

The “Arab Spring”: An Epitome of Western Political Machinations

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Abstract: When I received the invitation to make a presentation on “the impact of the Arab Spring on sub-Saharan Africa (or perhaps vice versa),” I embarked upon an extensive search for literature on the topic via libraries, archives, and the Internet. My search yielded two major works, the November 2011 report by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) titled *Africa and the Arab Spring: A New Era of Democratic Expectations* and an edited volume titled *Africa Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions* (2011), and many news articles. An examination of these writings made it possible for me to delineate the following three themes within which their analyses have been subsumed in this essay: (1) the struggle over conceptualizing the Arab Spring, (2) the competing postulates on the possibility for the spread of the Arab Spring across Africa, and (3) the consequences from the Arab Spring. In the end, a conclusion is drawn and a recommendation is made based on the discussion.

Keywords: Arab Spring, the West, Political Machinations, Democracy, Union of African States.

INTRODUCTION

The most important finding during the search for the literature on the topic is that what we now know as the “Arab Spring,” or in Arabic *al-Thawrāt al-‘Arabiyyah*, has been a carefully orchestrated Western political machination. While I had my suspicion about this possibility, I was quite surprised when I was able to piece together the evidence. Before discussing the abundant amount of evidence that supports the proposition of a Western political machination in the sections that follow, it behooves me to begin with a brief description of the events that came to be dubbed as the Arab Spring.

Arab Spring is used to describe a wave of demonstrations, protests and wars which began in December of 2010 that forced rulers from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen; civil uprisings in Bahrain and Syria; major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and The Sudan; minor protests in Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti, and the Western Sahara; border clashes in Israel; protests by the Arab minority in Iranian Khuzestan; and Tuareg fighters returning from the Libya war stoking a simmering

conflict in Mali. Facing state attempts at repression and Internet censorship, protesters employed techniques of civil resistance in sustained campaigns involving demonstrations, marches, rallies, strikes, and social media.

Conceptualizing the Arab Spring

The *Oxford Dictionaries* defines Arab Spring as “a series of anti-government uprisings in various countries in North Africa and the Middle East, beginning in Tunisia in December 2010” (Oxford University Press, 2013). The *Open Dictionary* defines Arab Spring as “a series of activities ranging from political protests to civil war that happened in a number of Arab countries, including Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria, beginning in the early months of 2011” (Macmillan English Dictionary Online, 2013). Despite the slight differences between these two denotative conceptualizations of the Arab Spring, and the fact that the concept “Arab” used to describe the majority of the people of North Africa is a misnomer (more on this later), they would have sufficed had it been just a mundane phenomenon; but like any politically-charged phenomenon, such conceptualizations would become

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connotatively problematic and inspire competing postulates.

Before delving into the debate over conceptualizing Arab Spring, I will begin with the concept of “Arab” itself as it pertains to North Africa. It was quite a surprise during my initial visits to North African countries that many of the people do not like to speak Arabic, much less French, contrary to the impression the Western media have propounded. Even the minority “Arab” populations in those countries prefer to be called Bedouin. The majority of the people who are referred to as “Berber” find the concept offensive. Most North Africans call themselves Shilha, Riff, Shawiya, Kabyle, Mrazig, Miknasa, Turco-Tunisian, Dom, Dawada, Toubou, Tuareg, Firjan, Magarha, Majabra, Qadhahfa, Warfalla, Zuwayya, Ababda, Ahamidat Alhoarh, Bisharin, El Homaydat, Hedareb, Huteimi, Nubian, Sa’idi, and Siwi.

As for the concept Arab Spring, Joseph Massad (2012) informs us that it started with the January 2011 edition of the *Foreign Policy* magazine. In his 2012 book, Marc Lynch, who wrote that article (January 2011), notes that he had unintentionally coined the term (2012: 9). Nonetheless, Massad argues that the term “was not simply an arbitrary or even seasonal choice of nomenclature, but rather a United States strategy of controlling (the) aims and goals” of the movements (Massad, 2012).

