

## **Clientelism and Patronage Vs. Meritocracy in The Pan-African Organisations** **በፓን አፍሪካ ድርጅቶች ውስጥ ከአዉቀት እና ችሎታ ይልቅ የዝምድና አሰራር ቦታ ይዟል**

The organisation's mission, vision, and mottos can only be realised with a particular set of instruments; The African Union (AU), regional economic communities (RECs), and the AU organs cannot be seen differently. Pan-African institutions need to analyse the tensions between meritocracy and contrary values, such as clientelism and patronage, to create a positive and productive climate. As a result, the AU needs to examine the present trend and point to the need for a complete strategy shift in the recruitment and nomination of public officials to move in the direction of meritocracy and produce practical results.

The ideals of an organisation's efficiency can only be realised via using a mix of financial resources, technical advancements, and skilled labour. Human beings are the most important resource an organisation has access to, above all of these other resources, in order for it to achieve its goals. Human expertise and enlightenment are vital instruments for effectively directing, manipulating, transforming, and using other resources. In addition, the organisation's operation and achievement of its aims and objectives are contingent on the capacity of its members for profound insight.

The Pan-African organisation's institutional and governance structure is the root cause of its lack of merit-based professionalism and inability to deliver on its service promises. In other words, these organisations are designated by the structure of the head of state rather than having a mandate that determines the reorganisation of their vision and goal. As a consequence of this, it would be imprudent to anticipate a transformational and exponential impact.

The efficiency of every given enterprise rests, in large part, on its ability to make effective use of its available human resources. Therefore, the procedure by which this crucial organisational resource is introduced into the structure must be designed to pick and attract the finest among the many based on merit rather than on fundamental considerations like political patronage and clientelism.

Both clientelism and neo-patrimonialism are seen as a danger to the foundations of democracies due to their potential to enable special interests to hijack politics and undermine institutionalism and the proper governing structure. Clientelism prioritises private gain above the public good, which is incompatible with established intergovernmental protocols, openness, and monitoring.

Although political patronage and clientelism are severe problems in postcolonial Africa, they are not the only root of the problem. Instead, moral decline, widespread poverty, and an inadequate educational system play a more prominent role. Although the primary concern is an absence of a bottom-up, people-first approach as opposed to a top-down, politicians-first strategy. Numerous indications suggest that the leading cause began when the Organization of African Union (OAU) was founded.

Keeping in mind the ideals mentioned earlier, I want to examine how clientelism and patronage overshadowed meritocracy in stifling the Pan-African organisation's objectives and continue to do so unabatedly. In the business world, having the appropriate connections is more important than having the correct knowledge. The adage that "what you know" is less essential than "who you know" inside an organisation is often true. In your opinion, who is most invested in whether or not this job gets done?

## **The Recruitment of Authorities and Experts Is A Perennial Issue**

There has always been apprehension surrounding the appointment of authorities and experts to positions within the AU, RECs, and other relevant entities. That apprehension has only intensified in recent years. Numerous factors contribute to these difficulties, and a lot of factors contribute to Africa's dire economic state, including the continent's ethnocracy, regionalism, incompetent political leaders, and widespread poverty.

Certainty dictates that the AU, RECs, and other organs will not achieve their objectives if they rely on the status quo of recruiting practices, current expert pull, and business as usual. Africa critically requires the brightest minds, highly skilled and devoted experts (*crème de la crème*) to fulfil the essential goals in the battle against poverty, unemployment, inequality and most importantly, to establish continental unity.

We have observed numerous times the introduction of organisational reform at the AU, particularly the merit-based recruitment system, emphasising values of meritocracy, integrity, efficiency, transparency, accountability, diversity and inclusiveness. Despite the impressive list of prerequisites, commitment to Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance, and indoctrination to the cause of African union should be unwavering cornerstones.

One must emphasise "allegiance" to Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance since doing so is a necessary aspect of the dedication needed to embrace the ideology's goals of the AU fully. My research interviews and casual conversations with other professionals have shown me that the vast majority of specialists at both the middle and upper levels are working to pay the bills and provide for their families. Otherwise, staff members often need more emotional investment in the AU's guiding principles and long-term vision.

The outcomes are vivid, but the impacts are not startling. After being in existence for a combined total of six decades (four decades for the OAU and two decades for the AU), the organization's goals are now idealistic and far-fetched. As a direct result of this stifling, the AU needs more competence and more institutional and ideological consistency. In such a little bit of commentary, it would be unfair to go too in-depth; instead, focus on the topic at hand.

