

Colonial Institutions – Legacy and Effect – A Critique By Vusi Klou

“The central objective in decolonising the African mind is to overthrow the authority which alien traditions exercise over the Africans. This demands the dismantling of white supremacist beliefs, and structures which uphold them, in every area of African life. It must be stressed, however, that decolonization does not mean ignorance of foreign traditions; it simply means denial of their authority and withdrawal of allegiance from them.” Chinweizu

1. Background

When dealing with the vexed question of political institution in an era where Africa is supposedly independent, is a matter that needs to be dealt with care. It is a question that needs to be located within the context of defining Neo Colonialism.

Many a scholar have dealt with the neo colonial state of Africa or as some will prefer to call it, the pseudo independence. Africa for over 400 years has been under the invasion of western powers lead by Europeans particularly Britain and France. This invasion was cemented in 3 conferences namely the 1816 Vienna Conference, the 1884 Berlin Conference. These conferences hold a special place both in the development and direction of the continent and its people and the world at large.

It is at these conferences where European countries adopted the position that the colonisation and partitioning of Afrika was their strategic option so as to grow their economies as this gave them cheap access to resources in the form of land and labour. This period came with the mass enslavement and transatlantic trade of Africans particularly by the new settlers in America. It is critical to deal with this period of history as our leaders are giving away our resources cheaply today. The colonialist no longer needs force to pillage the continent, just the threat of sanctions and force are sufficient. Secondly as the continent and its people both at home and abroad continue on their relentless march to free themselves, they need to deal with the meaning and implications of these conferences.

Since the middle of the 20th century the continent and its people have been getting independence from their former colonial master with Azania being considered “free” and not independent. Inaugural Pan Africanist Convention comes at the time when the African people both at home and in the Diaspora have to take steps in pursuing the goals of an independent people and the continent.

We have to examine what independence means to us as a continent and a people both at home and in the Diaspora. What went wrong and right post independence and after the slaves were “freed” in the United States of America? Have the new states grappled correctly with the challenges of independence? Are they the

defenders of the African people and their resources? Do our countries represent the kind of progress that we envisioned as a people in our struggle for independence?

The paper seeks to provide possible pitfalls in our struggle; the challenges that we never considered and the role of Pan Africanism in understanding modern states.

2. The Global Stage

The Cold War Era

The Cold War era had its own impact in our colonial struggle. The continent was the playing ground for proxy wars between primarily the USA and the Soviet Union. A lot of countries in the continent suffered this fate. One can cite Angola, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo just to name a few. This fate is not limited to these countries. This proxy wars contributed to the distortions that we see in post independent Africa as the continent has been at war ever since post independence.

The other major problem for the distorted independence was the split in the international socialist front that was lead by the Chinese on the one side and the Soviet Union on the other. That split crippled the liberation movement of the various African countries as they spent a lot of time arguing about the best interpretation of socialism instead of focusing on the material conditions that confronted their countries. Further on the continent and planning for the ultimate independence of our countries. The leaders were mostly concerned with their loyalties to either block to prove their worth as socialists.

Our inability to propagate African Nationalism effectively as a uniting and higher form of nationalism that transcends tribal boundaries, ensured that our colonialists have room to manoeuvre and keep the continent perpetually at war. We can also cite countries such as Rwanda, the Congo, Sierra Leone, Burundi, just to name a few.

The world after the cold war

After the cold war only one super power remained and that was the United States of America. In this new world order Africa is a basket case of foreign powers of the world. Even the smallest European countries that do not matter that much call the shots when it comes to the continent. You have the Western countries under the leadership of America and Britain on the one hand and you have the emerging powers under the leadership of China and Russia. We also have the middle East extending its influence in the continent through organisations such as ISIS, Al shabbab and Boko hararm.

Where is Africa in all of this? Africa is still a continent under construction. It is still grappling with the challenges of forming itself as pure states in the 20th and 21st century. Most of the African countries are unable to protect their own borders and

citizens. They are unable to provide job and food security for their own citizens and governance issues are a challenge.

The continent is still a happy hunting ground for international forces, with the continent losing billions of rands in revenue as it is unable to protect its natural resources. The continent is faced with challenges of having to make its mark in the playing fields where the rules are against our progress.

Post-Independence Africa

One of the major mistakes that was made during liberation struggle was to prepare only for the defeat of the enemy. We never thoroughly prepared for the rebuilding that needed to take place after a successful revolution. We understood the impact that mental slavery had on us as a nation but did not develop counter measures to develop sufficient mechanisms to deal with it.