Is Massad’s claim farfetched? The evidence suggests that it is not. The Libyan case offers the strongest evidence. In addition to the United States Arabizing the conflict by pushing the Arab League to join it in calling for a United Nations’ “No Fly Zone” resolution on Libya, the United States also worked with France and Britain to thwart the efforts of the African Union (AU) in finding a political solution to the conflict. As former AU chairperson Jean Ping recounts, the United States, in collaboration with France and Britain, sought to control the events and push a hostile agenda in Libya by marginalizing and misrepresenting the AU’s intervention in that country. According to Ping, the AU Commission was baffled by the erroneous reports from the West stating that the AU’s actions in Libya were motivated to protect Colonel Muammar Qaddafi’s regime and that, after his downfall, the Union was delaying recognition of the new Libyan authorities as a way to force the inclusion of Qaddafi’s supporters into the new regime. Ping states emphatically that the assertions are false, as they are contrary to the decisions taken by the relevant organs of the AU on the Libyan case. It is against this background that he, on behalf of the AU, decided to address publicly the key issue of the Union’s intervention in Libya (Ping, 2011).

Ping starts by situating the AU’s efforts in the context of its reaction to what has been dubbed the “Arab Spring.” According to him, the popular uprisings

that took place in Tunisia and Egypt posed a doctrinal problem for the AU, since they did not correspond to any of the cases envisaged by the 2000 Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government. He notes that even though the AU did not anticipate these developments, it nonetheless reacted in creative ways. He mentions the fact that by basing its response not on a dogmatic interpretation of existing texts, the AU exhibited the needed flexibility as it sought to contribute to achieving the overall organization’s objective of consolidating democracy in the continent. He adds that the African leaders welcomed the developments in Tunisia and Egypt and stressed that member states renew their commitment to the AU’s agenda for democracy and good governance and to inject additional momentum to implementing socio-economic reforms (Ping, 2011).

The democratic revolution in Libya, however, according to Ping, took a different path from those in Tunisia and Egypt. He states that from the start, the AU made it very clear that any resolution to the Libyan crisis must be based on the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people’s need for democracy, respect for human rights, and good governance. He notes that the AU called for inclusive transitional institutions that would manage the country until elections are held, implying that Qaddafi is to relinquish power to those new institutions. He adds that as a regional organization with diplomacy as its main weapon, the AU’s ultimate objective was to avoid war, which is only necessary as a last resort when all other options have failed (Ping, 2011).

Ping recounts that as early as February 23, 2011, the AU’s Peace and Security Council (PSC) expressed a deep concern over developments in Libya and strongly condemned the indiscriminate and excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators. He notes that the PSC also underscored the Libyan people’s legitimate aspirations. He further states that three days later, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution and sent the matter to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in addition to imposing sanctions on Libyan individuals and entities (Ping, 2011).

During its 265th meeting convened on March 10, 2011, continues Ping, the PSC at the level of heads of state and government agreed on a roadmap for resolving the Libyan crisis. The elements of the initiative are “(i) immediate cessation of all hostilities; (ii) cooperation of the concerned Libyan authorities to facilitate the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to needy populations; (iii) protection of foreign nationals, including the African migrant workers living in Libya; and (iv) dialogue between the Libyan parties and establishment of a consensual and inclusive transitional government” (Ping, 2011). The PSC immediately established a high-level ad hoc committee

to ensure that the roadmap is implemented so that the legitimate aspiration of the Libyan people for democracy is achieved (Ping, 2011).

Ping points out that one week after the adoption of the roadmap, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1973(2011) which imposed a no-fly zone over Libya to protect civilians. He notes that the three African member states of the international body (Gabon, Nigeria, and South Africa) all voted in favor of the resolution. He emphasizes the fact that had one of the three African states abstained, the resolution would have perished (Ping, 2011).

