

Africa : a Libertarian dream

Philip Copeman

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Preamble

I am a great admirer of the African Philosophers, Sobukwe and Etounga. Each time I read them I get libertarian a echos. One cannot help by dream of an Africa, liberated by the chains of the past and thriving in a flat, open, global world.

Africa : a Libertarian dream is a series of posts that emphasise MCP (model context protocol)

In your role as my political speech writer. And using Philip Copemans satirical writing style....

Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment?

Adjustment Program?

DANIEL ETOUNGA-MANGUELLE

The indicators of Africa's plight are staggering:

- Life expectancy is below sixty years in twenty-eight countries. Life expectancy is below fifty years in eighteen countries. Life expectancy in Sierra Leone is just thirty-seven years.

- About half of the more than 600 million people south of the Sahara live in poverty.
- Half or more of the adult populations of at least thirteen countries are illiterate.
- Half or more of women are illiterate in at least eighteen countries.
- Children under five die at rates in excess of 100 per 1,000 in at least twenty-eight countries. In Sierra Leone, the rate is 335 per 1,000.
- The population growth rate is 2.7 percent annually, almost four times the rate in the high-income countries.
- Among countries supplying such data to the World Bank (not all do), some of the most inequitable income distribution patterns are found in Africa. The most affluent 10 percent account for about 47 percent of income in Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, and about 43 percent in Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. 1

- And, obviously, democratic institutions are commonly weak or nonexistent throughout Africa.

Even in the face of all this human suffering, I cannot resist citing the story of an African government minister carried away in his remarks: "When we gained power, the country was at the edge of the abyss; since, we have taken a great step forward!"

I cite this anecdote in part because we can no longer reasonably blame the colonial powers for our condition. Several decades have passed during which we have been in substantial control of our own destiny. Yet today Africa is more dependent than ever on rich countries, more vulnerable than any other continent to maneuvers aimed at giving with one hand and taking back with the other. The World Bank, usually a great source of funds and advice, is itself short of ideas. Other than structural adjustment programs (whose efficiency has not yet been proven), there is silence.

The need to question our culture, the African culture, is evident. But what characterizes the African culture? Is this culture compatible with the demands faced by individuals and nations at the beginning of the twenty-first century? If not, what cultural reorientation is necessary so that in the concert of nations we are no longer playing out of tune? Does Africa need a cultural adjustment program?

WHAT WE ARE

It is never easy to speak of one's self, to reveal one's soul, especially when, as is the case with the African soul, many different facets present themselves. There are at least three dangers in this. The first is idealizing and embellish-

ing in order to appear to be more than we are. The second is to say nothing that exposes the mysterious halo that people from all cultures wear. Finally, who has the qualities and qualifications to speak in the name of us all? An African proverb is correct in saying that he who looks from the bottom of a well sees only a portion of the sky.

As legitimate as these concerns are, they should not prevent us from looking in the mirror. Do we dare to look ourselves in the face, even if it is difficult to recognize ourselves?

Fifty Africas, a Single Culture?

We long ago got into the habit of referring to Africa as a diverse entity, and no one is surprised, in light of the balkanization of the continent, to see works with titles like *Les 45 Afriques* 1 or *Les 50 Afriques* 3 because, as

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J. Ki-Zerbo noted in the introduction to the latter, "Africa is palpable. It is also profitable."

The descriptions of African diversity are enough to make an Olympic skat-

ing champion dizzy. First, to better oppose them, we like to emphasize white Africa and black Africa: one north of the Sahara and the other south of it. But how do we then classify the Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe, each with a powerful white minority? Behind the racial screen, one quickly discovers a far more important source of diversity – language. There is an Arabophone Africa, an Anglophone Africa, a Francophone Africa, a Lusophone Africa, a Hispanophone Africa, not to mention the scores of languages that have no relation to the languages of the European colonizers.

What can be said if we then dare to transcend frontiers resulting from colonial dismembering of real nationalities such as the Yorubas, Hausas, Peuls, Malinkes, to mention only a few, that straddle several states? To continue the census of African diversity based on the color of the epidermis or on language could lead to several thousand Africas! Next, we must confront the anthropologists. Are there as many cultures in Africa as there are tribes? Does their number coincide with the states as outlined by the colonial powers? Does generalizing about African culture as a whole make any sense at all?

I believe that it does. The diversity – the vast number of subcultures– is undeniable. But there is a foundation of shared values, attitudes, and institutions that binds together the nations south of the Sahara, and in many respects those to the north as well. The situation is analogous to that of Great Britain: Despite its Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish subcultures, no one would question the existence of a British culture.

The existence of this common base is so real that some anthropologists question whether imported religions – Christianity and Islam – have really affected African ancestral beliefs or given Africans different ways of understanding the contemporary societies in which they live. Modern political

power has often assumed the characteristics of traditional religious ritual powers; divination and witchcraft have even made their way into court-houses. Everywhere on the continent, the bond between religion and society remains strong. As Felix Houphouet-Boigny, the late president of the Ivory Coast, told us (and he, as a Roman Catholic, knew what he was talking about): "From African archbishops to the most insignificant Catholic, from the great witch doctor to the most insignificant Moslem, from the pastor to the most insignificant Protestant, we have all had an animist past." 4

African culture is not easily grasped. It refuses to be packaged and resists attempts at systemization. The following typology is not wholly satisfactory, but it gives some sense of what the African cultural reality is.