We did not do a thorough analysis of the roots of the coloniser in our countries. Maybe we were oblivious of the very reason they had colonised us in the very first place. We were completely unaware of the traces and stains they were leaving in the "independent countries". We seemed to have believed that as soon as the coloniser was sent packing, that will be an indication of their disappearance. The colonial countries were rooted in Afrika for the sole reason of plundering the countries of Afrika of its natural resources. The gold, diamonds, copper, cocoa, tobacco and many others that Afrika is endowed with were completely irresistible to abandon. Proof of the above was the systematic and unending coup d'états in almost all the countries that had attained independence since 1957 commencing with Ghana. In 1963 only, there were thirty-three (33) coup d'états in the continent. Some countries had repeated episodes of these.

In 2016, using the WWWPAC as a vehicle, we have an opportunity not only to analyse but to begin putting active means measures that will see us actively engaging the challenges facing the continent.

When we speak about political institutions we sometimes narrow them to those that are formally recognised such as the state departments, the justice system and the executive. We know about the media having an influencing effect on the masses and shaping their opinion, but have we recognised media as part of the political structure? Let us proceed to look at the non- governmental institutions, organisations such as human rights watch, Amnesty international WWF. These organisations have on numerous occasions if not all the times, been used as fronts for foreign intelligence agencies and corporations wanting to loot resources.

On the financial front we have institutions such as the IMF, World Bank the Reserve or Central banks of this world, which are all part of one and the same system of oversight and governance of the world. Playing the support role will be the rating agencies such as Moody's, Fitch and S&P. This is one system of ruling and controlling the world without any of the western governments taking up arms and invading a

resisting country. It is because the world has become the so-called one global village and therefore these institutions play a pivotal role both politically and economically at an international level, unhindered.

It is these institutions that shape the policies of our states and governments in Africa. They control how our governments should spend and on what. They determine which government is performing well for their benefit and which government is doing the opposite. The reward for those governments which are doing well is access to loans and donor funding and the punishment to those governments that are not willing to toe the line is punishment through sanctions and other punitive measures.

The Lobby groups are also part of the international political management system. They agree on how to divide the loot of Africa's resources particularly the mineral resources and in the case of the Middle East the Oil reserves. They set prices and determine at what pace should those resources be exploited. These lobby groups are usually managed and directed by the USA with Europe being a participant

The point that we seek to demonstrate is that capitalist imperialism as a system that has been able to reinvent itself to ensure its perpetual control over its subjects and the resources and in this case the subjects being the African people

The Place of Pan Africanism

In all of this we necessarily have to ask what the place of Pan Africanism is? How does Pan Africanism seek to address the total liberation of the continent by creating political institutions and structures that will transform society? It needs to be said and emphasised that Pan Africanism as an ideology from the onset seeks to overthrow white domination, Liberate Africans and their continent. It seeks to create a new continental order where Africa will prosper. The primary way of doing and achieving this aim will be the development of the political consciousness of the masses and relevant institutions that will support and maintain Africanism.

Does Pan Africanism define in detail the steps that need to be taken to realise its vision after we have decolonised? Was the failure primarily ideological or on leadership to comprehend and understand fully what was expected of them? Did Pan Africanism as an ideology foresee the ever mutating character of colonialism?

As Pan Africanists, is our analysis of the current challenges still relevant? Does it address the current challenges faced by the continent? The basis of our revolution is the same but conditions have changed. The continent has Francophone countries and the interpretation of their challenges is different from those of Anglophone countries. How then does Pan Africanism as a guiding ideology help navigate the apparently difficult terrain?

African Nationalism

Why African Nationalism? It is a result of an analysis of how Afrikan people were defeated, how a few thousands of settler colonialist could rule over a millions of Africans. It was a product of a conclusion that the tribal differences are an obstacle to fighting colonisation and gaining independence. African Nationalism is a result of the realisation that the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts.

African Nationalism is an antidote to tribalism and colonialism. It is a leap towards forming a truly African Nation ready to take its place amongst nations as an equal and not a beggar. It aims to forge common identity, common programme and owing our allegiance to the African nation than to our individual tribes. It is the critical pillar of Pan Africanism and a must in our quest to overthrow white domination.

Decolonisation of the mind/Developing the African personality

Decolonising the mind is one of the painful tasks we have to undertake as the continent. Along this task will be the cultural revolution. We are raising this issue because as Pan Africanist/Black consciousness proponents we know that this is not just a romantic notion but a real task.