According to Ping, in working toward the implementation of the AU roadmap, during a meeting of the ad hoc committee in Nouakchott, Mauritania on March 19, 2011, it was decided that the members go to Libya to interact with all parties to the conflict. He notes that the group sought permission to go to Libya, as stipulated by Resolution 1973(2011), but the request was rejected. He states that the same day, the military campaign to enforce the resolution was launched (Ping, 2011).

Ping further states that on March 25, 2011, in Addis Ababa, the AU held a consultative meeting that brought together all international stakeholders in the Libyan conflict. The efforts of the ad hoc committee were welcomed and a consensus was reached on the elements of the AU roadmap. Ping notes that the ad hoc committee was in Libya on April 10 and 11. In Tripoli, the then Libyan officials accepted the AU roadmap; while in Benghazi, the leaders of the National Transitional Council (NTC) called for an urgent ceasefire. Ping mentions that on April 26, a meeting at the ministerial level of the PSC reviewed the deteriorating situation in Libya. In May, an extraordinary session of the Assembly of the AU was convened and reiterated the call for "an immediate end to all attacks against civilians and a ceasefire that would lead to the establishment of a consensual transitional period, culminating in elections that would enable the Libyans to freely choose their leaders" (Ping, 2011). Ping adds that he participated as an invitee in a number of the meetings that were geared toward resolving the Libyan crisis. He also traveled to foreign capitals, including Brussels, London, Paris, Rome and Washington, to explain the AU roadmap and seek support for it (Ping, 2011).

On September 5, 2011, recounts Ping, in response to a demand he made, the NTC leadership sent him a letter stressing the strategic orientation of its African policy, as well as its commitment to national unity and the protection of all foreign workers within Libya, including the African migrant workers. He adds that on September 20, in New York, the chairperson of the AU recognized the leaders of the NTC as the representatives of the Libyan people as they form an

inclusive transitional government. Also, at the high-level ad hoc committee meeting held in Pretoria on September 14, the AU committed itself to working with the NTC and all other Libyan stakeholders (Ping, 2011).

Ping concludes by saying that "One of the aspects highlighted by the crisis in Libya relates to the reluctance of some members of the international community to fully acknowledge the AU's role." "Yet," he adds, "lasting peace on the continent can only be achieved if efforts to that end are based on the full involvement of Africa and a recognition of its leadership role because, as stressed by the summit in August 2009, without such a role, there will be no ownership and sustainability..." (Ping, 2011). A profitable question that emerges here is the following: What if the powers that prefer instability in Africa, so that they can continue to exploit and dominate the continent? It should be noted here that with the aid of the United States, Britain, and France, a group of NTC fighters brutally assassinated Qaddafi on October 20, 2011.

Ping's account is supported by a memorandum written by Alex De Waal of the World for Peace Foundation, who argues that the AU peace "proposal was unfairly derided and dismissed by the western powers" mainly because the "US, France and Britain were following a different track and driving UN policy" (De Waal, 2012). De Waal adds that the crux of the disagreement between the AU and NATO occurred when the AU ad hoc committee met in Nouakchott on March 19, 2011. As soon as Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz provided a plane to fly the committee members to Libya for consultations and informed the United Nations about the initiative, the United States and the United Nations sent a curt message to the committee members stating that should they proceed with their visit, their safety could not be guaranteed, and then decided to immediately launch the military campaign against Gaddafi and his supporters (De Waal, 2012).

De Waal concludes that the United States, Britain and France killed the approach for an inclusive negotiated settlement in Libya. The lesson from this, according to De Waal, is that "The African dimensions to the Libyan war shine a spotlight on any justification for NATO's intervention in terms of R2P (the responsibility to protect). The blocking of the AU diplomatic initiative indicates that the decision to escalate the military intervention beyond the defence of Benghazi to an agenda of regime change could not be justified as a last resort. There were options for a negotiated settlement that could have been pursued. Indeed, a partnership between the UN and the AU could have benefitted Libya and both organizations" (De Waal, 2012).