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Hierarchical Distance

In the view of D. Bollinger and G. Hofstede, hierarchical distance – the degree of verticality – is generally substantial in tropical and Mediterranean climates, where the survival of the group and its growth depend less on human intervention than it does in cold and temperate countries. 5 In countries with substantial hierarchical distances, the society tends to be static and politically

centralized. What little national wealth exists is concentrated in the hands of an elite. The generations pass without significant change in mind-set. It is the reverse in countries with short hierarchical distances. Technological changes happen because the group needs technical progress; the political system is decentralized and based on a representative system; the national wealth, which is substantial, is widely distributed; and children learn things that their parents never knew.

In the more horizontal cultures, subordinates believe that their superiors are people just like themselves, that all people have equal rights, and that law takes precedence over strength. This leads to the belief that the best way to change a social system is to redistribute power. In the more vertical societies, Africa among them, subordinates consider their superiors to be different – having a right to privilege. Since strength prevails over law, the best way to change a social system is to overthrow those who hold power.

To the extent that it covers many aspects of a society (e.g., political systems, religious practices, organization of enterprises), hierarchical distance would virtually suffice to explain underdevelopment. However, as Bollinger and Hofstede note, France, Italy (particularly in the south), and Japan are also countries of high hierarchical distance.

Control over Uncertainty

Some societies condition their members to accept uncertainty about the future, taking each day as it comes. There is little enthusiasm for work. The behavior and opinions of others are tolerated because deep down people feel relatively secure in the status quo.

In other societies, people are acculturated to conquer the future. This leads

to anxiety, emotionalism, and aggressiveness, which produce institutions oriented toward change and the limitation of risks.

Africa, except for the southern tip of the continent, appears to belong entirely to the category of societies with weak controls over uncertainty. To create secure societies, three levers are available: technology, jurisprudence, and religion. We might say that African societies are societies of strong control over uncertainty; unfortunately, the control is exercised only through reli-

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gion. In the final analysis, if Africans immerse themselves in the present and demonstrate a lack of concern for tomorrow, it is less because of the safety of community social structures that envelop them than because of their submission to a ubiquitous and implacable divine will.

The African, returning to the roots of religion, believes that only God can modify the logic of a world created for eternity. The world and our behavior are an immutable given, bequeathed in a mythical past to our founding ancestors, whose wisdom continues to illuminate our life principles. The African remains enslaved by his environment. Nature is his master and sets his destiny.

This postulate of a world governed by an immutable divine order in a universe without borders is accompanied by a peculiarly African perception of the notion of space and time.

The Tyranny of Time

The African sees space and time as a single entity. The Nigerians say, "A watch did not invent man." Africans have always had their own time, and they have often been criticized for it. As an example, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber writes:

Time in Africa has both a symbolic and cultural value that are very important in the manner in which it is lived and felt. This is frankly both a benefit and a handicap – a benefit to the extent that it is satisfying for individuals to live during a period at a rhythm that is their own and that they have no desire to give up. But it is also a handicap to the extent that they are in competition with countries that do not have the same work methods and for which competition at the level of productivity, for example, passes through a more rational use of time. 6

Servan-Schreiber is right. In traditional African society, which exalts the glorious past of ancestors through tales and fables, nothing is done to prepare for the future. The African, anchored in his ancestral culture, is so convinced that the past can only repeat itself that he worries only superficially about the future. However, without a dynamic perception of the future, there is no planning, no foresight, no scenario building; in other words, no policy to affect the course of events. There can be no singing of tomorrows so long as our culture does not teach us to question the future, to repeat it mentally, and to bend it to our will. In modern society, everyone must prepare. Other-

wise, as Servan-Schreiber reminds us, there will be no more seats on the train, no more money at the end of the month, nothing in the refrigerator for

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the dinner hour, and nothing in the granaries in between seasons. 7 All in all, daily life in Africa!

Indivisible Power and Authority

Over the course of several millennia, societies in the West evolved substantially outside of the influence of religion, leading to the separation of the things of this world from the spiritual world. This evolution also led to the advent of the power of the state, which was certainly still spiritual but detached from supernatural forces that no longer intervened in the governing of this world. In Africa, however, the force of religion continues to weigh both on individual and on collective destiny. It is common for African leaders to claim magical powers.

It is difficult to explain African passivity other than by the fear inspired by a God hidden in the folds of the clothes of every African chief. If a king or president escapes an attack (even a simulated one), the entire population will deduce that he has supernatural power and is therefore invincible. This propensity to equate all power with divine authority does not concern only the "fathers of the nation"; it affects every citizen – even the most ordinary – as soon as he is given any authority whatsoever. Take an African, give him a

bit of power, and he will likely become bumptious, arrogant, intolerant, and jealous of his prerogatives. Constantly on his guard and an enemy of competence (not a criterion for electing gods), he is ruthless until an inopportune decree designates his successor. He ends his career entirely devoted to the cult of mediocrity. (It is a well-known fact in our republics that to end the career of a technocrat or a politician for good, you need only point out his excellence.)

