

The African Renaissance, Regionalism and AfCFTA Within the Context of African Unification

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Oftentimes, political discourse in Africa is dominated by a sea of catchphrases. These words have the ability to inspire others by evoking a positive emotional response; however, **words without deeds are meaningless**, or we rarely get no clarity about the definition of these buzzwords. Some of the terms widely used by politicians and academia include *African Renaissance*, *Pan-Africanism*, *Agenda 2063*, *Intra-Africa Trade*, *Silencing the Gun* and so on. Hence, coining practical terminologies that resonate with the general population is key to keeping citizens' aspirations intact.

As a youth movement leader and political activist, I was intimately involved in the transition from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU). Since that time, I have advocated for African political union and opposed dependence on foreign handouts. My core worldview, which has been shaped by empiricism; however, has not changed significantly; since my early days, and still based on these beliefs.

The primary purpose of this commentary is to examine the three most significant key concepts that have emerged in postcolonial African political and economic thought. First, I believe that obtaining a fundamental grasp of philosophical assertions of the "**African Renaissance**," "**Regionalism**," and the African Continental Free Trade Area "**AfCFTA**" is of paramount importance. Similarly, comprehending "divergence and convergence" on the topic can provide a clearer picture of where we are now and where we are heading.

In this context, it is essential to keep in mind that the AfCFTA is an outcome of political agency, whereas the African Renaissance and Regionalism remain a philosophical rhythm. Despite the fact that African Renaissance and Regionalism have not become bound up with political behaviour, they can be used as a tool to strengthen Africa's institutional and cultural foundations. There is a significant gap in our understanding of the ways in which political conduct in Africa is influenced by its context and how the context, in turn, shapes and influences conduct and agency.

For this reason crucial to define the term "African Renaissance" and dispel common misconceptions about what it means right off the bat. What do we mean by "African Renaissance?" Simply put, I wonder if the "African Renaissance" refers to a period of *Postcolonial African socioeconomic and political* order or *Spiritual Renewal, Conscientious*, and *Revisionist*?

There is a moral dilemma that we must pose a question to all Africans. Are we mimicking the European Renaissance that occurred between the 15th and 16th centuries? The European Renaissance bridged the period between the Middle Ages and the Modern era by reviving and enhancing the ideas and works on ancient antiquity. Comparing these facts, one can only speculate what African leaders had in mind when they conceived the African Renaissance.

Unsurprisingly, African thinkers have attempted to refute or substantiate this claim. Cheikh Anta Diop, Fantu Cheru, Ngugi wa, Thandika Mkandawire, Sabelo, Pixley Seme, and Asante are notable examples. Some African scholars have argued for a specific definition of the "African way of Renaissance," while others have reinterpreted the term within a broader African framework.

Keep in mind that a similar difficulty was raised when attempting to define Pan-Africanism. We are all aware that other regional identities, such as Pan-Europeanism, Pan-Arabism, and others, existed before Pan-Africanism. For this reason, Pan-Africanism is not a uniquely African phenomenon. Hence, the rise and fall of "PANISM" must be thoroughly investigated, with the survival of Pan-Africanism being the only notable exception.

As we recall, Mohammed Gaddafi was a proponent of Pan-Arabism before he became a Pan-Africanist, a free transfer without payment; nonetheless, Africa paid either positively or negatively. But it is not my point of discussion.

Coming back to African Renaissance: Sabelo articulated a vision of the African Renaissance that encapsulated a wide range of African initiatives such as Pan-Africanism, African nationalism, African humanism, African socialism, Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Negritude, Black Consciousness and so on forth.

Mimicking alien theories for “no” good reason will leave Africa stuck in the past, unable to move forward in any meaningful way.

Africans should look to Pixley Isaka Ka Seme, an authentic thinker who was able to express his patriotism as an African in a global context without adopting European ideals, for guidance. He is a legitimate owner of two essential tenets of African philosophy, "*I Am an African*" and "*African Regeneration*." Through his "Regeneration of Africa" notion, he envisioned a revitalised African culture replete with spirituality and humanism that had been lost to European rationality and secularism.

His concept of "*Regeneration of Africa*" stretches back to the **Haitian Revolution** of 1804 against colonialists; and the Ethiopian victory over the Italian colonial invasion of 1896 in **Adwa**. His perspective on life has been influenced by these events and the fight for liberation. In light of these interpretations of African Regeneration, his philosophical assertion contributes positively to the cohesion of Africa.

