

The Democratic Project and the Human Condition across the African Continent

Abdul Karim Bangura

Oh Almighty Allah/God (SWT), please give us more Afrikan leaders with a mandate higher than the ballot box and can see beyond being big fishes in their little ponds/fiefdoms.

Abdul Karim Bangura, *Prayer for Africa*, January 01, 2013

Introduction

When I received the invitation to give this lecture on “The Democratic Project and the Human Condition across the African Continent,” I engaged in an extensive search for literature on the subject through the Internet, libraries and archives. My search yielded no work on the nexus between the two concepts/variables, albeit there are works that have dealt with each of them individually.

During an E-mail communication between Professor Adebayo Ninalowo and I, he made the poignant point that any work dealing with this important topic must incorporate “statistical indices as well as correlational matrices that go beyond the conventional historical and theoretical analytical penchant, albeit of epistemological values.” He noted that “the notion of human condition has also rightly been construed as synonymous with human-centered development.” He added that “by the same token, the State qua State is universally historically mandated to provide instrumentalities for the amelioration of the human condition, irrespective of geographical boundaries. Also the democratic culture, properly speaking, is supposed to invariably facilitate improvements in the human condition, as broadly conceived” (E-mail communication, February 19, 2013).

Thus, the major research question that emerges is the following: Is there a correlation between the democratic project and the human condition across the African continent? The ancillary hypothesis therefore is that H_1 : The stronger the democratic project across Africa, the stronger the human condition in the continent and vice versa. The testing of this hypothesis inevitably calls for a correlational statistical analysis (more on this later).

A corollary research question that emerges is this: What type of democratic state will best serve the African continent? Here, I suggest a hybrid of a Union of African States (UAS) based on the analyses of major African thinkers.

Consequently, the rest of this essay is divided into four major sections. The first section is on the research methodology and definitions of major concepts. The second section entails the operationalizations of the variables and data collection. The third section discusses the results from the statistical analysis at both the univariate (one variable at a time) and bivariate (two variables at a time) levels. The fourth section examines the need for and

type of a UAS, and how, as Professor Tunde Babawale inquired during another E-mail communication between us, “African states can make a transition from their present positions to the status of democratic developmental states” (E-mail communication, February 19, 2013). In the end, a conclusion is drawn based on the findings.

Research Methodology and Definitions of Major Concepts

The primary research methodology employed in this paper is quantitative, albeit not devoid of qualitative discourse where necessary. As stated earlier, both univariate and bivariate statistical methods are used.

At the univariate level, two types of descriptive statistical techniques—(1) measures of central tendency and (2) measures of dispersion—are utilized. The measures of central tendency used are the mean and the median. The mean is the arithmetic average of a set of scores; the median is the point in a distribution of scores that is exactly at half way above and below those scores. The measures of dispersion include the range and standard deviation. The range is the distance between the highest and lowest scores in a distribution, and the standard deviation is the square root of the squared deviations of the scores around the mean divided by the number of scores.

At the bivariate level, two types of associational statistical techniques—(1) Correlation and (2) scatter plot—are employed. Correlation is a measure of the association between two variables; more specifically, it shows the extent to which two variables vary together in a given population. Scatter plot is a graphic display instrument that depicts the relationship between two variables. The scatter plot is important because a maxim that is often repeated by research methodologists is that “Correlation does not imply causation.” Put differently, a correlation may show that a co-relationship exists, but it does not and cannot prove that one variable is causing the other. There could be a third factor involved which is causing both, some other systemic cause, or the apparent co-relationship could just be a fluke. Thus, the scatter plot can provide a clue that two variables might actually be related and, if so, how they move together.

The two major concepts in this paper are *democracy* and *human condition*. Both concepts have received a great deal of scholarly attention over the years. In the rest of this section, I present the general definitions and the competing theoretical postulates on the concepts as they pertain to Africa.

Democracy

The word *democracy* is used to describe at least three different political systems. One way the concept is employed is to describe regimes that come as close as possible to the Aristotelian notion of the “rule of the many.” In this case, a political system is said to be democratic if all, or most, of its citizens participate directly by either holding office or making policy. The New England town meeting comes as close as possible of this notion. In such a meeting, adults in a community gather once or twice a year to vote directly on major issues and expenditures.

The second way the concept democracy is used is to describe a system which is said to serve the “true interests” of citizens, whether or not they directly affect the making of those decisions. A number of totalitarian regimes, such as those in the Soviet block, Chinese, Cuban, some Asian, some Latin American and certain European governments, used this concept. The Soviet Union, for example, used to claim that it operated on the principle of “democratic centralism” whereby the true interests of the masses are discovered through discussions within the Communist party and then decisions are made under central leadership to serve those interests.

The third way the concept democracy is utilized is to describe the principle of governance of most countries (for example, the United States) that are referred to as democratic. This concept is most concisely stated by Joseph Schumpeter as follows: “The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals [i.e. leaders] acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (1950:269). Whenever the word *democracy* is used in this essay, it has the meaning assigned to it by Schumpeter.

In the case of Africa, as Rita Kiki Edozie informs us, three major schools of thought have competed over time in the discussion of the democracy project in the continent. The first school is liberalism, which encompasses theorists who proffer the Western traditional, patrimonial, neo-patrimonial, Afro-pessimist and good governance paradigms. Generally, these theorists propound the philosophical doctrine that democracy is the key to protecting the rights of the individual to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness (Edozie, 2009:23). The second school, socialism, entails theorists who advocate Marxist, Rousseauian, populist and participatory democratic paradigms. These theorists are concerned more explicitly with equality and social justice. They see the state as the engine to redistribute resources via public ownership and extensive welfare (Edozie, 2009:28). The third school is African culturalism, which houses theorists who propound Africanist, Afrocentricity, and neo-traditionalist paradigms. For these theorists, the idea of democracy was always embedded in African culture, as indigenous democracy was based on the palaver premise of dialogue through which one has the right to take the floor and express his opinion on matters dealing with the community. They therefore call for a return to traditional African culture (Edozie, 2009:30).

But citing the many limitations of the preceding theories in explaining the democracy project in Africa (the interested can read Edozie’s book, since the limitations are numerous), Edozie offers a fourth alternative, which is post-colonialism that includes theorists who suggest the third wave and African Renaissance paradigms. According to these theorists, including Edozie, in order to transcend “the simplistic linear behavioral assumptions or a unidirectional nativist, African essentialism” of the aforementioned theories, post-colonialist theory presents “a counter-narrative of modern democratic politics in Africa [in ways] that re-imagines the continent along the lines of post-colonialism” (Edozie, 2009:xv-xvi). This approach, Edozie asserts, “allows for new strategies of understanding Africans at the local and national levels whilst not losing sight of the disempowering effects of contemporary imperial global practices” (2009:xvi).

Nonetheless, sometimes, whether by the use of force or delaying tactics, most incumbent regimes in Africa have managed to prevent movement towards democratization. In some cases, even when elections are held, existing political elites sometimes remain in power,

where the military has played an important role for their continuity. For example, Laurent Gbagbo refused to step down as President for several months after losing the election to Alassane Ouattara in Côte d'Ivoire. In Kenya, the opposition Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) fragmented fatally, allowing Daniel Toroitich arap Moi's ruling party to win several highly contested elections (Haynes, 1993:535-39). In Ethiopia, in another highly contested and opaque election, Meles Zenawie and his party won the coveted seat. Hundreds of students who protested were gunned down in the street, journalists were detained, and a curfew was decreed to prevent social movements from gaining momentum. Even when a discredited regime is replaced by election, the successor normally does not find it a simple task to put in place the necessary economic reforms to better the country. In Zambia, Fredrick Chiluba found it hard to control corruption and reform the economy. Mostly, citizens who are eager to see changes are quickly disappointed because change is not available or it is delayed (Haynes, 1993:535-39). The point is to emphasize the fact that the establishment of democracy is by no means a panacea for all socio-economic ills. This brings back a previous point: that is, sustainable government that is able to spur economic, political and social progress should be built upon strong institutions that support accountability and governmental legitimacy in order to see long-lasting change.

Whether multiparty democracy is a luxury to be enjoyed only by the wealthy nations or a precondition everywhere for sustained economic progress is a different issue that remains still unsettled. Nonetheless, there is a tenacious link between open democratic forms of government and good economic performance. Whatever the truth may be, today most students of development seem to agree that the effective participation of the general population in the formation and implementation of public policies is essential for successful development. The breakdown of the structural adjustment program (SAP) is attributable, at least in part, to the failure to build popular consensus in support for the measures (Landell-Mills, 1992:543-67).

Indeed, as Kelechi Kalu agrees, there is clearly a need for a constitutional democratic framework for governments in sub-Saharan African countries. But he also argues that such a system of government will not succeed in the context of declining investment in socio-economic infrastructures. Thus, he insists that the objective of a viable constitutionally-based government must not be to further fragment the different but yet similarly situated social formations in Africa; instead, it should strive to unify them in the context of a just governance structure within which strength in diversity and unity in collective action are promoted (2001:54).

Human Condition

Jeremy Griffith has provided the most comprehensive definition for the human condition as follows:

The truth is the human condition is the agonising, underlying, core, *real* question in all of human life, of are humans good or are we possibly the terrible mistake that all the evidence seems to unequivocally indicate we might be? While it's undeniable that humans are capable of great love, we also have an unspeakable history of brutality, rape, torture, murder and war. Despite all our marvellous accomplishments, we

humans have been the most ferocious and destructive force that has ever lived on Earth—and the eternal question has been ‘why?’ Even in our everyday behaviour, why have we humans been so competitive, selfish and aggressive when clearly the ideals of life are to be the complete opposite, namely cooperative, selfless and loving? In fact, why are we so ruthlessly competitive, selfish and brutal that human life has become all but unbearable and we have nearly destroyed our own planet?! (Griffith, 2001).

At least four theories can be discerned from the literature dealing with the human condition which I have dubbed as (1) the Purposive Theory, (2) the Thought Process Theory, (3) the Human Capacity Theory, and the (4) the Four “Givens” Theory. The Purposive Theory is represented in Alasdair MacIntyre’s postulate that because humans are curious, they search for purpose and thrive on new information (2001:60). The Thought Process Theory is evident in John McDowell’s proposition that humans possess high-level thought processes such as self-awareness, rationality and sapience that define their personhood (1994:115). The Human Capacity Theory can be delineated from MacIntyre’s premise that humans have the capacity for both “good” and “evil” (2001:60). And the Four “Givens” Theory is manifest in Irvin Yalom’s proposition that the four ultimate concerns of human existence are (1) death, (2) freedom, (3) isolation, and (4) meaninglessness (cited in Hoffman, 2009).