The African will not accept changes in social standing: Dominant and dominated remain eternally in the places allocated them, which is why change in social classifications is often condemned. We complain about the difficulties in promoting the private sector in our states. These difficulties are rooted in the jealousy that dominates all interpersonal relations, which is less the desire to obtain what others possess than to prevent any change in social status.

In Africa, you must be born dominant; otherwise, you have no right to power except by coup d'etat. The entire social body accepts, as a natural fact, the servitude imposed by the strong man of the moment. It has been argued that the underdeveloped are not the people, they are the leaders. This is both true and false. If African peoples were not underdeveloped (that is to say, passive, resigned, and cowardly), why would they accept underdeveloped leaders? We forget that every people deserves the leaders it gets.

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The Community Dominates the Individual

If we had to cite a single characteristic of the African culture, the subordination of the individual by the community would surely be the reference point to remember. African thought rejects any view of the individual as an autonomous and responsible being. The African is vertically rooted in his family, in the vital ancestor, if not in God; horizontally, he is linked to his group, to society, to the cosmos. The fruit of a family-individual, society-individual dynamic, all linked to the universe, the African can only develop and bloom through social and family life.

How do we restore the degree of autonomy to the individual that is necessary for his affirmation as a political, economic, and social actor, while preserving this sociability that is the essence of the existence of the African? The suppression of the individual, the cardinal way of ensuring equality in traditional societies, is demonstrated in all areas – not only in economic matters, where the ultimate market price is a function of the presumed purchasing power of the buyer, but in cultural matters, where oral traditions have monopolized the transmission of culture. We might even wonder if it wasn't by design that Africans avoided the written word to assure the suppression of individualism. African thought avoids skepticism, another virus carried by the individual. Consequently, the established belief system remains absolute: As soon as ancestral beliefs are threatened, the only possible choice is between the established order and chaos.

The concept of individual responsibility does not exist in our hyper-cen-

tralized traditional structures. In Cameroon, the word "responsible" translates as "chief." Telling peasants that they are all responsible for a group initiative is to tell them therefore that they are all chiefs – which inevitably leads to endless interpersonal conflicts.

The death of the individual in our societies explains not only the culture of silence in which men like President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana rise up but also explains the contempt in which people hold all those that occupy an intermediate position in the hierarchy. Thus, in an African ministry, it is well understood that the only person who can solve any problem whatsoever, be it the most commonplace, is the minister himself. Supervisors, managers, and other officials are there only for show. Our ministers have no complaints. It is not good to delegate one's authority at the risk of encouraging the birth of a new political star who may eventually prove to be a competitor.

We must be realistic. Tribalism blooms in our countries because of both the negation of the individual and the precariousness of his situation in the absence of an operative set of individual rights and responsibilities. Should we then continue, while dancing and singing, to drift collectively toward hell

to safeguard a hypothetical social consensus? Or has the moment come to restore all rights to individuals?

Excessive Conviviality and Rejection of Open Conflict

The African works to live but does not live to work. He demonstrates a propensity to feast that suggests that African societies are structured around pleasure. Everything is a pretext for celebration: birth, baptism, marriage, birthday, promotion, election, return from a short or a long trip, mourning, opening or closure of Congress, traditional and religious feasts. Whether one's salary is considerable or modest, whether one's granaries are empty or full, the feast must be beautiful and must include the maximum possible number of guests.

He who receives gives, but he who is received also gives in order to truly participate in the joy or pain of his host. Sociability is the cardinal virtue of all human beings; indeed, the African considers any person he meets a friend until the contrary is demonstrated. Friendship comes before business; it is impolite, in a business discussion, to immediately go to the crux of the matter. The African has an inexhaustible need for communication and prefers interpersonal warmth over content. This is the main reason for the inefficiency of African bureaucracies. Each petitioner, instead of writing, seeks to meet in person the official in charge of examining his file, thinking this eliminates all the coldness of writing letters back and forth.

Differences that are the basis for social life elsewhere are not perceived or are ignored to maintain ostensible social cohesion. It is the search for social peace based on a shaky unanimity that pushes the African to avoid conflict – although the continent is surely not free of it. In some African societies, the avoidance of conflict means that justice cannot be rendered in the daytime.

In some Bamileke (West Cameroon) villages, the constituted bodies in charge of security and justice are secret and meet at night. Members wear masks to prevent being identified.

Conflict is inherent in human groups of whatever size, yet we try to sweep it under the rug – and have been highly unsuccessful in doing so.

Inefficient Homo Economicus

In Africa, what classifies man is his intrinsic value and his birth. If the African is not very thrifty, it is because his vision of the world attributes very little importance – too little – to the financial and economic aspects of life. Other than some social groups like the well-known Bamileke of Cameroon or the Kamba of Kenya, the African is a bad H. economicus. For him, the

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value of man is measured by the "is" and not by the "has." Furthermore, because of the nature of the rapport that the African maintains with time, saving for the future has a lower priority than immediate consumption. Lest there be any temptation to accumulate wealth, those who receive a regular salary have to finance the studies of brothers, cousins, nephews, and nieces,

lodge newcomers, and finance the multitude of ceremonies that fill social life.