We are a broken people, a broken nation that suffers from an identity crisis, a nation that follows others and copies other nations, a nation that undermines and hates itself. In order for us to carry a successful revolution as Pan Africanist/Black Consciousness activist and revolutionaries, the task of decolonising the mind is most urgent. We need to objectively look at the role of institutions like religion, the orientation and syllabi of our education, orientation of the rule of law and legal principles and all other colonial frills and trappings.

A lot of work was not done post-independence, and our reliance on intellectual guidance from the Western powers is evident. We have hundreds of writers in philosophy, literature and academic books and science but their work does not see the light of day in our education curriculum. In order to get recognition, our artists have to be approved on western terms. Musically the same applies. It is inconceivable that we can truly win the battle against colonialism if we do not undertake this task of changing and replacing colonial institutions. A united Socialist Africa will remain a pipe dream if as Pan Africanists we do not undertake this task.

The place of Socialism

But why Socialism as a social system? As a continent we have experience with capitalism from the time of foreign capture and conquest. It introduced colonialism, encouraged slavery and slave trade, facilitated underdevelopment and the exploitation of our resources. Capitalism is an enemy of the African people and humanity at large. It divides the countries of Afrika into small exploitable entities. It is an oppressive political system disguised in democracy. It creates and resides state political power on the minority.

Socialism is therefore a solution and an ally in our struggle to be free of European domination and promote equitable usage and distribution of productive resources. All the institutions of socialism promote humanity and support the essence of humans as social beings.

Continental unity

It is critical to recall that the boundaries that Afrika has were all drawn and imposed by the colonial powers at the Treaty of Berlin. The era of small nations and countries is over and long gone. All continents are in the process of consolidation and repositioning themselves. Those that have already consolidated enjoys advantages particularly in essential areas, namely political determination, economic consolidation and militarily advancement. The continent cannot survive if we continue to operate in silos and in isolation as small so-called independent states.

Afrika can no longer afford the paralysis that is being brought on by the existence of smaller states. They are unstable and cannot guarantee the security of our people and the resources of the continent. The majority of the states cannot withstand foreign invasion; cannot provide food security and provide inferior service to their citizens.

The unity of the continent is a must and a condition for our survival and existence. Socialism and African Nationalism are imperative pillars to achieve this unity. This is the place of Pan Africanism in our political space and our lives

What is our task in this Era

Our immediate task is to look at the mistakes committed, update our analysis and come up with intervention measures. We need to stop operating in a scattered formation. We must regroup and become one strong force. The task of this convention is to begin to reorganise all these forces to operate as one collective group with one aim in mind of the total decolonisation of the mind of the masses of Afrika.

How is that to be achieved? The leadership of the Pan Afrikanism movement need to know and understand that as we regroup we need to readjust our tactics and strategies. We have discussed the weakness faced by our struggle in that we did not understand and perceive the depth of the roots of colonisation in the continent and that such weaknesses manifest themselves in a liberated Africa copying colonial institutions. What then do we propose?

Proposed way forward

The convention will need to consider several intervention mechanism to begin changing the tide and this will include amongst other interventions committees that will develop programmes and formulate solutions for strategies the continent. As

Pan Africanists we are trail blazers, we are the think tank of the African continent and the continent requires us to think creatively to move Africans forward.

Creating out own institutions

Research Organisation.

Nothing has become critical than developing an independent capability to do research in any field that affect the daily lives of African people. Currently all the data that is shaping African opinion is essentially flawed, and based on colonial and colonialist outlook. The current guiding thinking that forms the premise of an independent Africa cannot liberate the continent because it is still the same agenda of Keeping Africa under control.

We need Afrika orientated thinking in the fields of medicine, Economics, Law, Agriculture and other related fields that will ensure that as a continent we break our reliance on the western governments to direct and develop our policies.

The failures in the political, economic and social development of the continent has been our reliance on the West to interpret and direct out developmental agenda. All our liberation movements have been reduced to political spectators merely commenting on what is out there. The education institutions are also part of the colonisation process. An independent Africa cannot maintain them as they are. In order for the continent to take the first steps towards independence we need to place more attention on these aspects of human development. The continent cannot continue its reliance on its former colonisers.