When Pixley Seme conceived of "**the Regeneration of Africa**" in 1906, he saw African unity as essential to the continent's future self-respect and economic success. The concept centred on the **emancipation** of Africa from colonialism and allowing Africans to receive the benefits of the unification dividend.

In point of fact, I am in agreement with Comrade Pixley Seme, who has applied the idea of the Renaissance to the context of "Regeneration" in Africa." Pixley Seme's lesson for Africa is that it should not try to adopt the European development model to its problems; instead, the continent should design theories according to its own unique conditions.

The fragmented African political economy needs to be "Reintegrated," from both a political and sociocultural point of view, before any progress can be made. That is not some ideological doctrine but rather an epistemic assertion. Economic integration was one of the numerous concepts' copycats from the European Union without first undertaking the local context in enough depth.

There are some fundamental questions that should be asked. For example, what is economic integration for Africa *without a viable economy* at the national level? How can African economy which is highly fragmented also dependent on mineral resource and commodities, and controlled by external force become integrated? When is Africa engaging in establishing *knowledge-based economy which* "African economic and political Reintegration"?

Africa has half of Germany's GDP. In 2021, Germany's GDP was about \$4.223 trillion, and its population was 83.13 million. Despite Africa's less than \$2.5 trillion GDP and 1.2 billion people. This shows that the New York, Tokyo, and London commodity exchanges rule the world. Where does Africa fit in this matrix? Since supplying "commodities" does not constitute one a decisive market participant.

Africa should not be misled by the "global economic order" because Africa's nations are economically identical apart from IMF and World Bank ratings. Refrain from telling me that South Africa or Nigeria is more prosperous than Malawi or Benin because we are all in the same boat.

Regionalism: How might African regionalism contribute to achieving continental unity, collective autonomy, and economic transformation? I believe contemporary African regionalism can be utilised to devise a strategy for tackling Africa's developmental encounters.

However, there has always been a tension between "micro-nationalism" and "macro-nationalism" in African unification aspirations. Micro-nationalism is inextricably intertwined with the nation-state and the imperative obligation of protecting its sovereign position. The notion of "macro-nationalism" is frequently applied to the pan-African project, which has existed since the struggle for continental independence and the necessity to unite against colonialism.

Thus, regionalism can be seen as the bridge instrument between narrower and broader varieties of nationalism. Currently, the AU frameworks are more complex in resolving these tensions; nevertheless, as member state awareness rises and citizens start to demand, I believe the organisation will strive to become a supranational entity.

Why the world portrays Africa as a land of conflict, famine, illness, extreme poverty, tribalism, and terrorism?

Asante, Samuel: emphasises that Afrocentric thinking is a philosophical approach that advocates for African-centred and African action in global politics to repair the inaccurate perception or imagination of Africa. Africanity is a state of mind that celebrates the variety of African identities, and I agree that Afrocentrism is a contract of identity embodying ideas beyond narrow nationalism and tribal identity for a shared value system.

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): is the most effective mechanism ever created for Africa to capitalise on its resource and population dividend. The "horse or the cart" dilemma remains unresolved because the institutional formula was supposed to follow the complete convergence of regional economic communities (RECs). Notwithstanding, the building bloc is still in the process of bolstering these RECs, as evidenced by the recent membership of Democratic Republic of Congo to East African Community.

Presently, neither the sub-regional nor continental levels of RECs have harmonised customs unions for trade. Thus, the first question is how the RECs will be incorporated into the AfCFTA's institutional architecture. The second question relates to a theoretical, institutional framework check and balance. Whereas General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATTA) founded the World Trade Organisation (WTO), who will oversee AfCFTA activities and fix its flaws?

Conclusion Argument: there is a possibility of developing a fully converged multinational, multicultural, and multilingual with an indigenous governance system called "United Peoples of Africa (UPA)." That is socially and culturally mature, economically resilient and politically comprehensive, and legally sound.

Consequently, African Renaissance, Regionalism, and AfCFTA can be achieved if Africa understands and acts upon its position in building an "**alternative world order**" that is compatible with its needs; otherwise, Africa would remain a beneficiary and not an equal partner.

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