It should not come as a surprise that the urban elite embellish these spending traditions by behaving like nouveaux riches. They, of course, have access to large amounts of money, chiefly in government coffers, and to the relatives and friends who are the beneficiaries of our free-spending habits are added banks in Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the Bahamas. African governments are not, it is evident, any better at economic management than are African individuals, as our frequent economic crises confirm.

The High Costs of Irrationalism

A society in which magic and witchcraft flourish today is a sick society ruled by tension, fear, and moral disorder. Sorcery is a costly mechanism for managing conflict and preserving the status quo, which is, importantly, what African culture is about. Therefore, is not witchcraft a mirror reflecting the state of our societies? There is much to suggest this. Witchcraft is both an instrument of social coercion (it helps maintain and perhaps even increase the loyalty of individuals toward the clan) and a very convenient political instrument to eliminate any opposition that might appear. Witchcraft is for us a psychological refuge in which all our ignorance finds its answers and our wildest fantasies become realities.

Contrary to what some might believe, the Christian religion, far from putting an end to witchcraft in Africa, has legitimized it. The existence of Satan is recognized by the Bible and the White Fathers, thus confirming the existence of sorcerers and other evil persons.

Sects, usually based on the magical power of the leader or prophet, are proliferating in Africa. In Benin, a particularly religious land that is the cra-

dle of Haitian and Brazilian voodoo, fifty-eight new sects were born between 1981 and 1986, bringing the total number of denominations in the country to ninety-two. In Kenya, there might be as many as 1,200 sects; in some rural districts, there are more churches than schools. Some prophets, their "temples" on the street, become affluent because of their ability to detect bad spirits. Others can protect against disease. Still others can help you protect your job and enhance your income.

An example I particularly like is that of Kombo, a transporter with a fleet of trucks serving the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. Kombo believes that to

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European precautions – the regular maintenance of vehicles – it is necessary to add African precautions. What do these include? Well, his witch doctor gives him some porcupine-fish powder that he pours into his tires in order to prevent punctures. Why, you might ask? Because, when attacked, this thorny fish has the ability to inflate until it doubles in volume. The powder of this fish is therefore perfect for maintaining tire pressure.

Sorcery also extends to government. Witch doctors surround African presidents, and nothing that really matters in politics occurs without recourse to

witchcraft. Occult counselors, responsible for assuring that authorities keep their power by detecting and neutralizing possible opponents, have power that the most influential Western advisers would envy. The witch doctors often amass fortunes, and they sometimes end up with official designations, enjoying the direct exercise of power.

Football, the opiate of Africans, competes with politics with respect to sorcery. The story made the rounds that the Elephants of Abidjan lost their match against Egypt for the African Cup because the captain of the team lost a magic charm on the field a little before half time. The entire team searched for it in vain. Everyone believed that the Egyptians had found it and had made it disappear. Thanks to this deceit, they won the match, two goals to one.

The fact that Africa is not alone in celebrating irrationalism at the outset of the twenty-first century does not excuse our propensity to delegate to sorcerers and witch doctors the responsibility for solving our problems. Jean-Francois Revel has asked, "Might man be an intelligent being that intelligence does not guide?"⁸ In my view, the African is the intelligent being that uses his intelligence least – so long as he is happy to live life as it comes. In an Africa that refuses to link knowledge and activity, our authentic cultural identity is operating when we say, as Revel notes, "Give us development in the form of subsidies, so as to spare us the effort of establishing an efficient relationship with reality."⁹ That same culture lies behind our claim to the right to inefficiency in production, the right to corruption, and the right to disrespect basic human rights.

What Africans are doing to one another defies credulity. Genocide, bloody civil wars, and rampant violent crime suggest that African societies at all social levels are to some extent cannibalistic. Those who write laws and those who are responsible for enforcing them are those who trample on them.

Thus, in almost all African countries, the day after gaining independence, in-

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vestment codes designed to attract foreign investment were promulgated. Yet affluent Africans jostle each other at the counters of Swiss, French, Belgian, and English banks, giving the impression that they have no confidence in themselves, in their country, or in what they produce. They appear to destroy with their own hands what they have built.

The truth quickly becomes apparent. Seen from the inside, African societies are like a football team in which, as a result of personal rivalries and a lack of team spirit, one player will not pass the ball to another out of fear that the latter might score a goal. How can we hope for victory? In our republics, people outside of the ethnic "cement" (which is actually quite porous when one takes a closer look at it) have so little identification with one another that the mere existence of the state is a miracle – a miracle in

part explained by the desire for personal gain. There is rarely any vision of a better future for all. At the same time, initiative and dynamism are condemned as signs of personal enrichment. The sorcerer wants equality in misery. There are numerous cases in which someone who has built a house has been told not to reside in it; others who have begun construction have been told to stop the work if they value their lives.

Was African totalitarianism born with independence? Of course not! It was already there, inscribed in the foundations of our tribal cultures. Authoritarianism permeates our families, our villages, our schools, our churches. It is for us a way of life.

Thus, faced with such a powerful, immovable culture, what can we do to change Africa's destiny? We are condemned either to change or to perish.