In De Waal's later article titled "African Roles in the Libyan Conflict of 2011" that appears in *International Affairs* (2013), one can delineate at least nine instances of Western underhandedness in the Libyan conflict. First, even though President Barack Obama said that "broadening [the Western] military mission would be a mistake...If we tried to overthrow Qaddafi by force, our coalition would splinter," the subsequent actions of the United States, France and Britain indicate "that such disavowal of regime change was an exercise in dissimulation" (De Waal, 2013:368). Second, in a *New York Times* article bearing the names of Obama, Prime Minister David Cameron, and President Nicolas Sarkozy, the three Western heads of state mentioned the call by the Arab League for intervention in Libya but failed to say that they had just endorsed the African Union's proposal at the United Nations Security Council (De Waal, 2013:369). Third, while the African Union leaders were meeting in Nouakchott, Mauritania on March 19, 2011, Sarkozy hastily convened his "summit for the support of the Libyan people." This move was appropriately interpreted by the African Union leaders as a snub to them (De Waal, 2013:371). Fourth, a meeting was convened in London on March 29 that brought together leaders from the United Nations, the Arab League, the Islamic Conference, the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. At the meeting, the Libyan Contact Group was established, without the African Union. The newly created group immediately called for Gaddafi to give up power and expressed support for the National Transition Council (De Waal, 2013:371). Fifth, while the African Union leaders were meeting in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea to debate the framework for agreement for a political solution the week after it was hammered out in Pretoria, South Africa on June 26, Britain and France sent emissaries to meet privately with African "leaders and said they would object to any mention of a ceasefire in the resolutions" (De Waal, 2013:374). Sixth, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated the United States' position in the starkest terms: "But the bottom line is, whose side are you on? Are you with Qaddafi's side or are you on the side of the aspirations of the Libyan people and the international coalition that has been created to support them?" This statement made it very clear that the Western powers were not interested in negotiations (De Waal, 2013:374). Seventh, on June 27, just days before the Malabo summit, the International Criminal Court issued warrants of arrest for Gaddafi, his son Saif al-Islam and Abdalla al-Sanussi, head of military intelligence. This move by a court that had never before acted with such speed "jeopardized the option of Gaddafi's going quietly into exile" (De Waal, 2013:375). Eighth, at a meeting in Istanbul, Turkey on July 15, the Libyan Contact Group recognized the National Transition Council as the "legitimate governing authority in Libya" and called for Gaddafi to leave office. The group also "reaffirmed the leading role of the United Nations in facilitating dialogue and

supporting an inclusive political transition process," a snub that snuffed out any interest the National Transition Council had in an African Union plan (De Waal, 2013:375). Finally, while the African Union was pursuing a negotiated settlement, The Sudan being influenced by the United States "was actively involved in providing military support to the Libyan opposition, in discreet coordination with Qatar and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" (De Waal, 2013:375).

Employing impeccable empirical evidence, Tony Cartalucci meticulously provides a chronology that shows that the so-called "spontaneous," "indigenous" uprisings hailed as the Arab Spring "were part of an immense geopolitical campaign conceived in the West and carried out through its proxies with the assistance of disingenuous foundations, organizations, and the stable of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) they maintain throughout the world" (Cartalucci, 2011). Cartalucci reveals that from December of 2008 when Egyptian activists from the now infamous April 6 movement were in New York for the inaugural Alliance of Youth Movements (AYM) summit and received training, networking opportunities, and support from various corporate and United States government sponsors, including the State Department itself, to December 2011 when Tunisia and Libya were fully run by Western proxies, the Arab Spring was conceived as the first leg of a grander strategy to encircle Russia and China. What Cartalucci finds even amazing is that it would take almost four months after the uprisings started for corporate media such as the *New York Times* (in its April 14, 2011 article titled "U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings" written by Ron Nixon) to admit that the United States had been behind them and that they were anything but "spontaneous," or "indigenous" (Cartalucci, 2012).