As it pertains to Africa, Joe Kapolyo (2005 & 2010) proffers seven core values that he believes undergird the human condition. The first core value is *religion*, which Kapolyo thinks is probably misapplied to Africa south of the Sahara; while there are words for “praising God,” “serving God,” and “thanking God,” there is no word for “religion.” The second core value, which derives from the first, is the growth of varieties of spiritual activities. The third core value is commitment to the group; for the African, isolationism is unimaginable. The fourth core value is to *eat*, implying that in every situation it is one’s duty to exploit the circumstances to his/her personal (and by extension his/her extended family) advantage. The fifth core value is belief in the *afterlife*; part of the human condition is not only to long for but to seek for life after life. The sixth core value is the African concept of *time*, which has two basic dimensions: (1) the past and (2) the present. The future is only important because it will become the present and later on the past. The seventh core value is the *social definitions of truth*. Unlike Western philosophy which has, since the Enlightenment, conceptualized truth in absolute terms, the African definition of truth is not divorced from metaphysical ideas or notions. For the African, over against facts there are values based not on knowledge but on opinion and belief. So while on the one hand facts cannot be disputed, values on the other hand are a matter of preference and choice. These core values, according to Kapolyo, represent the African view of human nature within the context of traditional African perceptions.

Operationalizations of the Variables and Data Collection

This section describes how each of the two variables is measured and its data source. The variables are discussed individually for the sake of clarity.

1. *Democracy*—The 2011 Democracy Index (DI) of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is employed in this essay as the measurement of democracy. The index is based on the view that measures of democracy that reflect the state of political freedoms and civil liberties are not thick enough. Put differently, these measures do not encompass sufficiently or at all some features that determine how substantive democracy is or its quality. At the same time, the EIU admits that even its thicker, more inclusive and wider, measure of democracy does not include other aspects—which some authors argue are also crucial components of democracy—such as levels of economic and social wellbeing. Thus, the EIU respects the dominant tradition that holds that a variety of social and economic outcomes can be consistent with political democracy (EIU, 2012).

The EIU's index provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide for 165 independent countries and two territories. This covers almost the entire population of the world and the vast majority of the world's 192 independent countries, excluding 27 microstates (EIU, 2012).

On a scale of 0 to 10, the EIU's index is based on the ratings for 60 indicators grouped into five categories: (1) electoral process and pluralism, (2) civil liberties, (3) the functioning of government, (4) political participation, and (5) political culture. Each category has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and the overall index of democracy is the simple average of the five category indices (EIU, 2012).

The category indices are based on the sum of the indicator scores in the category, converted to a scale of 0 to 10. Adjustments to the category scores are made for countries that do not score a 1 in the following critical areas for democracy: (a) whether national elections are free and fair, (b) the security of voters, (c) the influence of foreign powers on government, and (d) the capability of the civil service to implement policies (EIU, 2012).

If the scores for the first three categories are 0 (or 0.5), one point (0.5) is deducted from the index in the relevant category (either the electoral process and pluralism or the functioning of government). If the score for category 4 is 0, one point is deducted from the functioning-of-government category index (EIU, 2012).

The values of the index are used to place countries within one of four regime types: (1) full democracies—scores of 8 to 10, (2) flawed democracies—scores of 6 to 7.9, (3) hybrid regimes—scores of 4 to 5.9, and (4) authoritarian regimes—scores below 4. Threshold points for regime types hinge upon overall scores that are rounded to one decimal point (EIU, 2012).

The data for the EIU's index of democracy are collected from experts' assessments, public opinion surveys—the World Value Survey, Eurobarometer surveys, Gallup polls, Latin American Barometer, and national surveys. In the case of countries for which survey results are missing, survey results for similar countries and experts' assessments are used to fill the gap. Included are participation and voter turnout rates and the balance between the legislative and executive branches of government (EIU, 2012).

2. *Human Condition*—Since there exist no index titled Human Condition Index, the 2011 Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is used as a proxy, *development* being a synonym for *human condition*. The HDI represents a composite statistic of education, income, and life expectancy at birth indices used to rank countries into four tiers of human development: (1) very high—score of

between 0.800 and 1.0, (2) high—score of between 0.670 and 0.799, (3) medium—score of between 0.480 and 0.669, and (4) low—score of between 0.400 and 0.479. The purpose is to facilitate instructive comparisons of the experiences within and between different countries (UNDP, 2013).

The education component of the HDI is measured by mean years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and expected years of schooling for children of school entering age. Mean years of schooling are computed by using educational attainment data gleaned from census and surveys in the UNESCO Institute for Statistics database. Expected years of schooling, capped at 18 years, are based on enrolment by age at all levels of education and population of official school age for each level of education. The indicators are normalized by utilizing a minimum value of zero and maximum values set to the actual observed maximum values of mean years of schooling from countries in the time series, covering from 1980 to 2011. The education index represents the geometric mean of the two indices (UNDP, 2013).

For the income component, the yardstick for minimum income is set at US\$100 purchasing power parity (PPP) and the maximum is set at US\$107,721 PPP. Both of these indices are estimated for the same period—1980-2011. The decent standard of living component is measured by the gross national income (GNI) per capita (PPP) instead of the gross domestic product (GDP). The HDI utilizes the logarithmic income to reflect the diminishing importance of income with increasing GNI (UNDP, 2013).

The life expectancy at birth component is computed by using a minimum value of 20 years and maximum value of 83.4 years. These represent the observed maximum values of the indicators from the countries in the time series—1980-2011 (UNDP, 2013).

The scores for the three HDI dimension indices are then aggregated into a composite index by employing the geometric mean. The calculation of the HDI was changed from the “arithmetic” to the “geometric” mean in 2010. The meaning and reason for this change are well explicated by the UNDP as follows:

Unlike the old HDI, the new HDI based on the geometric mean takes into account differences in achievement across dimensions. Poor performance in any dimension is now directly reflected in the new HDI, which captures how well a country’s performance is across the three dimensions. That is to say, a low achievement in one dimension is not anymore linearly compensated for by high achievement in another dimension. The geometric mean reduces the level of substitutability between dimensions and at the same time ensures that a 1% decline in index of say life expectancy at birth has the same impact on the HDI as a 1% decline in education or income index. Thus, as a basis for comparisons of achievements, this method is also more respectful of the intrinsic differences across the dimensions than a simple average (UNDP, 2013).

Summary—Here, it behooves me to state the nature of the statistical data collected for this study and that of the preceding measurements. First, the DI was inaugurated in 2006 and reported again in 2008, 2010, and 2011. The HDI was developed in 1990, but the data have not been collected for each year. In fact, one cannot match both data sets for more than one year: 2011. Thus, only the data for that year for both indices, which are also the most recent,

are employed in this study. Also, the data on both indices are available for 41 of the 53 independent African countries.

Second, the measurements offer a useful snapshot of some perceptions of a country's quality of the variables, but various researchers have pointed out some problems in their constructions. These critics have claimed that users often fail to take into account or often are not aware of the indicators' limitations, which together can be summarized as follows: (a) lack of transparency, (b) not reproducible, (c) over complexity, (d) arbitrary, (e) absence of an underlying theory, (f) hidden biases, (g) lack of comparability, (h) lack of actionability, (i) overselling, and (j) no concept validity.

While these criticisms are valid, no alternative measures have been developed with which everyone agrees. So, we are left with imperfect but useful measures. Indeed, the indicators contribute to the growing empirical research of democracy and the human condition which have provided activists and reformers worldwide with advocacy tools for policy reform and monitoring. The indicators, and the underlying data behind them, are part of the current research and opinions that have reinforced the experiences and observations of reform-minded individuals in government, civil society, and the private sector that these variables are imperative for stability. Their growing recognition, as empirical evidence suggests, has stimulated demand for monitoring their quality across countries and within individual countries over time. Virtually all of the individual data sources underlying the aggregate indicators are, along with the aggregate indicators themselves, publicly available.

Furthermore, the indicators are a compilation of the perceptions of a very diverse group of respondents, collected in large numbers of surveys and other cross-country assessments. Some of these instruments capture the views of individuals, firms, and public officials in the countries being assessed. Others reflect the views of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and aid donors with considerable experience in the countries being assessed, while others are based on the assessments of commercial risk-taking agencies.

The Results

As stated earlier, the primary research methodology employed in this paper is quantitative, albeit not devoid of qualitative discourse where necessary. As also mentioned, both univariate and bivariate statistical techniques are used. The data were computed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). What follows is a discussion of the results generated after the data were computed.

Univariate

Before discussing the descriptive statistical results from the computations of the quantitative data collected for this study, I begin with a brief description of the data available for the 41 African countries listed in alphabetical order. As shown in Table 1, South Africa has the highest DI score (7.79) and Cameroon has the lowest DI score (1.17); Tunisia has the highest HDI score (.683) while Zimbabwe has the lowest HDI score (.140) for 2011.

Table 2 shows that the mean for DI is 4.1134 (out of a possible score of 10) and that for HDI is .41405 (out of a score of 1.0); the median for DI is 3.8200 and that for HDI is

.40200. Each of these scores is less than half of the possible scores for the indices. In essence, as a group, the African countries fall within the hybrid regimes DI category.

Also revealed in Table 2 is that the standard deviation for DI is 1.63083 and that for HDI is .123217; the range for DI is 6.62 and that for HDI is .543. Given the means and medians for these variables, it is safe to assert that the dispersions within these variables are significant. In short, there are significant differences among African countries on these indices.