CULTURE AND CHANGE

Our first objective is to preserve African culture, one of the most – if not the most – humanistic cultures in existence. But it must be regenerated through a process initiated from the inside that would allow Africans to remain themselves while being of their time. We must keep these humanistic values – the solidarity beyond age classification and social status; social interaction; the love of neighbor, whatever the color of his skin; the defense of the environment, and so many others. We must, however, destroy all within us that is opposed to our mastery of our future, a future that must be prosperous and just, a future in which the people of Africa determine their own destiny through participation in the political process.

In doing so, we must be mindful that culture is the mother and that institutions are the children. More efficient and just African institutions depend on modifications to our culture.

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The Four Revolutions We Must Lead

We need to undertake peaceful cultural revolutions in four sectors: education, politics, economics, and social life.

Education. The traditional education of the African child prepares boys and girls for integration into their tribal community. To the child are transmitted not only the habits customary for his or her age and sex, but all the values and beliefs that are the cultural foundation of the group to which he or she belongs. In a system in which education is perceived above all as an instrument of socialization, the traditional African child is educated by the entire community. The problem is that this system offers few incentives for children to improve themselves, to innovate, or to do better than their parents.

How then can we reform educational systems so strongly handicapped by both a conservative culture and a lack of infrastructure and pedagogical fa-

cilities? (It is, for example, not unusual for there to be 125 students in a single classroom.) Very simply, by asserting the absolute preeminence of education, by suppressing the construction of religious structures and other palaces to the detriment of schools, and by modifying the content of the curricula, accenting not only science but especially the necessary changes of the African society. This means critical thinking, affirmation of the need for sub-regional and continental unity, rational development of manual as well as intellectual methods of work, and, in general, the qualities that engender progress: imagination, dissent, creativity, professionalism and competence, a sense of responsibility and duty, love for a job well done.

The African school should henceforth mold future businesspeople, and therefore job creators, not just degree recipients who expect to be offered sinecures. From the time the child is in elementary school, the young African will have to be awakened to time management, not only in terms of production but especially in terms of maintenance of infrastructure and equipment. The teaching of technological maintenance is surely more important than courses on the role of the one-party system in national integration and on the infallibility of the "Father of the Nation."

But change must not stop there. The role of the African woman – the abused backbone of our societies – in society must also be transformed. Women do not have access to bank accounts, credit, or property. They are not allowed to speak. They produce much of our food, yet they have little access to agricultural training, credit, technical assistance, and so on.

In Africa as elsewhere, the emancipation of women is the best gauge of the political and social progress of a society. Without an African woman who is free and responsible, the African man will be unable to stand on his own.

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Politics. Once education has been reformed, African political systems will change virtually by themselves. A new type of citizenship will emerge, one that gives more room to the individual, his worth as a social actor, his ability to adapt to his institutional environment, and the demands that progress puts on his community. African nations need to extend the pluralism that already exists in the diversity of their peoples to the political arena. They must cultivate tolerance and emphasize merit. Regional integration must replace nationalism.

Economics. To revolutionize our economic culture, we must understand that instead of depending on a world market that we are virtually excluded from, we must first establish integrated markets among ourselves. We must accept profit as the engine of development. We must recognize the indispensable role of individual initiative and the inalienable right of the individual to enjoy the fruits of his labor. We must understand that there can be no real or lasting economic growth without full employment. The entire African population must be put to work. It is impossible for anyone to be both unemployed and a good citizen, especially in countries with no social safety net.

Social Life. African civil society will not emerge without qualitative changes in behavior, first in the relationships among Africans and then with

respect to behavior toward foreigners, to whom we generally feel inferior. We must have more self-confidence, more trust in one another, and a commitment to a progress that benefits all. We need more rigor and a systematic approach to the elaboration of strategies – and the implementation of decisions taken – whatever the costs.

CONCLUSION

We are now at a crossroads. The persistence and destructiveness of the economic and political crises that have stricken Africa make it necessary for us to act without delay. We must go to the heart of our morals and customs in order to eradicate the layer of mud that prevents our societies from moving into modernism. We must lead this revolution of minds – without which there can be no transfer of technology – on our own. We must place our bets on our intelligence because Africans, if they have capable leaders, are fully able to distance themselves from the jealousy, the blind submission to the irrational, the lethargy that have been their undoing. If Europe, that fragment of earth representing a tiny part of humanity, has been able to impose itself on the planet, dominating it and organizing it for its exclusive profit, it is only because it developed a conquering culture of rigor and work, removed from the influence of invisible forces. We must do the same.

https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-iZKKC2b1CW7Dr-yI/2000-etounga_djvu.txt

Sir, Sons and Daughters of Afrika! Mr. Speaker as already informed you that we had hoped that this inaugural Convention of the Africanists would be opened by Dr. Kamuzu Hastings Banda, failing which, by Mr. Kenneth Kaunda of the Zambia African National Congress in Northern Rhodesia. Both have been unable to attend our convention, for both are now, in the language of the colonialists, "detained" in some concentration camps because they dared to demand the right of self determination for the indigenous African people of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. The honourable task of opening this conference has,

therefore, fallen to me, an Africanist, and I wish to thank the Central Committee for the honour.