In the case of Libya in particular, Francis Boyle in his book titled *Destroying Libya and World Order* (2013) provides impeccable evidence that shows three decades of United States government, stretching and operating vigorously over five different administrations (Ronald Reagan, George Bush I, Bill Clinton, George Bush II, and Barack Obama), to bring an end to Gaddafi's Revolution, take control of Libya's oil fields, and decimate its Jamahiriya system. Employing standard criteria of international law, Boyle also demonstrates that the R2P doctrine and its antecedent, "humanitarian intervention," were a cover for Western imperialism.

Also, former Congresswoman and 2008 Green Party candidate for President of the United States Cynthia McKinney and her delegation of observers to Libya to monitor the purported humanitarian intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in their collection of essays in the book, *The Illegal War on Libya* (2012), as well as personal accounts by other eyewitnesses, present contradictory

narratives to those of NATO and the mainstream Western media. They were among the handful of independent voices in Libya during the NATO bombardment of a helpless civilian population it had a United Nations mandate to protect and the massive propaganda campaign that made it possible. McKinney and her colleagues address many questions left unanswered by a complicit Western media dealing with why Libya was targeted and not Bahrain, Yemen or Egypt; what life in Libya was like under Gaddafi; the truth about the so-called "Black Mercenaries;" the role of Western nonprofit organizations (NGOs) and the International Criminal Court (ICC); AFRICOM's plans for Africa; and Libya's independent central bank, its oil, its plans for an African currency, and its efforts to free African states from the coils of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Furthermore, intellectual attempts to explain the Arab Spring have not escaped scrutiny. As Bessma Momani argues, structural arguments and convenient frameworks such as neo-Ottomanism, neo-liberalism, Zionism, neo-imperialism, Americanism, globalism and Islamism which are being used to explain the uprisings fail to capture their complexity. This is because, according to him, the Arab people are being denied agency when academics try to fit political history into familiar and convenient theoretical frameworks. He notes that while it is natural for academics to want to tie the events of the uprisings together, the grand, global ideas cannot explain what is going on today in the Middle East. He adds that when Tunisians saw (Tarek al-Tayeb) Mohamed Bouazizi, "a university educated" fruit seller set himself ablaze in December of 2010 in reaction to corrupt police who told him he could not sell his fruit without paying a bribe, when Egyptians saw the brutal attack and indignity caused to Khaled (Mohamed) Saeed, and when the Syrian children of Deraa wrote the fatal words "down with the regime," they were not living in "isms" (Momani, 2012).

Of the three examples Momani cites, the one on Bouazizi is problematic, since Islam forbids suicide. In fact, Bouazizi never graduated from high school, contrary to what Momani states. In Tunisia, many people mocked Bouazizi for setting himself ablaze because he was slapped by a 45-year-old female municipal officer, Faïda Hamdi, for lacking a vending permit. Instead, Bouazizi's sister, Samia, then 19 years old, is credited for organizing and starting the initial protests when the mayor of Sidi Bouzid refused to meet with the family.

The ultimate question here then is the following: Why is it important to understand the struggle over conceptualizing the phenomenon that came to be dubbed as the Arab Spring? Indeed, to call a thing by its precise name is the beginning of understanding, because it is the key to the procedure

that allows the mind to grasp reality and its many relationships.

Possibility for the Spread of the Arab Spring across Africa

An examination of the writings on the Arab Spring and its potential to spread across Africa makes it possible to delineate two categories within which their authors can be placed: (1) those who asserted that the uprisings would spread and (2) those who contended that they would not spread. Among those writers who argued that the Arab Spring would spread across Africa are the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2011), contributors to the book titled *African Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions* (2011), David Smith et al. (2011), Joseph Siegle (2011), Abdulrazaq Magaji (2012), United Press International (2012), Monica Gutierrez and Eduardo Rubio (2012), Virginia Comoli (2012), and Terna Gyuse and Isaiah Esipisu (2012). Those writers who denoted that the Arab Spring would not spread across Africa are Gaoussou Drabo (2011), Sim Tack (2012), BBC News (2012), Marianne Pretorius (2012), Rosa Belkadi (2012), and Helen Epstein (2013). While it seems that more writers attested that the uprisings would spread, it is obvious that those who maintained that it would not spread were accurate.