Table 1: DI and HDI Scores by Country for 2011

Country	DI Score	HDI Score	Country	DI Score	HDI Score
Algeria	3.44	.677	Liberia	5.07	.300
Angola	3.32	.403	Madagascar	3.93	.435
Benin	6.06	.435	Malawi	5.84	.385
Botswana	7.63	.633	Mali	6.36	.309
Burkina Faso	3.59	.305	Morocco	3.83	.567
Cameroon	1.17	.460	Mozambique	4.90	.284
Central African Republic	1.82	.315	Niger	4.16	.261
Chad	1.62	.295	Nigeria	3.83	.423
Comoros	3.52	.428	Republic of the Congo	2.15	.489
Côte d'Ivoire	3.08	.397	Rwanda	3.25	.385
Democratic Republic of Congo	2.15	.239	Senegal	5.51	.411
Djibouti	2.68	.402	Sierra Leone	4.51	.317
Egypt	3.95	.620	South Africa	7.79	.597
Ethiopia	3.79	.328	Sudan	2.38	.379
Gabon	3.48	.648	Tanzania	5.64	.398
Gambia	3.38	.390	Togo	3.45	.428
Ghana	6.02	.467	Tunisia	5.53	.683
Guinea	2.79	.340	Uganda	5.13	.422
Guinea-Bissau	1.99	.289	Zambia	6.19	.395
Kenya	4.71	.470	Zimbabwe	2.68	.140
Lesotho	6.33	.427			

Source: Author-generated from data derived from the EIU and UNDP databases

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	DI	HDI
Mean	4.1134	.41405
Median	3.8300	.40200
Standard Deviation	1.63083	.123217
Range	6.62	.543

Source: Author-generated from data derived from the EIU and UNDP databases and computed using SPSS

Bivariate

In this section, I seek to provide an answer to the major research question in this essay mentioned in the introductory section: Is there a correlation between the democratic project and the human condition across the African continent? Table 3 shows that with a Pearson Correlation score of .320 and 2-tailed significance score of .041, there is positive and statistically significant correlation between DI and HDI at the .05 level. This is to be expected because as a group, the African countries are at the low ends of both indices.

Table 3: Correlation between DI and HDI

		DI	
HDI	Pearson Correlation	.320*	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.042

* = Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Source: Author-generated from data gleaned from the EIU and UNDP databases and computed using SPSS

Moreover, as can be seen in Figure 1, it is quite obvious that the co-relationship between the two variables is spurious: i.e. they have no direct causal connection. It is therefore wrong to infer that they do have a relationship that could be explained by either coincidence or the presence of a certain third, unseen factor commonly referred to by research methodologists as a “confounding factor” or “lurking variable.”

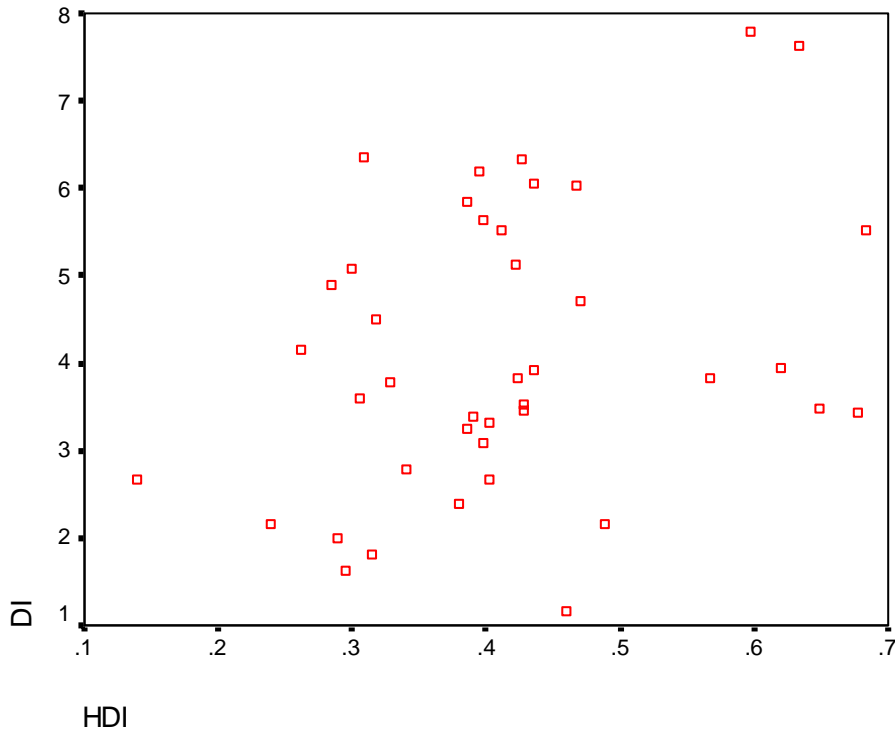


Figure 1: Scatter Plot of DI and HDI

Source: Author-generated from data gleaned from the EIU and UNDP databases and computed using SPSS

The Need for and Type of a Union of African States

Given the preceding findings, here, I attempt to offer an answer to the corollary research question in this study stated in the introductory section: What type of democratic state will best serve the African continent? As I have done elsewhere (Bangura, 2011 & 2012), before discussing any notion of the ideal UAS, it is imperative to begin with a definition of the concept of the state and the competing theories/paradigms on the state.

But first, the following sobering observation by Costa Hofisi, a doctoral student at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa, is a poignant point to begin the discussion, for it captures the nature of the problem of the African state:

Without being “pessimistic in diagnosis” and “optimistic in prescription,” the African state has failed to develop despite its declared commitment and preoccupation with development. The prospects of meeting the millennium development goals (MDGs)—one of which is poverty alleviation—get dim as the year 2015 draws near, consequently making the United Nations to summon an emergency summit. The number of poor in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to rise from 314 million in 2001 to 366 million in 2015 (Hofisi, 2008).

Given this grim assessment of the African state, which is a common theme among the

overwhelming majority of observers of the continent, it is therefore only appropriate to start with the problem of defining the term *state*, even if the reader may feel frightened at the thought of another definition of a clearly over-defined phenomenon. The intention, however, is not to suggest a *new* definition, but to stress an important point: i.e. there seems to be no *final* definition of *state*, only suggestions of what it should imply.

Consequently, the concept of *state* should be an open one which will continue to be redefined as our knowledge of the phenomenon increases and as new problems emerge to be solved by the state. The intellectual preoccupation with the phenomenon of the state, to give it a new content and to come up with suggestions about how to promote it, is therefore part of the research process in the social sciences. When definitions of *state* are talked about, the effort is geared toward research orientations or foci of interests. To avoid the concept altogether would create more havoc than it solves.

To begin with, while the term *state* often encompasses all institutions of government or rule, ancient and modern, the modern state system reflects many characteristics that were first consolidated in Western Europe beginning in the fifteenth century when the concept *state* also inherited its contemporary meaning. As a result, the term is often used strictly to refer to modern political systems.

In casual parlance, the words *country*, *nation*, and *state* are often used interchangeably. But more strictly, however, the terms can be denotatively distinguished as follows: (a) *country* refers to a geographical area; (b) *nation* refers to a people who share common customs, origins, and history, albeit the adjectives *national* and *international* also refer to matters dealing strictly with *states*, as in *national elections*, *international relations*; (c) *state* refers to a set of governing institutions with sovereignty over a definite territory.

In terms of its etymology, according to historian Douglas Harper (2007), the term *state* and its cognates in other European languages—*état* in French, *staat* in German, *stato* in Italian—were derived from the Latin word *status*, which means “condition” or “status.” And, as Quentin Skinner (1989) points out, the revival of the Roman law in fourteenth-century Europe saw the Latin term *status* employed to refer to the legal standing of persons such as various “estates of the realm” (noble, common, and clerical) and particularly the special status ascribed to the king. The term was also used to refer to certain Roman notions that date back to the days of Cicero (106–43 BC) dealing with the “condition of the republic” as in *status rei publicae*. Over time, the term continued to lose its reference to particular social groups and was applied to the legal order of the entire society with its enforcement apparatus.

Another rendering of the word *state* is that it originated from the medieval *state* or regal chair upon which the monarch or the head of state would sit. Metonymically, the term *state* became used to refer to both the head of state and the power entity s/he represented. The two frequently quoted references of these different meanings commonly attributed to King Louis XIV of France are (1) *L'État, c'est moi*, meaning “I am the State,” and (2) *Je m'en vais, mais l'État demeurera toujours*, meaning “I am going away, but the State will always remain.” One can find a similar association of terms being used in referring to government as having authority: for example, as a September 17, 2008 *Inter Press Service* news headline written by Najum Mushtaq reads, “Kenya Parliament May Soon Consider New Abortion Rights Law.”

Also, according to Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg (1982), the term *state* has both an empirical (*de facto*) and juridical (*de jure*) connotation. In the empirical sense, an entity

is a state if it is an organization that has a “monopoly of legitimate violence” over a specific territory, *à la* Max Weber (more on him and his ideas later). An often-cited example in Africa is the Somali region of Somaliland, which is an entity that imposes its own legal order over a territory even though it is not legally recognized as a state by the international community. In the juridical sense, an entity is a state in international law if it is recognized as such by the international community, even if it does not actually have a monopoly on the use of force over a territory. An example of this type of state in Africa is the Democratic Republic of Congo as it is right now.

Furthermore, the concept of the state has been distinguished by Norberto Bobbio (1989) from two related concepts with which it is oftentimes conflated. One is the notion of the state as a form of government or regime such as a democracy or dictatorship that identifies a single aspect of the state: i.e. the way the highest political offices are filled and their relationships to one another. It is absent of the other aspects of the state such as the effectiveness and efficiency of the bureaucracy that may be paramount to its everyday functioning. The other notion of the state is as a form of political system which refers to the instruments of political power.

Still, some scholars such as David Easton (1990) have argued that the concept *state* is too imprecise and loaded to be employed productively by political scientists and sociologists and, therefore, should be substituted by the more comprehensive term *political system*. And, according to Easton, a *political system* refers to a collectivity of all social structures that work together to yield binding decisions in a society. Connoting a broader concept, a *political system* would encompass the political regime, the political parties, and various other similar political bodies.

In light of the preceding discussion, it makes sense to now review and synthesize the many competing theories/paradigms that have been used to study the pre- and post-colonial African state in order to delineate their differences, similarities, and overlaps and to theoretically ground this essay. This treatise regards the state from a political standpoint only, not from the juristic—sociology, as I understand the concept, being both a philosophy of history and a theory of economics. Thus, at least a synopsis should be presented about the general nature of the political theories on the state, the relationship between the state, on the one hand, and factions and fractions, and the ruling class as a whole.

As Colin Flint and Peter Taylor (2007) point out, most political theories of the state can roughly be classified into two categories. The first category comprises the “liberal” or “conservative” theories, which treat capitalism as a given, and then focus on the function of states in capitalist society. These theories tend to see the state as a neutral entity separated from society and the economy. Robert Dahl and Francis Fukuyama are frequently identified with this school of thought. The second category is composed of Marxist theories which see politics as intimately connected with economic relations, and then emphasize the relation between economic and political power. They see the state as an instrument in the hands of the upper class to serve their own interests. Karl Marx (although he never developed a theory of the state, but he is said to have intended to do so eventually), Ralph Miliband, Nicos Poulantzas, Jürgen Habermas, Antonio Gramsci and Michael Foucault are frequently cited as belonging to this school of thought.

