

AFRICAN IDEOLOGY IN A WORLD OF CHANGE

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Introduction

The apparently chiasmic expression: *a world of change* and *a changing world*, seemingly appear the same but are not entirely synonymous all at once. We need to be on our guard here while we reflect. The statement is most similar to the notion of a *place of revolution* and a *revolving place*. This attention is necessary to be drawn because, while we reflect, a juxtaposition of these ideas may surreptitiously sneak into our thought process and infest our clear thinking with a medley of confusion.

Beyond the semantics of saying that *a world of change* depicts a steady state of a completed action, the phrase: *a changing world*, would certainly refer to an action in the present continuous tense. Thus, while one is a passive platter to be acted upon, the other is active in the action of changing. The two central words: *world* and *change* challenge our ability to comprehend the – entire world, albeit, the – universe as it were, depending on the prepositions: *in* and *of*. There is need for our total understanding of the world in order to appropriately locate our ever *evolving presence and experience therein*, and thus delineate our conduct in a manner that has to fundamentally secure our survival, comfort and sustainability. It is this definition and delineation of the thematic: *ideology in a world of change that will bring us face to face with the unchanging understanding that the world as a theatre is ever in motion and varying in form and characteristics*. It is this world's human and material content *flux* or constant change that we may now categorize, qualify or describe as *ever changing*. It then logically compels us to subscribe to change as one of the major characteristics of the world in geopolitical, socio-economic and value terms.

The direct consequence of this characterization of the world as an *entity*,

the open theatre for changes, and in which entity we must survive and live, is that compulsion to contrive ways and means of sustaining vivacity in the world of change. These *contrivances* which ensue from our conception of the world and our place in it, crystallize into ideas that will enable humans to conquer the challenges of the world, which is replete with riddles of change.

Having cleared the mist in our thought process, we are better positioned to now say that our focus here in this discourse is on *Africans and their ideologies in a world of change*. We will need to, delimit here, also, the Africans or groups among "Africans" that we wish to speak about their ideologies. We also need to delimit the world we are referring to; - whether the entire globe or focusing only on the African continent or whether we need to include the countless numbers of Africans in Diaspora. It might also be safe for us now to talk about Africans wherever they are found and wielding authority or power or, about Africans wherever they form formidable groups and manifesting very significant impact on their environments.

To significantly and meaningfully engage in this discourse, it may well be more profitable to initially define and understand our terminologies. The operative terminologies in this discourse are as follows: -

African, ideology and the world of change. Our clear understanding of these key terminologies, will certainly position us to adequately engage with the thematic: *African ideologies in a world of change*.

African - who is African?

Wikipedia tells us that:

African(s) may refer to: Anything from or pertaining to the continent of Africa: people who are native to Africa, descendants of natives of Africa, or individuals who trace their ancestry to indigenous inhabitants of Africa.

Conversely, all those whose genealogy or ancestry are traceable to Africans, no matter the period in antiquity patently remain Africans, irrespective of whatever other citizenship they may claim. Thus, colour, domicile of choice and impeccable legal claims cannot make a non-African, an African and vice-versa. This is more so where there can be scientifically provable absence of the genetic properties which are expected to be found

in autochthonous African or people of other nativity. We have just dealt with the expression: African, only on one side and that is, as it pertains the person.

The other aspect of the term African can be looked at as it refers in totality to the possessive case. Thus, an African could now refer to anything that has its origin from Africa, whether in terms of good or services, provided it is of Africa. Provability of the nativity, originality or fundamental derivation of most things in this regard can be very contentious. However, it is only necessary that we take note of this aspect of the term African (of things) in the possessive case; and be weary of confusion of the ideas when the issues arise.

It does not suffice to say that whatever presents Africanness, (some characteristics reflecting origin from Africa) either in form, structure, character, trait, usage or tendency is African. Conditions may change and these presentations and characteristics may seemingly subsist or truly assume or represent other origins.

When the tendency to substantially represent the image, status and nature, as well as the desire to sustain *Africanity*, as character of the African continent consciously representing people and thing therefore takes the centre stage, that disposition can be referred to as Africanism. It becomes a movement open to question by philosophers, measurable by sociologists and classifiable by political scientists.

These groups of intellectuals would want to take closer look at the movement or tendency from various perspectives, to find out whether the idea or belief qualifies to be called an ideology, a way of life – cultural belief or habit. Great attention is paid here to emphasize the gaining of understanding about Africa because, many Africans take it for granted that it is just enough to claim to be or not be African, only by virtue of place of birth or by documentary claims to that effect.

