn, at least, parts of this land mass into a powerful and secure base for the Black race? Museveni closes by saying that "the points above lead me to say that economic integration is not enough. Especially for the sake of the strategic security of the black people, we must go as fast as possible for political integration."

I. A Pandemic of Declarations:

One analytical limitation that reigns sovereign high in the agenda is the notion of naive realism in the rhetorical oversimplification of the articulation of African Unification that has been invoked to point to certain conceptual shortcomings in current perspectives of unity. These shortcomings can be seen as outcomes of more or less conscious attempts of Africa's unifiers to quickly get their hands on "ur-

gent" or "practical" matters of unification politics without worrying much about "abstract" theory. One manifestation is the pre-emptive "socialisation" of African unification ideas and practices, as demonstrated, for example, by the dimensions and the implications of the pandemic of declarations and plans of action for Africa. Some of these are:

- **The Monrovia Symposium,**
- **The Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos,**
- **EU/ACP Lomé convention**
- **The Arusha, Khartoum, and Addis Ababa Declarations,**
- **The Cairo Agenda for Action, The Abuja Treaty,**
- **The Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS and ORID....**

- **Various UN/WB initiatives including United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, and African Alternative to Structural Adjustment Framework, 80s, United Nations Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, The World Bank Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Agenda for Action (1981), and SSA: from Crisis to Sustainable Growth (1989), "Africa: New Partnership Agenda for Development" NEPAD, adopted in 1997, by the UN,**

- **Bilateral initiatives such as US Proposal for a Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa; Swedish Initiative Partnership with Africa;**

- **UK "Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the Twenty-first Century", US African Crisis Response Initiative and the OTI. Tokyo International Conferences on African Development, a Japan-led initiative and a lot more...**

Programmes to provide and utilise substantial quality of resources to meet the challenge of development have been on the agenda for quite a long time. Substantial financial grants and loans have flowed into Africa in support of 'human development' and technical assistance to strengthen the flow and utilisation of resources within national economies. Regional and sub-regional integration programmes have been mounted with tenacity that only the ASEAN has seen. Yet, like many other strategic cum policy efforts, these have not yielded the desired results. Human capital flight has reached high proportions leaving behind an ill-prepared and corrupt leadership, managerial and labour force. Skills, knowledge and positive work habits continued to be in short supply as learning systems decay in most countries.

II. Unanswered questions of African unification

In 1991, I was invited to set-up and head a team that was to undertake the ALF/GCA study on political transition in Africa. Coming right after the **Arusha Declaration on Popular Participation**, a land mark contribution to the debate on the role of civil society, I took on the task with enthusiasm and vigour. The team concluded that the way ahead for democracy was very murky. Three years later, I was, under the auspices of UN and EU, assigned with two formidable tasks: to undertake studies to revitalise the role of African civil society in the UN New Agenda for African Development and to appraise what the future holds for the democratisation process in Africa. My modest conclusion, albeit with trepidation that this would be unacceptable to my contractors, was none would have succeeded without a strong continental leadership and oversight; amid the miasma of leaders that relapsed into old habits that die hard.

That is why discussions leading to African futures tend to be one of despondency – the so called post-Cold War political dynamics and trends towards regional action in the continent fast replacing African economics as the morbid science, art or both. But we need to be vigilant more than cynic. While participants in the complex traffic web of African unity could be torn between professional caution and the genuine desire for a better future for their continent, repeated attempts to dispel the prevailing gloom have not yielded to reasoned demands; raising some fundamental questions. What do we mean by unification in the first place? Does the philosophy have indigenous African roots? What are the endogenous factors that brought about this new chapter of discourse on unification? With thousands of ethnic groups and languages in Africa, how deep-seated is nationalism and ethnicity and what does it mean for African unification?

Nevertheless the stark reality of the new concept of the failed states (Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leon and many more not included to err on the safe side...), and the locally-perpetrated genocide in Rwanda, DRC and Burundi to name a few, make this last question less cynical than it

would otherwise appear at first sight. Indeed as Museveni asserts

"Africans today are surviving at the mercy of others. Rationality would have propelled us to quickly use the recovery of our independence to ensure that Africa stands up once and for all time. The independence and Post-independence African leaders need to bear the historical responsibility for the future tragedies that may befall the Africans in future".