Leading the group which believed that the Arab Spring would spread across Africa, the report by the ACSS (2011) proffered the view that the uprisings would serve as a trigger, not a driver, for further democratic reforms in Africa. This is because, according to the report, the continent has been experiencing a democratic surge during this time with important advances in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria, and Zambia, among other countries. Is it not true, however, that the countries mentioned had their democratic breakthroughs not as a result of street revolutions like in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya?

The contributors to *African Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions* (2011) argued that the uprisings spurred others across Africa because the struggle for democratization goes beyond calls merely for transparent electoral processes to a reawakening of the spirit of freedom and justice of the majority. They cited as examples Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Western Sahara, and Zimbabwe. In addition to these countries, Smith et al. (2011) mentioned Nigeria, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Mozambique. Siegle (2011), Magaji (2012), United Press International (2012), Gutierrez and Rubio (2012), and Comoli (2012) also predicted that some of these countries would suffer the same fate of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. For Gyuse and Esipisu (2012), only those countries in Africa that do not ensure food security and good governance would encounter a similar fate. But,

we are yet to see regime changes in these countries due to street revolutions.

Drabo (2011) led the group which said that the Arab Spring would not spread across Africa by arguing that Africans recall past uprisings and learnt from them, thereby being more suspicious toward the emergence of the various “Springs.” He then offered three reasons for his position. The first reason is that an important part of Africa had already plunged into a democratic turmoil during the 1990s similar to the one that was taking place in the Arab world. The second reason is that the famous bonus for democracy promised never reached the level of expectation. And the final reason is that Europe and the United States have been ambiguous toward the revolts in the Maghreb and the Near East.

Tack (2012) provided four reasons for why outcomes similar to those of the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya failed to materialize in other African countries. First, the social environment (for example, a large middle class) that gave power to popular support of the uprisings in the Maghreb and Middle East is lacking in most of Africa South of the Sahara. Second, the technology-dependent media such as Twitter and Facebook that enabled the Arab youth to spread information, organize protests, and coordinate their activities are not widely accessible in most African countries. Third, lower literacy among those with low socio-economic status in many African countries hinders the spread of information and awareness about political development and human rights standards in the world. Fourth, while religion was a unifying factor in the Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan uprisings, it is a barrier in Africa South of the Sahara.

BBC News (2012) argued that the Arab Spring would not spread across Africa, because it would signify a step backwards, not forward. In fact, as the news service stated, it would make a mockery of all that the majority of the African countries achieved in the late 1980s and early 1990s when they ushered in multiparty democracies to replace dictators and presidents-for-life. If anything, BBC news added, the propagandists of the Arab Spring had more to learn from their counterparts in Africa South of the Sahara than the other way round.

Pretorius (2012) maintained that the Arab Spring was unlikely to spread across Africa because history has shown that residents of Africa South of the Sahara have only resisted oppression when it has been enforced from the outside. Instead of starting a revolution, asserted Pretorius, citizens turn into fugitives and become a burden for other countries that are trying to keep afloat in tough economic times. She added that most Africans have great difficulty rising up against their own for fear of being accused of being imperialist stooges, and very often they are.

For Belkadi (2012), the Arab Spring would not spread across Africa and would fail to spur lasting democratization even in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya because it was a fast-forward approach to democracy that could bring about the undesirable result of theocratic rule. Citing the case of Algeria, she argued that the citizens of the country were at best content with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s performance or, at worst, they were unwilling to face the instability that follows such turmoil, which they endured after the tragic events of the 1990s. (It was not until this year that Algerian protesters forced him to step down from office.)