Two other prominent theories of the state are the state autonomy/institutionalist and the anarchist. The first theory postulates that the state is an entity that is somehow impervious to

external social and economic pressures, and has its own interests. Theda Skocpol and G. William Domhoff are prominently identified with this theory (Sklair, 2004). The second theory states that the state is undesirable, unnecessary, and harmful, and calls for the promotion of a stateless society, or anarchy. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Max Stirner, Peter Kropotkin, Emile Armand, Lawrence Jarach and John Zerzan are strongly identified with this theory.

The Eurocentric and Africentric theories/paradigms that have been employed to study the African state include the Structuralist, the Weberian, the Federalist, the Marxist/Instrumentalist, the Neo-Marxist/Neo-instrumentalist, the Anarchist, the Pluralist/Polyarchist, the Institutional/Neo-Weberian, the Developmentalist, the Human Rights, the African Socialist, the Social, and the *Fundi wa Afrika*. Since these theories/paradigms are numerous, for each one, only a brief description and one work that used it to study the African state are presented. Given the space constraints of this essay, no attempt is made here to rehash the charges and countercharges among these schools of thought. The interested reader can be better served by consulting the sources discussed in this section.

Proponents of the Structuralist perspective see the state as a political association with effective dominion over a territory. The entity usually includes the set of institutions that claim the authority to make rules used to govern the exercise of coercive violence for the people in that territory, and its status as a state often hinges upon being recognized by a number of other states as having internal and external sovereignty of the territory.

Earlier major scholarly works on Africa were dominated by the Structuralist perspective when examining the state. For example, Leslie Rubin and Brian Weinstein (1974) in their discussion of the organization of the contemporary African state, identify three characteristics. The first characteristic is that Europeans drew frontiers for about forty-five states enclosing thousands of pre-colonial political systems entirely or partially. They note that boundaries were often carelessly drawn, an action that will have important consequences on interstate relations within Africa for many years (Rubin and Weinstein, 1974:50–51).

The second characteristic is that Europeans made internal administrative divisions such as provinces, regions, and circumscriptions, which are still generally used, although with different names. These divisions, which were set up to facilitate governance, recruitment of workers, and unify the control communications, sometimes corresponded with previous divisions among African political systems, but often they did not. This situation upset traditional patterns of communication and loyalty that have led to long-term effects (Rubin and Weinstein, 1974:51).

The third characteristic is that Europeans developed administrative laws, procedures, and styles based on their own models in Europe that have proven difficult to discard. The colonialists formed local armed forces for their purpose of maintaining order over the newly defined states and to carry out the judgments of courts and administration. They also established patterns of centralization and decentralization of power that still contribute to differences among English-speaking, French-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking states (Rubin and Weinstein, 1974:51).

Advocates of the Weberian (1994) notion of the state identify it as a collectivity of institutions in terms of Max Weber's definition: i.e. an organization that has a "monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory." The entity may include the

armed forces, civil service or state bureaucracy, courts, and police.

Weber's notion of patrimonialism buttresses Thomas M. Callaghy's work (1984) on Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Callaghy argues that the patrimonial character of the late President Mobutu Sese Seko Nkunku Ngbendu wa Za Banga (born Joseph-Désiré Mobutu) during his rule laid the foundation for the Zairian state's decay. He characterizes this decay in terms of its declining capacity to rule or to maintain the conditions for the operation of its eroding productive infrastructures. He identifies three areas of decline. The first area is the increasing inability of the state to relate national means to policy ends which is evident in the inefficiency of public administration, security forces, economic policies, etc. The second area is the shrinkage of credibility, as citizens became increasingly convinced that the state is incapable of carrying out accustomed functions. The third area is the decline in probity that is manifested in a culture of blatant corruption.

Purveyors of the Federalist idea of the state look at it as a conglomeration of political units, not completely sovereign by themselves, but in some cases partially or co-sovereign, that are subject to a constitution that defines the federal union. It is no exaggeration to state that very few federal political systems in the world have been studied more than that of Nigeria because of that country's enormous size, very large population, ethnic complexity, and abundance of crude oil.

As Oladimeji Aborisade and Robert Mundt (2001) retell a very familiar story to many, from the time the British colonial authorities first considered the matter, some form of federal organization seemed necessary because of the colony's size and ethnic complexity. Early nationalist leaders such as Nnamdi Azikwe and Obafemi Awolowo also advocated a federal arrangement for independent Nigeria. As the unitary Richards Constitution proved quite unpopular in all areas, a federal system composed of three regions was established as the basis for Nigeria's move to independence in 1954. In what emerged as a uniquely Nigerian scenario, two of the regions, the Eastern and the Western, gained self-governing status in 1957; the North got its own in 1959. Thus, by independence a decentralized federal system was already in place in Nigeria. The Constitution of 1960 was explicitly federal, with responsibilities divided between the deferral government and the three regions. Since then, federalism has been a constant in all of the country's constitutions: 1963, 1979, and 1989. It was also the overwhelming choice during the 1994–1995 Constitutional Conference convened by the then head of state, the late Sani Abacha. According to Aborisade and Mundt, it is difficult to imagine a stable political structure in Nigeria that does not take into consideration the devolution of power at least to the leaders of the three major ethnic groups (2001:117): (1) the Igbo who are the majority in the Southeast, (2) the Yoruba who are the majority in the West, and (3) the Hausa who are the majority in the North.

Promoters of the Marxist/Instrumentalist perspective of the state see it as an entity that is determined by its position in a capitalist society. Following Karl Marx's comment in his book, *The Communist Manifesto*, these scholars maintain that the state is but an executive committee for managing the common affairs of the *bourgeoisie*. Its leading proponent, Ralph Miliband (1983), argues that the state is an "instrument" in the hands of the ruling class used to dominate society by virtue of the interpersonal ties between economic elites and state officials. Members of these groups, he points out, come from the same background and, therefore, share the same interests and linked together through an array of interpersonal and political ties.

An example of a scholarly work in which the Marxist/Instrumentalist perspective is employed to discuss the nature of the state in Africa is Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah's classic *Class Struggle in Africa* (1970). In this book, Nkrumah identifies two groups of classes that have emerged in the African state due to colonialism and neocolonialism: (1) the *Privileged Classes* comprising the bureaucratic *bourgeoisie*, officers of armed forces and police, intelligentsia, professional class, compradors, etc.; and (2) the *Oppressed Classes* made up of workers, peasants, small farmers, and traders. He notes that the African *bourgeoisie*, the class that thrived under colonialism, is the same class that is benefiting under the post-colonial, neocolonial era. He states that the *bourgeoisie's* basic interest hinges upon preserving capitalist economic and social structures; it is therefore allied with the international monopoly capital to exploit the masses whose aspirations can only be fulfilled through "scientific socialism" (Nkrumah, 1970:11–12). He defines "scientific socialism" as a universal and abiding principle that involves "the genuine socialization of productive and distributive processes," and argues that "those who for political reasons pay lip service to socialism, while aiding and abetting imperialism and neocolonialism, serve bourgeoisie class interests." He adds that "workers and peasants may be misled for a time, but as class consciousness develops the bogus socialists are exposed, and genuine socialist revolution is made possible" (Nkrumah, 1970:26).

Nkrumah observes that while the African *bourgeoisie* is small in terms of its numbers, and lacks the financial and political strength of its counterpart in the developed nations, it gives the illusion of being economically strong because of its close ties with foreign finance capital and business interests. He points out that many members of the African *bourgeoisie* work for foreign firms and have, therefore, a direct financial stake in the continued exploitation of Africans by these foreign firms. Other members of this group—notably in the civil service, trading and mining firms, the armed forces, the police, and in the professions—are committed to capitalism because of their background, their Western education, and their shared experiences of occupying privileged positions. They are mesmerized by capitalist institutions and organizations, they ape the way of life of their old colonial masters, and they are determined to preserve the status quo and power inherited from them. Nkrumah adds that Africa has in fact in its midst a hard core of *bourgeoisie* who are analogous to colonialists and settlers in that they live positions of privilege—a small, selfish, money-minded, reactionary minority among vast masses of exploited and oppressed people (Nkrumah, 1970:12).

Scholars who purport the Neo-Marxist/Neo-Instrumentalist notion of the state move the Marxist/Instrumentalist perspective a bit further by arguing that the question of who controls the state is irrelevant. Leading Neo-Marxist scholar, Nicos Poulantzas (1978), influenced by Louis Pierre Althusser, postulates that the capitalist states do not always act on behalf of the ruling class and, when they do, it is not necessarily the case because state officials consciously do so, but because the "structural" position of the state is configured in such a manner to ensure that the long-term interests of capitalists always dominate. Poulantzas' contribution to the Marxist postulates of the state is the concept of "relative autonomy," although his work has been attacked for its "structural functionalism."

Operating from the Dependence paradigm, which postulates that the development of the core/center countries is a direct result from the underdevelopment of the peripheral countries, Bernard Magubane (1976) points directly to the roots of the poverty of the

African state, asserting that the political economy of the continent can only be understood in terms of the relation of various African states to the international power structure and the social classes this power structure birthed within the dominated formulations. He argues that the historical incorporation of Africa and its pre-capitalist systems into the evolving capitalist mode of production led to the emergence of extremely complex systems of class relations. He notes that the system was characterized by economic and political structures in which the possessing and ruling stratum was foreign and the Africans appeared in descending order of subservience and dependence. He argues that to study the class structure of modern Africa calls for the examination of the determinate mode of production, which is the colonial capitalist mode of production. He adds that in any given African region or country, social classes appear that complement the colonial relations of production.

Furthermore, according to Magubane, the social structure of the African state, when viewed in detail, reveals a fairly complex kaleidoscope: alongside interethnic distinctions, there have emerged important interclass distinctions; and alongside of modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress the African masses. All these machinations, he points out, have arisen from the passive survival of antiquated modes of productions that are frozen in time by capitalism with its inevitable train of social and political anachronisms (Magubane, 1976:195).