African leaders are articulate in stating their unification aims and positions and in promoting them within and through the AU. But to describe the strategy is problematic for a number of reasons.

1. African States cannot be expected to know all their unification political objectives and means-ends calculation openly and I cannot suppose that their formally declared aims and purposes exhaust their ideological and strategic intentions.
2. The way they envision the concepts and goals of political unification in specific contexts may be at variance with the global "meaning" or "sense" attributed to them. I submit that the specific mode of concern about African unification may be more revolutionary than processual, egalitarian than liberal, or more substantive than procedural. Or, it may switch from the liberal code or structural model of union to the revolutionary code unpredictably; making the task of describing their integrating reform objectives a bit difficult.
3. Finally the articulation of ideas and ends of unification are not monolithic. It is modulated within the network of domestic and foreign participants. It includes statements of aims for "general audiences", like the goal of securing peace and stability and prevention of balkanisation. But it also includes discourses and associated objectives designed primarily, though not exclusively, for consumption by specific constituencies.

For these reasons, it is not easy to give an exact account of African integration goals and ultimate political ends pursued by AU. The author has lingering doubts and questions about the current status and mission of the dominant regional organisations (ADB, ECOWAS, COMESA, IGAD, SADC, ECCAS, UMA...) and at the core of them the African Union about the nature of the alliance that all point up the need for caution in taking their declaratory goals of "African integration" at face value. Nevertheless, one can describe fairly accurately the declared reform goals on the assumption that they are significant, if not exhaustive, indicators of African leaders' real intentions. This is admittedly a simplifying assumption, but one which provides a point of departure for analysing an involved and controversial strategy.

III. Agency and ideological issues in African integration

What does this leave options for African Unity? Practically nothing but problems to solve. African Unity needs to be built - and built - virtually from scratch. Politically, its past is more a liability than an asset. In designing the methodology for studies leading to African integration and in establishing the analytical foundation for political unification of Africa, it is important that that we understand the different permutations and trajectories – from society-led, state-led transitions to a combinations of both.

Significantly, political and economic integration depends upon the **emergence of supportive set of political institutions that are recurrent and valued patterns of political behaviour that give shape and regularity to politics**. They may be manifest as political rules or as political organisations including customary political norms and practices. The prospects for sustainable livelihoods partly depend on habitual attitudes and behaviour among the population at large. From theoretical perspectives, political culture best predicts the prospects for political and economic integration. These explanatory factors operate at different level of analysis and each has its own data requirements. The power of a given set of factors to explain possibilities for political and economic integration, the susceptibility of concepts to empirical investigation, and the potential of the approach to generate policy recommendations, however, will no wonder lead to an imperative to adopt "an institutional approach". Hence, the hypothesis

The upshot of the development of political culture for African total integration depends on the rules and configuration of political institutions. The key question becomes: "is the endowment of institutions conducive to African unification?"

Here one is tempted to underwrite the hypothesis on the formation and sustainability of the real Africa Unity as opposed to vacuously formal institutional evolution that has been creeping since the fifties. The development of political culture for African total integration depends on the configuration of political institutions in state and civil society. Hence the endowment of institutions in society and state conducive to African integration is sine qua non for ultimate political integration. The goals may be amenable to description not only at the level of what we broadly and formally acknowledge as the aims, but also in terms of implicative objectives and purposes and specific tactics and processes that inform a variety of activities leading to one politically, socially and economically integrated Africa.

Agency:

Participants in and around projects of African integration generally constitute a network or intersection of institutions and groups which may include the following: indigenous governments that preside over formal transition to Af-

rican political and economic integration processes, political organisations not affiliated with ruling coalitions, opposition groups and intellectual that operate outside official government channels and struggle for a share of power or influence; in some cases, a free, though constitutionally and legally not very well protected, press; local non-governmental organisations involved in promoting African political and economic integration at the grassroots as well as in civic, humanitarian and relief work; professional associations; and multilateral and bilateral agencies and private international aid groups which collectively exert far-reaching external influence over political reform.