I am particularly grateful for the opportunity this offers me to treat briefly of certain issues relevant to our struggle which, though adequately treated in the documents that will be considered by this Convention, require to be presented to such a gathering. I hope, then, Mr. Speaker, in the course of my address, to answer broadly questions pertaining to our stand in contemporary international politics, our relation to the states of Afrika, both independent and dependent, our attitude to the entire nationalist movement in Afrika, our stand on the question of Race in general and the so-called racial question in South Africa. Finally, I hope to outline briefly our ultimate objectives.

INTERNATIONAL SCENE

We are living today. Sons and Daughters of the Soil, fighters in the cause of African freedom, we are living today in an era that is pregnant with untold possibilities for both good and evil. In the course of the past two years we have seen man breaking assunder, with dramatic suddenness, the chains that have bound his mind, solving problems which for ages it has been regarded as sacrilege even to attempt to solve. However, in spite of all these rapid advances in the material and physical world, man appears to be either unwilling or unable to solve the problem of social relations between man and man. Because of this failure on the part of man, we see the world split today into two large hostile blocks, the so-called Capitalist and Socialist blocks represented by the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union respectively. These two blocks are engaged in terrible competition, use tough language and tactics, employ brinkmanship stunts which have the whole world heading for a nervous breakdown. They each are armed with terrible weapons of destruction and continue to spend millions of pounds in the production of more and more of these weapons. In spite of all the diplomatic talk of co-existence, these blocks each behave as though they did not believe that co-existence was possible.

AFRIKA'S POSITION

The question then arises, where does Afrika fit into this picture and where, particularly, do we African nationalists, we Africanists in South Afrika, fit in? There is no doubt that with the liquidation of Western imperialism and colonialism in Asia, the Capitalist market has shrunk considerably. As a result, Afrika has become the happy-hunting ground of adventuristic capital. There is again a scramble for Afrika and both the Soviet Union and the United States of America are trying to win the loyalty of the African States. Afrika is being wooed with more ardour than she has ever been.

There is a lot of flirting going on, of course, some Africans [are] flirting with the Soviet camp, and others with the American camp. In some cases the courtship has reached a stage where the parties are going out together; and they probably hold hands in the dark

but nowhere has it yet reached a stage where the parties can kiss in public without blushing. This wooing occurs at a time when the whole continent of Afrika is in labour, suffering the pangs of a new birth and everybody is looking anxiously and expectantly towards Afrika to see, as our people so aptly put it ukuthi iyozala nkomoni (what creature will come forth). We are being wooed internationally at a time when in South Africa the naked forces of savage Herrenvolkism are running riot; when a determined effort is being made to annihilate the African people through systematic starvation; at a time when brutal attempts are being made to retard, dwarf and stunt the mental development of a whole people through organised "miseducation"; at a time when thousands of our people roam the streets in search of work and are being told by the foreign ruler to go back to a "home" which he has assigned them, whether that means the breakup of their families or not; at a time when the distinctive badge of slavery and humiliation, the "dom pass" is being extended from the African male dog to the African female bitch.

It is at this time, when fascist tyranny has reached its zenith in South Afrika, that Afrika's loyalty is being competed for. And the question is, what is our answer? Our answer, Mr. Speaker and children of the Soil, has been given by the African leaders of the continent. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah has repeatedly stated that in international affairs, Afrika wishes to pursue a policy of positive neutrality, allying herself to neither of the existing blocs but, in the words of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, remaining "independent in all things but neutral in none that affect the destiny of Afrika". Mr. Tom Mboya of Kenya has expressed himself more forthrightly, declaring that it is not the intention of African states to change one master (western imperialism) for another (Soviet hegemony).

We endorse the views of the African leaders on this point. But we must point out that we are not blind to the fact that the countries which pursue a policy of planned state economy have outstripped, in industrial development, those that follow the path of private enterprise. Today, China is industrially far ahead of India. Unfortunately, however, this rapid industrial development has been accompanied in all cases by a rigid totalitarianism notwithstanding Mao Tse Tung's "Hundred Flowers" announcement. Africanists reject totalitarianism in any form and accept political democracy as understood in the west. We also reject the economic exploitation of the many for the benefit of a few. We accept as policy the equitable distribution of wealth aiming, as far as I am concerned, to equality of income which to me is the only basis on which the slogan of "equal opportunities" can be founded. Borrowing then the best from the East and the best from the West we nonetheless retain and maintain our distinctive personality and refuse to be the satraps or stooges of either power block.

RELATION TO STATES IN AFRIKA

Our relation to the States in Afrika may be stated precisely and briefly by quoting from George Padmore's book, 'Pan Africanism or Communism'. Discussing the future of Afrika,

Padmore observes that "there is a growing feeling among politically conscious Africans throughout the continent that their destiny is one, that what happens in one part of Afrika to Africans must affect Africans living in other parts". We honour Ghana as the first independent state in modern Afrika which, under the courageous nationalist leadership of Dr. Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party, has actively interested itself in the liberation of the whole continent from White domination, and has held out the vision of a democratic United States of Afrika. We regard it as the sacred duty of every African state to strive ceaselessly and energetically for the creation of a United States of Afrika, stretching from Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar. The days of small, independent countries are gone. Today we have, on the one hand, great powerful countries of the world; America and Russia cover huge tracts of land territorially and number hundreds of millions in population. On the other hand the small weak independent countries of Europe are beginning to realise that for their own survival they have to form military and economic federations, hence NATO and the European market. Beside the sense of a common historical fate that we share with the other countries of Afrika, it is imperative, for purely practical reasons that the whole of Afrika be united into a single unit, centrally controlled. Only in that way can we solve the immense problems that face the continent people.