The Anarchist school of thought on the state proposes strategies for the total elimination of the state and offers replacements. There are two strands to this perspective. The first group, the “left,” argues for the conformation of society to alternative group structures. It considers the state to be an institutionalization of domination and privilege. According to this group, the state emerged to ratify and deepen the dominance of the victors of history. Thus, for this group, while reflecting social interest, the state is not a mere executive committee of the ruling class, as the Marxists suggest, but a position of power over the whole society which many fractions of the ruling classes and even the oppressed classes seek to control with different and ever-changing alliances. Therefore, this group rejects the need for a state to provide for the needs of the people because it perceives the state as an oppressive force which takes away the ability of people to make decisions about things that affect their lives. Consequently, leading left-wing anarchists such as Mikhail (Michael) Alexandrovich Bakunin (1991) and Prince Pyotr (Peter) Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1896, 1897) argue for a form of socialism without the state. The second group, the “right” or “Anarcho-capitalists,” led by scholars such as Murray Newton Rothbard (1975), calls for a free market guided by the invisible hand offering critical or valuable functions traditionally provided by the state.

Economist Alex Tabarrok (2004) argues that Somalia in its stateless period provides an example for an Anarchy state in Africa, as theoretically espoused by Anarcho-capitalists such as Rothbard. Tabarrok states that the Somali experience since the collapse of the state, and especially the failure of international intervention, has offered a clear challenge to elements of conventional economic, political and social order theory and the very premises under which Western diplomacy and development agencies operate. He points out that Somalia has no government but in many respects it is booming. Somalia has what is perhaps the best phone system in Africa, for example, because entrepreneurs are unburdened by any regulation. Tabarrok quotes the following from *The Economist* to support his assertion:

There is still no proper central government but, where once there was only a handful of warlords, there are now at least 24, and that is only the serious ones. With smaller fiefs to pillage, few can now afford the \$100,000 or more that it costs to wage a six-hour battle, so such battles are less common. This is what passes for peace in Somalia, and it is enough to tempt many homesick exiles to return. They bring money as well as skills and contacts. In the past few years, hospitals, schools, businesses and even a university have appeared. In some ways, anarchy makes doing business easier. There are no formal taxes—given how heavily-armed the average Somali is, these would be hard to collect—and no regulation whatsoever (*The Economist* quoted in Tabarrok, 2004).

Tabarrok further notes that on the other hand, anarchy is turning out to be quite expensive in Somalia. He again quotes the following from *The Economist* for this claim: “But the costs of chaos outweigh the benefits. You can roar through a warlord’s road block unmolested if you have ten gunmen in the back of your pickup, but you have to pay your gunmen. Nationlink, one of the country’s three mobile-phone operators, employs 300 guards to protect 500 staff. Everyone yearns for a restoration of stability and a proper government” (*The Economist* quoted in Tabarrok, 2004).

Pluralist/Polyarchist scholars such as Robert Dahl (1973) see the state as either a neutral arena for competing interests or its agencies as simply another set of interest groups. Thus, according to these scholars, state policy is the output of recurrent bargaining because the state is competitively arranged. They proffer the argument that while inequality does exist in society, nonetheless, all groups have an opportunity to pressure the state to fulfill their interests. They argue that the actions of a modern democratic state are the outcomes of pressures applied by a variety of competing organized interest groups—a kind of state that Dahl calls a “polyarchy.”

A frequently, if not the most, cited work that has employed the Pluralist/Polyarchist paradigm to examine the African state is the book edited by Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith titled *Pluralism in Africa* (1969) in which the authors seek to present what they call a “new” analysis of African reality. They focus on the concepts of the “plural society” and “structural pluralism” and emphasize social exclusion as a core feature of this analytical apparatus. They clarify this idea by suggesting that individuals can be incorporated into political structures either on (a) universalist terms—directly, on identical terms, as citizens; or (b) particularistic terms—in which individuals are incorporated indirectly through their membership of particular corporate sections, basically racial or ethnic groups. In particularistic structures, different groups may be incorporated on equal or unequal terms. The latter situation is “differential incorporation”: i.e. a situation of “structural pluralism.” In this case, a state is comprised of ordered and structurally unequal, exclusive, corporate sections.

According to Kuper and his colleague, the situation of structural pluralism corresponds to an order of social relations. In such a case, exclusionary practices are directed at both members of the society, according to the corporate section to which they belong, and also those from outside national frontiers. The latter category of exclusion may be less significant than in the case of the nation-state, as illustrated by some of the policies of colonial states toward migrant workers. Furthermore, the order of social relations is found in the differential incorporation of social aggregates into a common political society. This

incorporation may take place formally and explicitly under the law and constitution or without them. The system of differential incorporation may disenfranchise a particular section of society by withholding citizenship from its members. But, no matter how variable the system may be in its specific conditions and properties, the collective character and scope of its substantive differentiations must be rigorous and pervasive enough to be able to establish an efficient order of corporate inequalities and subordination by the differential distribution of civil and political rights and the economic, social and other opportunities that they give or withhold (Kuper and Smith, 1969).

Proponents of the Institutionalist idea of the state such as Theda Skocpol (1985), who claim allegiance to Max Weber, begin by criticizing the “society-centered” renderings of the state that emphasize the autonomy of the state with respect to social forces. For Institutionalists, the state is not an “instrument” or an “arena” and does not “function” in the interest of a single class; instead, behavior is primarily molded by the institutions in which it is embedded. Institutionalists stress the importance of interposing civil society between the economy and the state in order to explain the differences in state forms. Thus, according to them, state actors are to a great extent autonomous. Put differently, state personnel have interests of their own that they pursue independently in society, albeit not without occasional conflicts. Consequently, according to Institutionalists, since the state controls the means of coercion, and due to the fact that many civil society groups depend on the state for achieving their goals, state personnel have the possibility of imposing their own preferences on these groups. They also make a distinction between “strong states” versus “weak, soft, failed, collapsed, declined, absent, marginal, decayed, juridical or normative states,” asserting that the degree of “relative autonomy” of a state from pressures in society determines the power of that state.

Ali A. Mazrui (1995) likens the characteristics of the African state to that of a refugee. Most African states, he states, are artificial, and the states and refugees are fundamentally without roots. This lack of roots and artificiality of the African state, he argues, can be traced to its colonial origins and its artificial boundaries, while the lack of roots of the individual refugee is a result of the postcolonial political traumas of disruption and displacement.

According to Mazrui, an issue African states and refugees face is that of alienation, as both the state and individual refugees are often alienated from the societies in which they find themselves. This alienation, he points out, can be morally unsettling and can distort the ethics and standards of behavior of the refugees and of those who control the state. Under the pressure of refugee flows, he adds, what is right and what is wrong, what is bad and what is good, can undergo disconcerting mutations (Mazrui, 1995:9).

Mazrui notes that in global terms, the African state has become increasingly marginalized and has been pushed into the ghetto of the global system. He mentions the fact that like the continent’s refugees, many African states were already living, at least partly, on handouts by the 1990s. But the international community is feeling donor fatigue. Furthermore, he states, the end of the Cold War diverted Western investment and aid toward the former members of the Warsaw Pact and the newly liberalizing economies of China, India, and Vietnam. He argues that the new priorities of the post-Cold War era, to some extent, meant bad news for disabled African states and displaced African people. He notes that the Francophone economies have lost the financial asylum they used to enjoy from the French franc and must now deal with the full rigors of state formation, including the danger of producing economic

and even political refugees, as Anglophone Africa has been doing. He adds that the metaphor of the African state as a political refugee continues with the reality of institutional collapse, psychic bewilderment, and human dislocation (Mazrui, 1995:9–10).

Mazrui identifies the following six state functions that seem to be particularly crucial for a state to fail: (1) sovereign control over territory; (2) sovereign oversight and supervision, although not necessarily ownership, of the state's resources; (3) effective and rational revenue extraction from people, goods, and services; (4) capacity to build and maintain adequate national infrastructure—roads, postal services, telephone systems, railways, etc.; (5) capacity to render social services such as sanitation, education, housing, fire brigades, hospitals and clinics, and immunization facilities; and (6) capacity for governance and maintenance of law and order. He insists that we should not limit ourselves to these six functions when looking at the process of state failure, as we may get earlier notice of a state in decay if we work out indicators of performance in all six areas. This is because, according to him, the African state may show signs of desperation long before it has been reduced to a political refugee (Mazrui, 1995:11).

The Developmentalist notion of the state is proposed by Thandika Mkandawire. In his article, “Thinking about Developmental States in Africa” (2001), Mkandawire recalls that during much of the 1980s and 1990s, literature emerged suggesting that “developmental states” were impossible in Africa. He points out that the arguments proffered ranged from cultural ones about the pervasive nature of “clientalism” to structural ones on the dependence of African economies or the atypical levels of rent-seeking in African economies. He then argues that Africa has had states that were “developmental” in terms of their aspirations and economic performance. He further argues that the experiences need to be examined critically to glean useful lessons, an exercise that has been hampered by an excessive leveling of the political and economic arenas in Africa.

Mkandawire makes the following poignant observation about the African state that captures the shift in attitudes attributable not only to the dismal performance of African states during the current economic and social crisis, but also to a number of ideological, paradigmatic, and structural shifts in both the domestic and global arenas:

If the state was given a central role in earlier views of the process of development in Africa, the situation changed dramatically in the late 1970s and 1980s. The African state is today the most demonized social institution in Africa, vilified for its weaknesses, its over-extension, its interference with the smooth functioning of the markets, its repressive character, its dependence on foreign powers, its ubiquity, its absence, etc. The state—once the cornerstone of development—is now the millstone around otherwise efficient markets. It is now the “rentier state”, the “overextended state”, the “parasitical state”, the “predatory state”, the “lame leviathan”, “the primordial state”, the “prebendal state”, the “crony state”, the “kleptocratic state”, the “inverted state”, etc. Although this inflation of epithets has reached high proportions in more recent years, the tradition itself predates the “crisis” years. Early criticism of the state in Africa came from the neo-Marxists whose own epithets to describe the pathological condition of the African state included the “petty bourgeoisie state”, the “neo-colonial state” and the “dependent state”. The many epithets underscore the fall from grace of the African state. It is now argued that not

only has the state become dysfunctional in terms of the management of larger societal issues, but also a real nuisance in *la vie quotidienne* of its citizens, as evidenced by the “withdrawal” from state-dominated economic and social spaces (Mkandawire, 2001:289–290).