## **Can Recruiting and Selection Procedures Be Standardised and Transparent?**

How realistic is the adoption of consistency, standardisation and openness in the recruiting and selection procedures at the AU, RECs and other institutions? No empirical data indicates the extent to which recruitment into the AU, RECs, and other AU organs is impacted by patronage and clientelism in a dysfunctional manner.

In addition, the direct impact on the productivity of employees and the quality of the service that is provided. Such cause-and-effect debate can only be analysed in two ways: first, the same patronage and clientelism prevent a transparent evaluation of the current situation, and second, the resolutions since 1993 vs their consequences speak for themselves.

It is crucial to have an objective analysis framework to comprehend the full extent of the failure and how these specific organisations got to this position. Given the level of consideration shown throughout the discussion, it is clear that the "elitism hypothesis" provides the best lens through which this occurrence may be comprehended and studied. The capture impulse of the governing class in most African states is to blame for the elevation of patronage above merit. When I say "AU recruiting procedure," I mean the same one used by the AU, the RECs, and other AU bodies.

If we delve further, we could learn some alarming things about the political appointees and professionals that staff the AU, RECs, and other AU institutions. Still, in most cases, one's political connections, regionalism, ethnicity, religion, and party allegiance are essential factors in gaining work. On the other hand, it is not easy to draw the conclusion that every single job opening is influenced by patronage.

It is crucial to provide some common instances. Indeed, it is possible to identify certain RECs and learn how their senior officials are linked to the highest levels of the national government. Because of this, the RECs and AU organs suffer from subpar leadership appointments. Appointments and leadership roles within an organisation should be based on candidates' training and experience; therefore, qualification and capacity should serve as a pattern or guide.

An engineer is the best person to take charge of a construction-related problem, whereas a biologist is the best person to take charge of a medical-related one. Leadership roles appropriate for the needs of the organisation or the various industries should be limited. Nonetheless, the situation is different in the vast majority of African nations. Many people are appointed to positions that have little to do with their qualifications or the importance of their field because of political considerations.

Although people's socioeconomic status and a society's image of meritocracy are significant predictors of attitudes toward inequality, little is known about how these factors combine to discourage nominations and promote competition. The widespread adoption of meritocratic views

may serve as a potent justification for inequality. Still, they can also undermine the self-respect of those in lower socioeconomic brackets, who are less likely to approve of such disparities.

### **The relationship between corruption and patronage in postcolonial Africa:**

A criticism of ethics that focuses on the institutions and leadership of Africa as its primary points of reference. The commentary tackles a variety of topics to determine the extent to which favouritism and a sense of entitlement contribute to corrupt behaviour. In order to determine the extent to which political patronage contributes to the ubiquitous corruption that plagues the governments of postcolonial African nations is one of the most pressing problems.

Although the AU Commission may address some of the concerns, the implications of the integrity of the AU's elections and voting process will remain. Pursuits are unique to African leaders, and some African leaders, at varying levels, have goals that are at odds with providing effective government that benefits the populace as a whole.

These concerns stem from the need to hold AU leaders to the same ethical standards as African leaders. The AU, which sets norms for free and fair elections throughout the continent, should apply the highest ethical standards to its leadership elections. A successful AU Commission election should follow the same high standards and guiding principles as member states.

### **A Concluding Remark and Some Suggestions for Potential Action**

Human resources are an organization's most important asset. Because of this, the ways in which these valuable assets are brought into the public service must build trust and faith while keeping merit. Therefore, a person's appointment system must be based solely on his or her merits, such as their level of education, technical skills, personal qualities, work experience, and physical fitness. It puts performance and self-improvement at the top of its list, and it works to make sure that people of different races, ethnicities, classes, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds are treated equally.

Politicised quotas and favouritism in the AU, RECs and other AU organs' recruitment processes have to be deplored. Without sacrificing professionalism and dedication to the Pan-African cause, it is crucial to ensure that all regions of the continent are fairly represented. In order to ensure efficacy and efficiency, public sector recruitment should find a happy medium between merit and quota, and all political influences should be eliminated.

This commentary argues that patronage has trumped merit in the recruitment matrix of the AU, RECs, and other AU organs. The existing strategy must be completely revised, and the recruiting process should be outsourced to a third party. Doing so has a good chance of combating immorality, inefficiency, ineptitude, and waste in the hiring process. Having a highly trained expert on staff has far-reaching consequences for the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the services provided and the progress made toward the Pan African goal.

It is advocated that merit take precedence over patronage in order to progress Africa's common agenda; this should apply all the way to the African Union, its regional economic communities (RECs), and the institutions of the African Union. It's time to flip the old proverb on its head and recognise that the most critical question is not "*whom you know*" but "*what you know*."

***Seife Tadelle Kidane (PhD)***: is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Pan African Thought and Conversation (IPATC); Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Johannesburg.