NATIONAL MOVEMENTS IN AFRIKA

It is for the reasons stated above that we admire, bless and identify ourselves with the entire nationalist movements in Afrika. They are the core, the basic units, the individual cells of that large organism envisaged, namely, the United States of Afrika; a union of free, sovereign independent democratic states of Afrika. For the lasting peace of Afrika and the solution of the economic, social and political problems of the continent, there needs be a democratic principle. This means that White supremacy, under whatever guise it manifests itself, must be destroyed. And that is what the nationalists on the continent are setting out to do. They all are agreed that the African majority must rule. In the African context, it is the overwhelming African majority that will mould and shape the content of democracy. Allow me to quote Dr. DuBois, the father of Pan Africanism: "Most men in the world", writes Dubois, "are coloured. A belief in humanity means a belief in coloured men. The future of the world will, in all reasonable possibility, be what coloured men make it". As for the world, so for Afrika. The future of Africa will be what Africans make it.

THE RACE QUESTION

And now for the thorny questions of race. I do not wish to give a lengthy and learned dissertation on Race. Suffice it to say that even those scientists who do recognise the existence of separate races, have to admit that there are border line cases which will not fit into any of the three Races of mankind. All scientists agree that all men can trace their ancestry back to the first Homo Sapiens, that man is distinguished from other mammals and also from earlier types of man by the nature of his intelligence.

The structure of the body of man provides evidence to prove the biological unity of the human species. All scientists agree that there is no "race" that is superior to another, and there is no "race" that is inferior to others. The Africanists take the view that there is only one race to which we all belong, and that is the human race. In our vocabulary therefore, the word 'race' as applied to man, has no plural form. We do, however, admit the existence of observable physical differences between various groups of people, but these differences are the result of a number of factors, chief among which has been geographical isolation.

In Afrika the myth of race has been propounded and propagated by the imperialists and colonialists from Europe, in order to facilitate and justify their inhuman exploitation of the indigenous people of the land. It is from this myth of race with its attendant claims of cultural superiority that the doctrine of white supremacy stems. Thus it is that an ex-engine driver can think of himself as fully qualified to be the head of the government of an African state, but refuse to believe that a highly educated black doctor, more familiar with Western culture than the White premier is, cannot even run a municipal council. I do not wish to belabour this point. Time is precious.

Let me close discussion of this topic by declaring, on behalf of the Africanists, that with UNESCO we hold that "every man is his brother's keeper. For every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main, because he is involved in mankind".

IN SOUTH AFRIKA

In South Africa we recognise the existence of national groups, which are the result of geographical origin within a certain area as well as a shared historical experience of these groups. The Europeans are a foreign minority group, which has exclusive control of political, economic, social and military power. It is the dominant group. It is the exploiting group, responsible for the pernicious doctrine of White Supremacy, which has resulted in the humiliation, and degradation of the indigenous African people. It is this group which has dispossessed the African people of their land and with arrogant conceit has set itself up as the "guardians", the "trustees" of the Africans. It is this group which conceives of the African people as a child nation, composed of Boys and Girls, ranging in age from 120 years to one day. It is this group which, after 300 years, can still state with brazen effrontery that the Native, the Bantu, the Kaffir is still backward and savage etc. But they still want to remain "guardians", "trustees", and what have you, of the African

In short, it is this group which has mismanaged affairs in South Africa just as their kith and kin are mismanaging affairs in Europe. It is from this group that the most rabid race baiters and agitators come. It is members of this group who, whenever they meet in their Parliament, say things, which agitate the hearts of millions of peace-loving Africans. This is the group, which turns out thousands of experts on that new South African Science the Native mind.

Then there is the Indian foreign minority group. This group came to this country not as imperialists or colonialists, but as indentured labourers. In the South African set-up of today, this group is an oppressed minority. But there are some members of this group, the merchant class in particular, who have become tainted with the virus of cultural supremacy and national arrogance. This class identifies itself by and large with the oppressor but, significantly, this is the group, which provides the political leadership of the Indian people in South Africa. And all that the politics of this class have meant up to now is preservation and defence of the sectional interests of the Indian merchant class. The down-trodden, poor "stinking coolies" of Natal who, alone, as a result of the pressure of material conditions, can identify themselves with the indigenous African majority in the struggle to overthrow White supremacy, have not yet produced their leadership. We hope they will do so soon.

The Africans constitute the indigenous group and form the majority of the population. They are the most ruthlessly exploited and are subjected to humiliation, degradation and insult. Now it is our contention that true democracy can be established in South Africa and on the continent as a whole, only when White supremacy has been destroyed. And the illiterate and semi-literate African masses constitute the key and centre and content of any struggle for true democracy in South Africa. And the African people can be organised only under the banner of African nationalism in an All-African Organisation where they will by themselves formulate policies and programmes and decide on the methods of struggle without interference from either so-called left-wing or right-wing groups of the minorities who arrogantly appropriate to themselves the right to plan and think for the Africans.