This also applies to the fields of health and medicine, where the west and other powerful nations prescribe to the continent on priorities and needs. All research about pandemics is based on the information provided by western institutions. The worst is our inability to independently verify the information. Research and development is the only basis upon which states and organisations can use to correctly develop programmes for building and growth. It is the basis and a strong foundation of developing strong, and ideologically sound programmes. The existence of organisations such as IMF, World Bank, Standard and Poor, Fitch and Moodys are nothing but extension of the capitalist system to continuously plunder the resources of the world under the guise of providing independent critical information to states and the so called investors.

The role of lobby groups.

One of the key pillars of advocating one's agenda is through lobby groups. Again in the continent of Africa we have not developed this capability. Let's take again the case of the United States of America, Israel and some of the European countries. They have developed these institutions. At face value they are an independent entity that operates independently but the truth is that they have become part of the

established order of the state representing fixed interest. In other words they are nothing but an extension of the bourgeoisie state apparatus and imperialism.

Why does Afrika need this institutional overhaul? Precisely because modern state are much more than governance entities, the post independent African states have the infrastructure from colonialism and are set up to promote imperialism. They have become a sphere of influence and an important arena that cannot entirely be left to politicians. As revolutionaries and Pan Africanists it is very critical that we position ourselves appropriately to ensure that we are in a position to know first-hand what is happening in our countries and be able to intervene promptly if necessary.

We should be in a position to influence the direction that our independent states take, As Pan Africanists we must be the leading thinkers in the continent that are strategically positioned to guide our governments. If we are not then the lobby groups of America and Europe will continue to influence our states and dominate the continent.

The lobby groups will also be responsible for identifying campaigns, prepare how such campaigns will be effectively executed, lobby the different branches in various countries on what needs to be done, how and when. The effectiveness of centrally organised activities was a major success point of the Arab Spring and as Pan Africanist we can learn a lot from those activities.

Establishing of the school of Pan Africanism

Independent Africa has no defining ideology that governs its society, It is particularly strange because as a continent we used Pan Africanism as our guiding thought during our struggle but as soon the various countries gained independence they completely cast away that ideology in favour of capitalism and western ideology. What has western thinking done for us? The return to Western ideology and influence has ensured that we as a continent are kept backward. Our resources are plundered and whatever developmental agenda appears favours the foreign powers and not the motherland.

The development of the School of Pan Africanism will help with the reorientation of the continental agenda as it will be guided by Africanists with the particular agenda to advance the African personality. At the centre of its mandate will be to develop programmes that will help with the decolonisation of the mind and Leadership development.

Communications Forum

The importance of an effective communication strategy will be the backbone of a revived worldwide Pan Africanist movement. Our ability to speak with one voice, communicating a consistent message that can be understood by everyone and be able to galvanise African people into action is central to our strategy.

Our teams should be able to identify burning issues that need to be addressed, develop propaganda strategies that will enable all campaign groups to agitate for immediate action and insurrection. They will work with the research teams exposing the work of the imperialists, Capitalists and African neo colonial leaders who collaborate with foreign powers to exploit Africa. Targeted industries should include the health, mining and financial Institutions.

Arts and Culture

Arts and culture are a critical element in developing independent thinking. They can also be used as an effective tool to agitate for revolutionary thinking. On the basis of this it is recommended that our new approach should include this platform. Infact it should be at the core of our strategy and this should include all forms of art including painting, writing, poetry, performing arts, music etc.

The message should be aimed at decolonising the mind, propagating the ideals of Pan Africanism and a liberated Africa. It should be critical of corrupt leaders and outright brutal in its criticism of Imperialism and colonialism. It should encourage and foster an Afrikan revolutionary spirit.

Media

As a people and a continent it is critical that we project ourselves in a manner that inspires confidence. We should not be ashamed to claim our past glory because it is our heritage. The media as an institution of governance and political control is a critical instrument for our ultimate liberation. We correctly say the media is an institution of state. This is informed by our analysis that modern states creates quasi-independent institution and the media is such institution but all media houses are there to serve the ruling class and in this instance the ruling class are the ones governing the world and the media is their pillar of strength.

If our cause is to stand any chance of survival, we need to create our own media channels. We can no longer allow a situation to prevail and persist in which as a people we are interpreted by our enemies and projected by foreign powers. It is through this enemy and foreign media that as a people we are continuously indoctrinated to undermine and hate ourselves; where a negative image of our continent and us as a people is projected. Be it in Africa, the Caribbean, the US of America and Europe, we are always projects as underlings and worth nothing.

Summary

The sole intention of this document is for the convention to begin to discuss overall strategies and their implementation. These will take forward our delayed and restricted movement to authentic liberation.