Mkandawire goes on to describe the “developmental state” as having two components. One component is the *ideological*: i.e. a state is primarily one whose ideological underpinning is “developmentalist” if it conceives its “mission” as that of ensuring economic development, usually characterized by high rates of accumulation and industrialization. This type of state legitimizes itself by promoting sustained development, both domestically and in its relationship to the global economy. The other component is the *structural*: i.e. a state emphasizes its *capacity* to implement economic policies efficiently and effectively. Such a capacity is determined by institutional, technical, administrative and political instruments. It is the nexus between the *ideological-structural* components that distinguishes developmental states from other forms of states. (Mkandawire, 2001:290)

Nonetheless, Mkandawire cautions that the formulation of the “developmental state” runs the risk of appearing tautological since evidence that the state is developmental is often drawn deductively from the performance of the economy. This can produce a conceptualization of a state as developmental if the economy is developing, equating economic success to state strength while measuring state strength by the presumed outcomes of the state’s policies. Mkandawire cites the fact that in Africa, one finds many examples of states whose performance up until the mid-1970s would have qualified them as “developmental states” in the sense conveyed by the preceding definition, but which now appear anti-developmental because of the hard times that have halted the economic expansion of these countries (Mkandawire, 2001:291).

The Human Rights notion of the state is advocated by Willy Muniyoki Mutunga in the belief that the promotion and defense of human rights are imperative for a sustainable democratic and economically vibrant state in Africa. According to Mutunga, the resistance to the violation of human rights still remains the fundamental obligation of the human rights movement in Kenya and other African countries. He therefore argues that the role of the international human rights movement is to reinforce, if it can, the internal struggles of the human rights movements in Kenya and other African states. He points out that the recent struggle for democracy, the rule of law, the respect for human rights and the basic needs of all Kenyans and other Africans have enjoyed relative success, but that there is always the danger that these gradual and positive developments can be clawed back by states that are continually becoming infamous for their violations of human rights. He adds that blatant violation of the law and the constitution, torture, murder, rape, insecurity, a collapsing economy, a cowed and dependent judiciary, corruption, and compromised security apparatuses have all made African governments insecure, frightened, and dangerous (Mutunga, 2000).

What Mutunga brings to the attention of national and international human rights movements are the chilling facts of human rights violations in Kenya in particular and Africa in general. The violations are as follows (Mutunga, 2000):

- (a) human rights’ defenders ultimately face death if they persist in their project;

- (b) the state does not guarantee the protection of the lives and property of human rights' defenders;
- (c) the state encourages informal repression as a means of intimidating and denying citizens of their rights;
- (d) the religious and constitutional initiatives will never be given a chance to operate, and the state will encourage the subversion of their constitutional and legal mandate;
- (e) the state guarantees only the rights of the supporters of the ruling party and the political parties that cooperate with the ruling party;
- (f) opposition political parties will not be allowed to exercise their political and civil rights;
- (g) the ruling party and its allies in the opposition will solely determine the content of a new constitution and the management of the political succession; and
- (h) the international community is totally perfidious, hypocritical, unreliable, racist and cares only about its economic, social, cultural, political and military interests. The international community just pays lip service to issues of democracy, governance and human rights. The international community cannot, therefore, be relied upon to resist, even morally, the dictatorship of certain regimes.

It is Mutunga's hope that the international human rights movement is not about to become a front for capitalist interests. He therefore challenges the international human rights movement to demonstrate that human rights violations are all over the world and that the movement will resist all states in the world that violate human rights (Mutunga, 2000).

In his book, *Constitution-Making from the Middle: Civil Society and Transition Politics in Kenya, 1992–1997* (1999), Mutunga examines the constitution-making process as a specific component of the advancement of human rights in Kenya's transition politics. He places the middle class at the core of constitution-making and identifies many civil society groups that initiated the process, showing those that dropped out, at what point they did so, and which continued the struggle. He draws significant lessons accumulated over six years as the movement engaged the state and asserts the conflictual nature of state-civil society relations, existing mainly in opposition to an illegitimate, oppressive, and corrupt state (Mutunga, 1999).

Mutunga further shows how Kenya drew its democratic inspiration from anti-colonial movements, highlighting the central role of Mau Mau land and freedom fighters. He calls for the civil society to take an Africancentric approach based on the corporate project approach in its role in constitution-making. He characterizes civil society as diverse and lacking homogeneity, grounding his understanding of civil society on the central role of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Citizens Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs) project in Kenya. He points out that the vibrancy of civil society should be designed to

put checks and balances to the excesses of a government and argues that there should be no danger for civil society to be partisan (Mutunga, 1999).

Advocates of the African Socialist perspective of the state—one of the most noteworthy being Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (1989)—see the state as a society that ensures the sharing of economic resources in a traditional African way. Thus, the African socialist state is distinct from the classical doctrinaire socialist state, which yearns for the representation of the interests of the working class. The African socialist state is also neither the opposite of the capitalist state nor a response to it, but something completely different. It is fully African, appealing to an African identity that is even stronger than anti-capitalism. The African socialist state is, therefore, a recapturing of the spirit of what it was to be African.

In his essay, “African Socialism: Ujamaa in Practice” (1989), Mwalimu Nyerere states that traditional African society succeeded in ensuring that both the “rich” and the “poor” were completely secure. When natural catastrophe brought famine, it brought it to all: “rich” and “poor.” No one starved, either for food or for human dignity, because s/he lacked personal wealth; instead, s/he could depend on the wealth possessed by the community to which s/he belongs—that was and is socialism. He argues that there can be no such thing as acquisitive socialism, for the term is self-contradictory since socialism is essentially distributive: those who sow reap a fair share of what they sow (Nyerere, 1989:212).

Mwalimu Nyerere points out that in traditional African society, everyone was a worker. He does not use the term “worker” simply as an opposition to “employer” but also as opposed to “loiterer” or “idler.” Even the elder, who appeared to be enjoying himself/herself without doing any work and for whom everyone else seemed to be working, had, in fact, worked hard all his/her younger days. The wealth s/he now appeared to possess was not his/hers personally; it was only “his”/“hers” as the elder of the group which had produced it. S/he was simply the guardian of the wealth; the wealth itself gave him/her neither power nor prestige. The respect paid to him/her by the young was his/hers because s/he was older than they and had served his community longer; and the “poor” enjoyed as much respect as the “rich” elder (Nyerere, 1989:213).

Mwalimu Nyerere also notes that those Africans who talk about the African way of life and, quite rightly so, take great pride in maintaining the tradition of hospitality which is so great a part of it must keep in mind the following Swahili saying: “Treat your guest as a guest for two days; the third day give him a hoe.” In actuality, Mwalimu Nyerere, asserts, the guest was likely to ask for the hoe even before his/her host had to give him/her one, for s/he knew what was expected of him/her and would have been ashamed to remain idle any longer. He adds that there is no such thing as socialism without work. A society which fails to provide individuals the means to work or, having given them the means to work, prevents them from getting a fair share of the products of their labor, needs to be put right. Likewise, individuals who can work and are provided by society with the means to work but do not do so are equally wrong. They have no right to expect anything from society because they contribute nothing to it (Nyerere, 1989:213–214).

Thus, for Mwalimu Nyerere, the first step for Africans to develop their states must be to re-educate themselves; to regain their former attitude of mind. In their traditional African society, they were individuals within a community. They took care of the community, and the community in turn took care of them. They neither needed nor wished to exploit their fellow humans. And in rejecting the capitalist attitude of mind which colonialism brought to

Africa, Africans must reject also the capitalist methods which go with it. One of this is land being owned by the individual. To Africans, land always belonged to the community. Each individual within the society had a right to the use of land because otherwise, s/he could not earn a living, and one cannot have the right to life without also having the right to some means of sustaining life. But the right of Africans to land was simply the right to *use* it; they had no other right to it, nor did it occur to them to try to claim it (Nyerere, 1989:214).

Essentially then, following Mwalimu Nyerere, the foundation and the objective of the African socialist state is the extended family. True African socialists do not look on one class of men and women as their brothers and sisters and another as their natural enemies. They do not form an alliance with their brothers and sisters for the extermination of the non-brothers and non-sisters. They rather regard *all* men and women as their brothers and sisters as members of the ever-extended family, which is *Ujamaa*, or “familyhood,” that describes African socialism. It is opposed to capitalism which seeks to build a happy society based on the exploitation of human by human; and it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on the philosophy of inevitable conflict between human and human (Nyerere, 1989:217).

Mwalimu Nyerere concludes by stating that it was through the struggle to break the grip of colonialism that Africans learned the need for unity. They came to recognize that the same socialist attitude of mind which in the early days gave to every individual the security that comes with belonging to a widely extended family must be preserved within the still wider society of the nation. But Africans should not stop there. Their recognition of the family to which they all belong extended further—beyond the ethnic group, the community, the nation, or even beyond the continent—to embrace the whole society of humankind (Nyerere, 1989:217–218).

The Social state idea is proffered by Adebayo Olukoshi (2004). In his keynote address, “Toward the Restoration of a Social State in Africa,” delivered at the Globalization and Sub-Saharan Africa: International Experts’ Meeting convened at the European Parliament in Brussels on April 15 and 16, 2004, Olukoshi defines the Social state as one that is socially responsible or whose foundations entail a strong social policy component that is designed to address the broad social needs of the citizenry. The Social state plays a proactive role as the vanguard in social advancement of the broad boundaries in meeting the needs of the people. Olukoshi adds that the concept is also connected to the idea of social citizenship—i.e. the broad array of social welfare rights of the citizenry that is in many ways connected to the idea of the social contract between state and society—that is used in the political literature of the 1960s and 1970s, and as appeared in the discussions that took place during the reconstructions of the post-World War II European welfare states (Olukoshi, 2004:1).

Olukoshi points out that the nexus between the Social state and social citizen carried the role of state and citizenship beyond the narrow idea of security that undergirded state society relations in Europe. The idea was that the state itself was a product of a process of insecurity and instability; thus, within a given territory, the contract between the citizens of the political community and the leadership of that polity hinged upon providing security, particularly the security of life within that territory. It is the introduction of the idea of a social citizen and a social state that revolutionized that narrow conceptualization of the state, as essentially a security-providing state, to transcend that compact to include issues of economic and social rights. Therefore, according to Olukoshi, the idea of social citizenship presupposes the

existence of a strong proactive socially conscious state (Olukoshi, 2004:1–2).