We wish to emphasise that the freedom of the African means the freedom of all in South Africa, the European included, because only the African can guarantee the establishment of a genuine democracy in which all men will be citizens of a common state and will live and be governed as individuals and not as distinctive sectional groups.

OUR ULTIMATE GOALS

In conclusion, I wish to state that the Africanists do not at all subscribe to the fashionable doctrine of South African exceptionalism. Our contention is that South Africa is an integral part of the indivisible whole that is Afrika. She cannot solve her problems in isolation from and with utter disregard of the rest of the continent. It is precisely for that reason that we reject both apartheid and so-called multi-racialism as solutions of our socio-economic problems.

Apart from the number of reasons and arguments that can be advanced against apartheid, we take our stand on the principle that Afrika is one and desires to be one and nobody, I repeat, nobody has the right to balkanise our land.

Against multi-racialism we have this objection, that the history of South Africa has fostered group prejudices and antagonisms, and if we have to maintain the same group exclusiveness, parading under the term of multi-racialism, we shall be transporting to the new Afrika these very antagonisms and conflicts. Further, multi-racialism is in fact a pandering to European bigotry and arrogance. It is a method of safeguarding white interests, implying as it does, proportional representation irrespective of population figures. In that sense it is a complete negation of democracy.

To us the term "multi-racialism" implies that there are such basic insuperable differences between the various national groups here that the best course is to keep them permanently distinctive in a kind of democratic apartheid. That to us is racialism multiplied, which probably is what the term truly connotes. We aim, politically, at government of the Africans by the Africans, for the Africans, with everybody who owes his only loyalty to Afrika and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority being regarded as an African.

We guarantee no minority rights, because we think in terms of individuals, not groups. Economically we aim at the rapid extension of industrial development in order to alleviate pressure on the land, which is what progress means in terms of modern society. We stand committed to a policy guaranteeing the most equitable distribution of wealth. Socially we aim at the full development of the human personality and a ruthless uprooting and outlawing of all forms or manifestations of the racial myth.

To sum it up we stand for an Africanist Socialist Democracy. Here is a tree rooted in African soil, nourished with waters from the rivers of Afrika. Come and sit under its shade and become, with us, the leaves of the same branch and the branches of the same tree. Sons and Daughters of Afrika, I declare this inaugural convention of the Africanists open.

<https://sahistory.org.za/archive/robert-sobukwe-inaugural-speech-april-1959>

The libertarian position

The libertarian position emphasizes individual liberty, limited government, and free-market principles, advocating for personal responsibility and minimal state intervention in both personal and economic matters.

Core Principles of Libertarianism

1. **Individual Liberty:** At the heart of libertarianism is the belief that individuals have the right to make choices about their own lives, as long as those choices do not infringe on the rights of others. This principle extends to personal rel

ationships, lifestyle choices, and the use of substances, with a strong emphasis on civil liberties.

[2](#)

2. **Limited Government:** Libertarians advocate for a minimal state that exists primarily to protect individual rights. They argue that government intervention often leads to inefficiencies and infringements on personal freedoms. This includes calls for reducing the size and scope of government, lowering taxes, and eliminating unnecessary regulations.

[2](#)

3. **Free Markets:** Economic freedom is a cornerstone of libertarian thought. Libertarians believe that free markets drive prosperity and innovation, allowing individuals to engage in voluntary exchanges that benefit all parties involved. They oppose excessive regulation and advocate for a laissez-faire approach to economic policy.

[2](#)

4. **Non-Interventionist Foreign Policy:** Libertarians typically support a foreign policy that avoids military intervention and promotes diplomacy. They believe that non-interventionism is essential for maintaining peace and respecting the sovereignty of other nations.

[1](#)

5. **Social Issues:** On social issues, libertarians often align with more liberal positions, advocating for drug legalization, criminal justice reform, and the right to same-sex marriage. They argue that personal relationships and choices should not be regulated by the government.

Conclusion

The libertarian position is characterized by a commitment to personal freedom and responsibility, advocating for a society where individuals can pursue their own paths without undue interference from the government. This philosophy seeks to create a vibrant and diverse society driven by voluntary cooperation and free-market principles, ultimately aiming for a world where liberty is the guiding value in both personal and political realms.

<https://www.libertarianism.org/what-is-a-libertarian>

Philip Copeman's Satirical writing style

Philip Copemans satirical writing style :

Write a short post in my style to my readers explaining to them my logic and how they can use this prompting method to help their own writing.

How I write.

A satirical tone with a mix of rich complex sentences, colored with figures of speech, and short punchy phrases that act as punctuation. Even in a short post I try to get in exposition, inciting incident and rising action, climax, falling action and denouement, and at least have some components.

A lick of Shakespeare, Kipling or Hardy is good, Reversals and tailstings are a bonus.

In sonata style it is exposition, development and recapitulation. I like to use two metaphorical themes which can be extended metaphors that mix and turn back on each other.

Exposition to catch the readers attention can be dark even bitter, but the finish must be positive

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<https://www.libertarianism.org/what-is-a-libertarian>

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