Epstein (2013) argued that the Arab Spring would not spread in Africa because President Barack Obama had failed to live up to his earlier pronouncements for democratization across the continent. According to her, the Obama Administration’s neglect of human rights in Africa is the main reason for the shortcoming and, therefore, a great disappointment. She added that the administration’s focus on stability, security, and development while ignoring democracy and human rights is self-defeating, as it undermines those very goals.

Consequences from the Arab Spring

A number of consequences have emerged from the Arab Spring. Among them are economic challenges, weapons proliferation, authoritarian response that combines intransigence with strategic adaptability, and challenges to international law.

In terms of economic challenges, Mohammad Sharki (2012) reports that in the wake of the Arab Spring, North African countries are experiencing tough economic times, even though these nations have restructured state institutions and adopted new constitutions, laws and modes of governance. He notes that a number of analysts have suggested that this situation will continue after a decline of economic growth. He mentions the fact that despite the oil wealth, these countries are facing a growing youth unemployment rate reaching 40% of the educated class. He adds that although 7-10% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of these countries is being spent on secondary education, they are not reaping the benefits of this investment, since not a sufficient number of jobs are opening up, which are estimated to total half a million opportunities per year.

On the issue of weapons proliferation, Joanna Buckley (2012) informs us that the Arab Spring was followed by a ripple effect as military weapons leaked into surrounding unstable and conflict areas—a situation that has led to long-term national and regional security instabilities. In the aftermath of the West’s orchestrated and aided toppling of Gaddafi’s government, Buckley notes that authorities in Algeria,

Egypt, Israel, Niger and Tunisia expressed concern over the leakage of weaponry from Libya. She mentions the fact that the major powers in the international community, especially Russia, raised serious concern about the leakage of these weapons. She cites northern Mali as a case where such weapons are being used by the Tuareg to press their separatist demand. She adds that an increasing number of defections by security forces and militarization of the uprising in Syria also led to serious security concerns.

Events in the Middle East and other regions, according to Freedom House (2013), have fostered an authoritarian response that combines intransigence with strategic adaptability. This phenomenon in turn has had a significant impact on the state of global freedom. The organization's *Freedom in the World* reports on political rights and civil liberties reveals that more countries registered declines than exhibited gains in these attributes. Also, the Economist Intelligence Unit (2011) during the height of the uprisings demonstrated that the decades-long global trend in democratization came to a halt, albeit the political malaise is not limited to Africa and the Middle East, as the organization points out as follows:

A political malaise in east-central Europe has led to disappointment and questioning of the strength of the region's democratic transition. Media freedoms have been eroded across Latin America and populist forces with dubious democratic credentials have come to the fore in a few countries in the region. In the developed West, a precipitous decline in political participation, weaknesses in the functioning of government and security-related curbs on civil liberties are having a corrosive effect on some long-established democracies (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2011:3).

In the case of challenges to international law, Michèle Olivier (2011) argues that the downfall of the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have had serious consequences for international law across Africa. As Olivier points out, while "traditional international law refrained from prescribing to states which forms of government they should subscribe to in their own territories and prohibited the international community from intervening in what was essentially considered as the domestic affairs of states, this approach has come under increasing pressure in the post-Cold War era, with a growing trend amongst global and regional organizations to regard democracy as the only acceptable system of domestic rule" (Olivier, 2011). Thus, as Olivier also notes, those opposed to this move toward democracy are weary that enforcement of a right to democracy may lead the international community to pursue and justify any form of pro-democracy intervention (Olivier, 2011).

In terms of an overarching consequence from the Arab Spring, it is fitting to quote the following sobering caution from Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering: "It is important for the U.S. to understand that the Arab Spring is seen more widely in the Muslim world as reflecting America's declining influence in the region, and that this perception will increase as the U.S. prepares to withdraw from Afghanistan" (cited by Cupp, 2012). Indeed, as the United States, Britain, and France saw giddily themselves and their values in the Arab Spring, it seems that they may have misconstrued exactly what they had orchestrated.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The preceding discourse has been edging toward the proposition that in order for Africans to combat the challenges they face in fostering democracy and improving 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.