Briefly recounting the history of the structure of the colonial African state, Olukoshi argues that the colonial state had an inbuilt contradiction which could only resolve itself in the move towards independence—a movement that was justified on the grounds that the social policies of the colonial state were restrictive and discriminatory. As he puts it,

Most of the nationalists and strugglers for independence fought saying that they would provide health, education, generate employment where the colonial economies failed to generate enough employment to young people, and provide better social amenities to their people, like water and electricity. What the colonial states were not able to provide by the way in which [they were] constituted and the way in which [they] functioned became the flip side of the nationalists' manifesto for the push for independence. This was at the core of the post-independence social contract between state and society in Africa. Despite the different leaders' different paths—the socialists, the humanists and the market friendly and so forth; irrespective of the path they chose, when you look at the form of social expenditure of the post-independence there was a strong notion of state-led development. The state was easily the biggest and the most coherent actor in the political economy at independence. Public enterprises were set up without exception from Ivory Coast, Kenya to Nyerere's socialist republic which despite critics was doing exactly what Kenyatta was doing with his market ideology. All of them put a huge outlay in social expenditure (Olukoshi, 2004:3).

After also recounting the economic and social havoc caused by the neo-liberal push of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) on African states by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Western states, Olukoshi calls for the making of effective African states that are strong and capable of organizing development as directors and leaders of the countries and in setting the boundaries of what they want, including providing the essential structure for good investment into the economy. Thus, for him, the first immediate task for Africans is to rehabilitate the Social state, which should begin with the establishment of a functioning state. This also requires the development of a full social consciousness, right from the outset, in order to avoid the errors that were made to the state interventionist models in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of these errors have to do with the manner of the organization of power (Olukoshi, 2004:5–6).

The *Fundi wa Afrika* perspective of the state is the brainchild of Mueni wa Muiu, in her essay accordingly titled “*Fundi wa Afrika: Toward a New Paradigm of the African State*” (2002). She begins by arguing that throughout history, Western interests in Africa have consistently been to have access to cheap labor, control of the economy, markets, and raw materials. The African state was therefore shaped to meet these goals. Consequently, she asserts, African goals such as self-reliance, democracy, and continental unity cannot be achieved by the present states. She therefore calls for the restructuring of the African state to retain its positive and adequately functioning elements and by incorporating the still functional remnants of indigenous African institutions. Thus, according to Muiu, the African state should determine the framework of its economic, political, and social interactions with the sub-regional, regional, and global environment (Muiu, 2002:23).

This African state envisioned by Muiu is couched within the concept she calls *Fundi wa Afrika*, a new paradigm in the study of African politics. She analogizes this paradigm to her observations of building and tailoring processes in a small village in eastern Kenya as follows:

The owner of the house decided what the needs of the family were which he/she explained to the builder. Throughout the building process the builder and the owner consulted each other and whenever anything needed changing the builder changed it based on the needs of the client. I noticed the same process when I took my material to the tailor to make some outfits for me. She asked me what my needs were and we consulted each other throughout the process. When everything was over we were both happy. It is then that I realized that the relationship between Africans and their institutions in indigenous Africa was similar to the building and tailoring processes (Muiu, 2002:23).

These observations, according to Muiu, led her to study African institutions in order to understand when and how they changed to be externally determined rather than defined by internal factors. She argues that the analysis of the African predicament can only be understood in relation to the “new Scramble for Africa,” a process that led to the depletion of the continent’s human resources through the simultaneous onslaught of population control policies, AIDS, wars, and a captive and servile leadership. She therefore contends that *Fundi wa Afrika* will help to counter this debilitating process by offering Africans a way out of the predicament (Muiu, 2002:23).

After presenting a brief analysis of indigenous African political systems and an examination of the colonial and post-colonial state in Africa, Muiu draws many conclusions. First, indigenous African political systems were based on African culture and tradition. Second, a vibrant civil society existed and acted as a check on leaders’ power. Third, political power was decentralized, making it possible for leaders to rule and the people to participate fully. Fourth, the political systems were institutionalized in the society, since they were determined by the needs and values of their members. Fifth, the trans-Atlantic slave trade permanently transformed the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. Sixth, the pattern of slavery was accelerated through colonialism as foreign powers used Africans in their own land for the maximum profit of the West. Seventh, independence simply Africanized the colonial institutions. Seventh, Westerners rewarded African leaders that served them well, just like they did during slavery. And finally, just as the abolition of slavery was used by diverse Western agencies as an excuse to meddle into African affairs, international financial institutions are using the present African predicament to shape and control African economies. Muiu therefore argues that until Africans recapture their economies, the pattern will continue. Consequently, she calls for the development of African states that are based on their own culture and values (Muiu, 2002:38).

The ultimate question here then is the following: How are the preceding theories/paradigms on the African state different and similar, and how do they overlap? To begin with, the differences among the preceding theories/paradigms are ones of emphasis. The Eurocentric schools tend to emphasize the role of African states in the creation of their problems while the Africentric schools tend to emphasize the role of colonialists and

neocolonialists in the creation of those problems. Concurrently, the Eurocentric schools call for a greater role by the international community (cum Western countries and their financial institutions) in solving the problems of the African state and the Africentric call for a greater role by the African states themselves in solving their own problems.

In addition to the differences among these schools, there also are areas of similarities and overlap among them. Within a defined geographical context, all perspectives see the African state as the political organization of society. The common characteristics of the state identified include the existence of sovereignty or supreme authority, clearly defined borders with population, organized form of governance and decision-making, and security for the inhabitants. The African state system is based on territoriality, and its most important feature is the existence of political offices: i.e. persons invested with roles to exercise authority over others in a given territory. Consequently, the factors identified to have contributed to the emergence of the African state were just as significant as those that contributed to its predicament.

Nonetheless, given the theoretical/paradigmatic postulates on the African states proffered by the major African thinkers discussed in the preceding paragraphs, a hybrid of a UAS will look like the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2. As can be observed, the ideal UAS will promote the tenets of Mkandawire's Developmental Statism, Mutunga's Human Rights Statism, Mwalimu Nyerere's African Socialism, Olukoshi's Sociality, and Muiu's *Fundi wa Afrikanity*.

The ultimate question then is the one raised by Professor Tunde Babawale during an E-mail communication between us that I mentioned earlier: How can African states make a transition from their present positions to the status of democratic developmental states as envisioned by Mkandawire, Mutanga, Nyerere, Olukoshi, and Muiu? A pertinent answer to this salient question can be gleaned from Cheikh Anta Diop's *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State* (1987 3rd rev. ed.).

Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework of a Hybrid UAS

In the book, Diop suggests 15 steps African states can take to make a transition from their present positions to the status of democratic developmental states. The following 11 steps are still germane today for concrete action, as historical events have transcended the remaining four—for example, the case of South Africa (Diop, 1987:88-89):

- To restore consciousness of our historic unity.
- To work for linguistic unification on a territorial and continental scale, with a single African cultural and governmental language superseding all others; the European languages, then, whichever they may be, will remain in use or be relegated to the status of foreign languages taught in secondary schools.

- To raise our national tongues to the rank of governmental languages used in Parliament and in the writing of the laws. Language would no longer stand in the way of electing to Parliament or other office a person from the grass roots who might be unlettered.
- To work out an *effective* form of representation for the female sector of the nation.
- To create a powerful State industry, giving primacy to industrialization, development and mechanization of agriculture.
- To create a powerful modern army, possessing an air force and endowed with a civic education that would make it unlikely to indulge in Latin American-type putsches.
- To create the technical institutes without which a modern State cannot exist: nuclear physics and chemistry, electronics, aeronautics, applied chemistry and so on.
- To reduce luxurious living standards and judiciously equalize salaries in such a way that political positions are comparable to workers' jobs.
- To organize production cooperatives, made up of volunteers owning adjacent fields, in order to mechanize and modernize agriculture and permit large-scale production.
- To create model State farms with a view to broadening the technical and social experiences of still ungrouped individual farmers.
- To carry out with conviction a policy of full employment in order to progressively eliminate the material dependence of certain social categories.

Diop elucidated the preceding and other cardinal aspects for an African state during several interviews with Carlos Moore in February of 1977 under the auspices of *Afriscopes*. Diop was persuaded to break a 15-year silence to speak to Africa and the world when he was convinced that *Afriscopes* is a highly serious-minded and uncompromising African medium. The interviews originally appeared in *Afriscopes* (vol. 7, no. 2, 1977) and republished as an appendix in Diop's *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State* (1987 3rd rev. ed.). The following are relevant excerpts from the lengthy interviews (Diop, 1987:91-122):

- To overcome the tremendous obstacles in the way of the economic unification of Africa, decisive political actions are required in the first place. Political unification is a prerequisite. *The rational organization of African economies cannot precede the political organization of Africa.* The elaboration of a rational formula of economic organization must come *after* the creation of a federal political entity. It is only within the framework of such a geopolitical entity that a rational economic development and

cooperation can be inserted. The inverse leads to the type of results we have witnessed over the years.

- A continental federation is an urgently vital necessity for the totality of African peoples. It is the pre-condition for our collective survival. The more time goes by, the more it will be seen that we must either join in a continental federation or fall into a generalized and endemic state of anarchy.
- The links between a federation of African states should be flexible enough to allow one breathing space. Each national grouping must be left to enjoy the largest possible internal autonomy. But political and economic life must be rationalized from a federal perspective. A certain number of federal agencies must be created; defense, external trade and foreign affairs must definitely be united. We need a modern continental army worthy of the name, capable of facing any eventuality, rather than our present armies which are more auxiliaries to the police force. In fact, our armies were not created with the intent of facing up to any external threat.
- Whereas there would be administrative autonomy of each member state, the Federal umbrella government would be fully in charge of such activities that go beyond the national prerogatives. For instance, in terms of defense, the armed forces would be on a continental basis. The individual states would have a territorial guard. Troops would be based in various African countries...and officers would equally come from all regions of the continent. That is, officers and troops based in a state would not necessarily be indigenous to that particular country. Along the same lines, federal administrative cadres would be drawn from all areas of the continent and would serve wherever posted. Continental citizenship is a must. No African should need anymore than an I.D. card for traveling to and from any part of the continent.
- To begin with a group of states could already band together in an open federation and actively incite the other states to join...This demands courage, a lot of courage, political foresight and, above all, a deep profound commitment to Africa as a historical, cultural, and political entity.
- A collegial system of political leadership could be envisaged on the concept of rotation. For instance, an executive council of the federated states, comprised of the heads of these states could be set up. The federated states would have to accept a permanent, *irrevocable* transfer of part of their national sovereignty to such an executive council. That is, from the outset, the nucleus of federated states would integrate their defense, economy, external trade, civil service and foreign affairs. These would be prerogatives of the federated executive council. Equally, universities and scientific research centers would be unified and rationalized on a federal basis. The president of such a federation could be elected from within the federal executive council itself. That system could be adopted at a first stage, since continental-wide elections presuppose the existence of a continental federation. In as much as the functions of a

federal president would be symbolized by a person, such a person could be one of the heads of the federated states. Leadership, however, would be exercised on a collegial basis. Also, the presidency of the federal executive council would be on a rotative basis...The important thing is that the federal executive council be a truly democratic and collegial body, open to discussions and thorough analyses of each and every problem that might affect Africa as a whole.