Generally, the larger the number and degree of diversity of participants actively involved, the greater the variation. Uncertainty and complexity of forms of agency and activities possible, and the more open and free the transition to African total integration is likely to be in its formal as well as informal aspects. Admittedly, the interesting actors typically have their own primary "functions" quite apart from their role in promoting organic integration. Every one of the players is geared toward specific interests, concerns and activities beyond or outside the ends of political and economic integration. Even if they are expressly committed to promoting reform, it is always possible for participants to lose themselves in the specifics and "forget" the process as a whole. To restate the basic point, the extent and nature of openness of African political and economic integration are conditioned by the breadth of the range of available participants and the degree of uncertainty and complexity that characterised their agency and functional relations.

Structural constraints are reinforced by specific, more or less conscious, uncertainty and complexity; reducing activities of key participants, particularly governments and their foreign backers. As an interval between one regime or system of rule (OAU) and another during which competing actors claim and contest over power, (AU) unity may be characterised by rules and forms of political engagement that are "in constant flux" and may lead to "any number of unpredictable alternative outcomes". At the same time, however, the interval is marked by aspiring African leaders that seek to quickly get their hands on the flux of events and circumstances, often not succeeding in immediately securing themselves in and projecting to power.

Ideology:

Beyond the sphere of political agency, possibilities and problems of openness can be grasped in terms of the related domain of ideology. Ideological elements and constructs might be seen as the very constitutive structure of process openness and closure. African unification will commonly be characterised by a number of distinctive and shared additional elements, including concepts and rules of government, national and cultural values, traditions of political discourse and arguments, and modes of representation of specific interests, needs and issues. These ele-

ments, or complexes of elements, will tend to assume varying forms and to enter into shifting relations of competition, co-operation and hegemony during political reform. Generally, the broader the range of ideological elements at plays in a transition to integration, and the more varied and uncertain their relations, the greater the possibilities of process openness and transparency that exist.

Like the transition to African unification of politics and political organisations and activities to which they are often tied more or less closely, transition to globalised ideological constructs tend to be unsettled and, at times, unsettling. Particularly at these initial stages of transition to globalisation, they are more likely to be uncertain rather than stable structures of ideas and values. This has the effect of opening up the entire African political and economic integration process, of freeing the process from simple domination by any one organised actor or coalition of actors. Yet, global ideological elements and relations take shape and come into play within a hierarchy of global and local agencies and groups. A determinate order of institutions, powers, interests and activates operates through complexes of transition to African political and economic integration ideas and values, filling out, specifying, anchoring and, often short-cutting their formal content or meaning. And this may impose ideological as well as practical limits on the extent to which and how unification processes can be opened up.

Thus, the fact that promoters or supporters of African integration and development often do not efficiently realise in practice the potential of the ideas and goals they promote, that the volume of their interventions is not nearly proportional to their impact raises the issue of whether the ideas in question may be fundamentally constrained at the moment of their conception and implementation by the very institutions and technocratic structures that ground their articulation.

Within countries, the supply of ideas of African unification may be artificially deflated by particular strategies and mechanisms used by actors to manage entire reform processes. Conceptual possibilities may be left unrealised, or sub-optimally realised, insofar as governing elite are preoccupied with filling out those spaces of uncertainty in political thought, discourse and action that alternative parties would occupy in the course of their own engagement. In the sphere of ideology, openness of African integration process is concerned in part with allowing free expression of diverse ideas and beliefs and permitting unrestricted taking of positions by citizens on specific issues.

There is also another level of analysis, concerned with the extent and nature of openness of distinct ideological constructs to one another, with modes of articulation of given sets of ideas and values and of representations of specific issues relative to others. The concern here is not so much the number and diversity of ideas, values and opinions allowed to gain currency during transition to African

unification as modes of their competitive and co-operative articulation.