I therefore propose a Union of African States (UAS) based on the theoretical/paradigmatic postulates of some great African thinkers. The hybrid UAS will look like the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1. As can be observed, the ideal UAS will promote the tenets of Thandika Mkandawire's Developmental Statism, Willie Munyoki Mutunga's Human Rights Statism, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's African Socialism, Adebayo Olukoshi's Sociality, and Mueni wa Muui's *Fundi wa Afrikanity*. The following brief discussion of these scholars' postulates is based on Abdul Karim Bangura's essay titled "A Mathematical Exploration of Fractal Complexity among the Axioms on the African State in the Journal of Third World Studies: From John Mukum Mbaku to Pade Badru" (2012). The interested reader can consult the essay for more details.

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 "clientelism" 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 (Bangura, 2012).

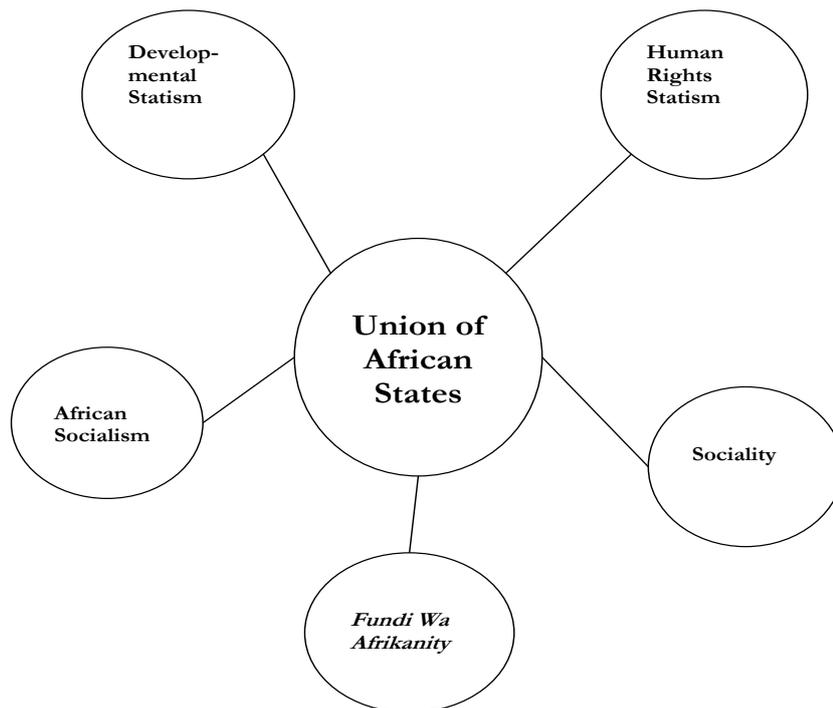


Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework of a Hybrid UAS

The Human Rights idea of the state is advocated by Willy Munyoki 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; Bangura, 2012).

Proponents 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 (Bangura, 2012).

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; Bangura, 2012).

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; Bangura, 2012).

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; Bangura, 2012).

The ultimate question then is this: 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.).

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 and 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 progressively to 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 *Afriscope*. Diop was persuaded to break a 15-year silence to speak to Africa and the world when he was convinced that *Afriscope* is a highly serious-minded and uncompromising African medium. The interviews originally appeared in *Afriscope* (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):

- (a) 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.

- (b) 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.
- (c) 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, or armies were not created with the intent of facing up to any external threat.
- (d) 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 any more than an I.D. card for traveling to and from any part of the continent.
- (e) 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.
- (f) 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 rotating 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.
- (g) 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?
- (h) 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.
- (i) 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.
- (j) 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.

- (k) 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.
- (l) 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 renovating effort.
- (m) 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.
- (n) 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.
- (o) 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 holistically restore the historical consciousness of

African peoples and facilitate the complete recovery of their political sovereignty in a postcolonial world.

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