- A practical thing leading to a continental consciousness is inter-African contacts on an informal, free and leisurely basis. An aspect of the problem of the unification of the African continent, and which is seldom stressed, deals with an inter-African tourist circuit. A special agency must be created for this purpose. Africans do not know Africa. How can you love a country, or have faith in its destiny, if you do not know it? All the more, how can we love our continent or develop a continental consciousness without knowing it?
- In the face of the disunity and uncertainty characteristic of intra-African politics, North African Arab states might indeed be instinctively tempted to seek fusion with their Middle Eastern brethren. Nevertheless...a continent-wide African consciousness does already exist. When you go to North Africa, to Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, for example, you can detect an African *behavior*. We can build on this as long as an effort is made to forget many painful things of the past. Africans to the north and south of the continent must think in terms of uniting because it is in their global interests to do so.
- If despite goodwill on our part, North African Arabs were to refuse a continental federation, then nothing should stand in the way of the formation of an exclusively sub-Saharan continental federation.
- The very failure of the Egypt-Syria federation shows how difficult it is for African states to look outside of Africa for a federation...The concept of an Arab state from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf is devoid of any economic base, whereas...North African states (can join) the rest of Africa to form a viable political economic entity.
- A continental African state must, of necessity, be non-aligned. Africa then will be a continent *with its own specific political personality*. In time, Africa would have to play a world role. *A continental African state must be an end in itself*. It would even be humiliating to conceive of a continental African state being towed as a vessel by any other state, government or bloc. A continental African state would entertain relations with all other countries on a perfectly equal footing.
- The loss of our national sovereignty strangled our independent creativity. Today, as Black people are slowly recovering their national sovereignty, we are obliged to free ourselves from all forms of cultural alienation. Without that internal recovery and psychic self-appraisal, very little can be accomplished. The recovery of political sovereignty is merely one aspect of the question. Economic sovereignty is another.

Psychic autonomy is yet another. All three must combine in a dynamic renovative effort.

- The cultural renaissance of our people is inconceivable outside of the restoration of both our historical past and our languages to a privileged position as the vehicles of modern education, technology, science, and the creative sensibility of our people. As long as the historical path linking us to our ancestors is not understood, critically appraised, legitimized, we will be unable to build a new culture. To this end the retrieval of our national languages is foremost.
- In fact, it is impossible to elaborate a new body of social studies without a systematic reference to ancient Egypt. Ancient Egypt plays for Africa and Blacks in general the same role which Greco-Latin culture plays for the western world...Profound links bind the ancient Egyptians to modern Black Africans, not only racially and culturally, but also linguistically.
- Without rhetoric and fanfare, Julius Nyerere elevated Swahili to the status of a national and governmental language. There is a lot to be learned from Tanzania's success, as flight from one's own language is the quickest shortcut to cultural alienation. For Africa this has been a monumental problem, but it has to be tackled head on.

It is quite evident from the preceding canons proffered by Diop that attempts at economic development and cooperation in Africa can only succeed from the political unification of the continent. They also show that national and ethnic groupings share a common cultural heritage, how linguistic unification is possible, and that only political unification can restore the historical consciousness of African peoples and facilitate the complete recovery of their political sovereignty in a postcolonial world.

It behooves me to also mention that other scholars have proffered postulates for reconfiguring the African states. Here, only a brief description of each scholar's postulate is presented. The interested reader can find details in Guy Martin's *African Political Thought* (2012). The scholars and their postulates are as follows—in the chronological order they were published:

- Joseph Ki-Zerbo (1978) proffers a concept of African unity that is very similar to that of Kwame Nkrumah—a multiracial and multiethnic state based on the reconstruction of such large and culturally homogenous medieval African states.
- Marc-Loius Ropivia (1994) suggests a new federalism based on two-state integrative units he calls “bistate nuclei” or “federative dyads” to be linked together by a federative link. The two-state nucleus will be progressively expanded until it ultimately leads to a continental federal state.
- Makau wa Mutua (1994) calls for abolishing some African countries and combining

others. His new Republic of *Kusini* (meaning in Kiswahili “south”) would include Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe; new *Egypt* would encompass Egypt and northern Sudan; *Nubia* would entail Kenya, southern Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda; *Mali* would bring together Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone; *Somalia* would have Djibouti, Kenya’s northeastern province, the Ogaden province of Ethiopia, and Somalia; *Congo* would combine Burundi, Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda; *Ghana* would include Benin, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Togo; *Benin* would encompass Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger; *Algeria* and *Angola* would remain as they are; *Libya* would entail Libya and Tunisia; *Sabara* would bring together Mauritania, Morocco, and Western Sahara; the new Republic of *Kiswami* (meaning in Kiswahili “island”) would have Comoros, Madagascar, and Mauritius; and Eritrea and Ethiopia would constitute a federation.

- Arthur S. Gakwandi (1996) proposes one super-state in each of the seven major African sub-regions: (1) Sahara Republic for North Africa, (2) Senegambia for West Africa, (3) Central Africa and Swahili Republic for Central Africa, (4) Ethiopia and Eritrea, (5) Swahili Republic for East Africa and part of Central Africa, (6) Mozambique for Southern Africa, and (7) Madagascar.
- Daniel Osabu-Kle (2000) proffers a Pan-African state with an African High Command for quick intervention and a Pan-African Youth Organization with branches in the continent and the Diaspora. These institutions would be augmented by a common currency, a common transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, a common defense policy, and a common foreign policy.
- Gedfrey Mwakikagile (2001) suggests nothing less than a closer union in the form of an African confederation or African federal government, which will start with economic integration and lead to an African common market and, eventually, to a political union.
- Pelle D. Danabo (2008) calls for a “Pan-African Federal State” (or United African Federal Union) based on a common Pan-African identity and society.
- Mueni wa Muiu and Guy Martin (2009) propose a Federation of African States built on the functional remnants of indigenous African political systems and institutions and based on African values, traditions, and culture. They suggest five super-states: (1) Kimit, (2) Mali, (3) Kongo, (4) Kush (where the new capital city, Napata, will be located), and (5) Zimbabwe.

With the exceptions of the proposals by Danabo (2008), albeit his proposed Pan-African Federal State is rather vague, and Muiu and Martin (2009), the rest are not grounded in an overarching political framework like that of Diop. They also lack specificity in terms of the

actual structure and operations of the proposed configured states.

Conclusion

The preceding discourse has been edging towards the proposition that in order for Africans to combat the challenges they face in fostering democracy and improve the human condition on the continent, they would have to add a distinctly African flavor and momentum to the endeavor. This thinking is undoubtedly part and parcel of the cultural heritage of Africans. However, it clearly needs to be revitalized in the hearts and minds of some Africans.

Indeed, as Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor (1990) and I (Bangura, 2002) posit, the African life concept is holistic—i.e. it is based on an integrative world view. All life to the African is total; all human activities are closely interrelated. This has as its underlying principle the sanctity of the person, her/his spirituality and essentiality. This essentialist view of the person confers value to her/his personhood. All else—her/his labor and achievements—flow from this value system. Even personal shortcomings cannot invalidate it.

In addition, Awoonor (1990) and I (Bangura, 2002) point out that for Africans, politics defines duties and responsibilities alongside obligations and rights. All these relate to the various activities that have to do with survival. The survival concept is continuing, dynamic and dialectical. The fundamental principle that is at the basis of this conception is a moral one. Moreover, the African moral order never defined rigid frontiers of good and evil. Good and evil exist in the same continuum. Whatever is good, by the very nature of its goodness, harbors a grain of evil. This is a guarantee against any exaggerated sense of moral superiority which goodness by itself may entail. The notion of perfection, therefore, is alien to African thought. Perfection in itself constitutes a temptation to danger, an invitation to arrogance and self-glorification. The principle of balance defines the relationship between good and evil. As life operates in a dialectics of struggle, so also does good balance evil and *vice versa*.

Thus, the essence of an African-centered approach is that it is imperative and urgent for Africans to be concerned about broader development as well as approaches to development that are undergirded by humanity or fellow feeling toward others. When African-centeredness is considered along with the idea of the socialization effects of developmental environments and the possibilities of a reinforcement of these notions and contexts, the implications for an African development process appear vital.

Although compassion, warmth, understanding, caring, sharing, humanness, etc. are underscored by all the major world orientations, African-centered thought serves as a *distinctly African rationale* for these ways of relating to others. African-centeredness gives a distinctly African meaning to, and a reason or motivation for, a positive attitude towards the other. In light of the calls for an African Renaissance, African-centeredness urges Africans to be true to their promotion of good governance, democracy, peaceful relations and conflict resolution, educational and other developmental aspirations.

We ought never to falsify the cultural reality (life, art, literature) which is the goal of African-centeredness. Thus, we would have to oppose all sorts of simplified or supposedly simplified approaches and stress instead the methods which will achieve the best possible access to real life, language and philosophy.

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About the Author

Abdul Karim Bangura is professor of Research Methodology and Political Science at Howard University. He is also researcher-in-residence of Abrahamic Connections and Islamic Peace Studies at the Center for Global Peace in the School of International Service at American University. He holds a PhD in Political Science, a PhD in Development Economics, a PhD in Linguistics, a PhD in Computer Science, and a PhD in Mathematics. He is the author of 70 books and more than 600 scholarly articles. One of his recent books titled *African Mathematics: From Bones to Computers* (2012) is the winner of the very prestigious Cecil B. Curry Book Award for 2012. Bangura is fluent in about a dozen African and six European languages, and studying to increase his proficiency in Arabic, Hebrew, and Hieroglyphics. He is the recipient of many teaching and other scholarly and community service awards. He is also a member of many scholarly organizations and has served as President and then United Nations Ambassador of the Association of Third World Studies.