For example, does African unification enter national transition processes as an external ideology, constructing and deploying its concepts in sterile abstraction from national beliefs and values? Does African unification come into play in total opposition to, or in co-operation with historic national values and sentiments? In the struggle over the establishment of global rules of economic and political engagement equate the articulation of G8 and multifunctional agenda with the production of broad-based concepts, norms and goals which should govern their leadership of globalisation? And do transition to African unification processes signify change in terms of the transformation of the immediate stuff of national politics into an activity mediated and guided by objective and critical unification standards, rules and principles? It is possible to draw a conceptual distinction between two levels of articulation of ideology in African unification process and to note the implications of their relations for process openness.

- There are first, representations of specific interests, identities, needs, wishes, goals, claims, and demands, different in various country groups and economic communities.
- These are to be distinguished from a second level of production and circulation of unification ideology where broad-based concepts, principles and rules take shape and come into play.

Explicit general forms of African unification refer to systemic categories and institutional mechanisms; they objective, mediate and generalise particular representations.

IV: Rewards of alliances

African unification and alliances between state and civil society face many limitations in the sphere of institutional development. While many proposals for remedial action have been formulated, real commitment to collaborative processes at the inter-organisational level has always been limited. Mobilising the action required has also remained a daunting challenge, as many practical and structural constraints militate against commitment by individual groups to inter organisational initiatives nationally and regionally. An increased awareness of this problem, has led us to question the nature of the relationship, which has existed between them providing significant impetus for change in networks development consciousness and practice.

This would be a major opening for the mutual incorporation of strategies and process in a more dynamic and complex articulation of professional work. As a result, increasing attention is exerted on the development of communities of practice and the knowledge management coordination nexus. The advantages of such a process would mean

- wider market base and production potential,
 - increased global competitiveness,
 - development of secondary processing,
 - development of tourist potential,
 - bring out the critical production edge
- develop the requisite negotiating leverage by developing cross national skills in international negotiations as have Asian countries have done via the ASEAN,
 - exchange of best practices lessons in all of the above:
 - Africa must reinforce its knowledge management strategy and Communities of Practice to participate in the global arena

The above underscores the need for closer co-operation and understanding between state institutions and African citizenry. States must first accept the rights and obligations of citizenship are not gifts from the state. The relationships must be based on generic notions of humility and optimism, macroeconomic prudence, and the right-based development. Achieving human security, the development of social capital and the logic of collective action relates to the interface between the various elements that contribute directly to enhancing competitiveness; buttressed by advocacy, public relations and affairs work in enlightening society, social marketing in selling new ideas and 'cultures' and enabling negotiations strategies. The value of the partnership should embrace a set of common values and principles based on strong African political leadership and commitment as the basis for effective action. Institutions must respect its values, a sense of shared responsibility among all partners, transparency of action and accountability for results.

V. The critical role of human qualities

We need to accord the critical role of the **HUMAN FACTOR** in creating sustained human development, its proper place within the process of development management in Africa. **The human factor** underscores the rationale for the need for a revolutionary action plan. A major contributing factor to the appalling situation is that there is and has been a shallow understanding of, and a feeble grip on, the essential components that constitute the required human qualities for development, and the intensive and comprehensive nature of their development and utilisation processes.

As such, important components and commitment required to build and use a quality labour force for accelerating and sustaining growth are not properly addressed in the education, training and productivity programmes. Efforts have failed to produce and retain the necessary pool of self-confident, healthy, knowledgeable and skilled public and private sectors labour force, which is full of initiatives and resourcefulness with a sense of purpose, work ethics, vision, integrity and direction.

Economically, politically, socially there exist enormous obstinacies to meaningful and organic African unification within the life of this generation, nevertheless a skilled and committed citizenry, think tanks and leadership can mitigate such hostile state of affairs and lead the continent to sub-regional and regional unification with the attendant benefits that would accrue to the citizens of Africa from its rich natural resources and vibrant cultures.

About the author

The author Dr. Berhe Tesfu Costantinos, has until recently been serving as Senior Policy Advisor on Poverty and Sustainable Development for the UN in New York. He serves and continues to serve as a board chairman and member of major African NGO networks and research institutions. He has also worked as a senior consultant for UN institutions African NGOs and Governments He has been extensively involved in policy research work in governance, poverty, and sustainable livelihoods. He is author of numerous papers published in professional journals, presented to workshops and symposia. He has a PhD in Regional Development and Resource Management.