We also learn from the same Wikipedia that Africa (as an entity) ranks second in the whole world on grounds of geographical size and in population. Africa is said to be sitting on about 30.370.000 million Km², that is about 11.7 million square miles, including adjacent Islands. The coverage of Africa is 20% of it land area. Furthermore, we learn that Africa has fifty-four (54) known countries and a population of 1,225, 510 people as at 2016.

What is meant by ideology?

The commonly used Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary tells us that ideology is the science of ideas, metaphysics, abstract speculation and or a visionary speculation. Further, ideology could be seen as a body of ideas or a way of thinking. This definition does not in any way enrich us with the reason for, uses, types and characteristics of these ideas and where they can be applied. The dictionary only further told us that ideology is etymologically Greek, thus; *idea* means-idea and *logos* means - discourse; therefore ideology means a discourse or study of ideas.

Since ideas or body of ideas are applicable within human circles by humans with reference to discourse, we turn to sociologists for some insight. The sociologist, Persell (1990:194), discussing the understanding of society, states that:

Ideology is a system of ideas that reflects and justifies the interests of those who believe in it. An ideology makes existing inequalities seen more “natural” or taken for granted. An important feature of ideology is that it bears some slight resemblance to reality.

However, it is notable that when changes are set to occur on the sociological or political landscape of a people, Persell (1990:504) states that “ideology plays a key role in the recruitment process of a social movement”. This implies therefore, that one ideology can be used to jettison the other, depending however, on the intellectual and programmatic conformity of the new body of ideas with palpable reality. It is based on this precondition that Ferree and Miller (1985:42) defined ideology as:

A flexible structure of beliefs about the nature of social relationships, one’s position in the social structure and causes and consequences of social action.

Attention needs now to be drawn to the fact that in the course of our definition of African, as anything or person(s) genetically native to the second largest and populous continent of the world, Africa, we also implied that changes do occur on this continent in the form and life style of the African. The changes trigger off expected struggle for Africanism as a reactionary movement against any impending disorder or subjugation. Thus Africanism emerges as an ideology. It then calls for groups of persons to propagate the ideology circumstantially.

We also have discovered that ideas arise in chains to justify firm possession or expropriation of Africanness through political, socio-economic and educational packages designed for Africans, either by Africans as leaders or by foreign aids or by revolutionary, reform or regressive movements. But the centre-point is that change continuously reverberates in the forms delineated above and they do generate, and sometimes exacerbate the formulation of ideologies, in order to contain the resultant changes.

The happen stances experienced by the African, be they, discrimination or acceptance; hunger or opulence; health challenges and their management; peace and wars; natural disasters and balanced ecosystem, all establish the existence of change in Africa among Africans. The direct consequence is formulation of ideologies, movements, sets of beliefs and other contrivances by which to live and enjoy sustainable development as Africans. Some reflections on change and stability with to regard to ideologies among Africans in a world of change becomes our next port of call.

Change and stability

As already spoken about, change is a direct reversal and destabilization of the *status quo*. It is the direct opposite of the existing order. Due to the multiplicity of diverse languages spoken by the component groups of the African continent, and which languages make them unique, there has been persistent occurrence of violent conflicts, fueled by ethnic and religious differences in the post-colonial era.

The conflicts are not unconnected with the natural struggle to keep ones' own and advance it. Some struggles arise out of the desire to, not only keep and maintain ones' own, but also to acquire other peoples' own, either as a matter of greed, sheer show of power and superiority or out of envy, lack of subsistence and sustenance facilities or even outright imposition of self on others; either for the fun of it or for derivation of some satisfaction there from.

Even the ancient philosophers' maxim that "*Omnia flunt*" (everything is following) i.e. everything is in flux and that *the only permanent thing in life is change*, enthuse many such that they adopt the imposition or infliction of change on society, irrespective of the importance of change, its irrelevance or consequences.

Change can actually be static even when it is occurring. For instance, when an electric which has changed a hand fan is turning on the spindle, or its fulcrum, normal wind-flow is tampered with, (change) but the changed electric fan (now becoming an Agent of change) is stationary. You may change the gear of a moving vehicle to a stop. We are not going to pursue the semantics of the use of the word change, but the word change in application could be relative in varying ways.

However, when people harp on the cliché that “*the only permanent thing in life is change*”, a little reflection or explanation has to follow to show in what manner the change occurs. This attention is worthy of note as it takes us into the development of group or personal world views or beliefs, which eventually translate into what becomes ideologies for people; whether of political parties, unions or movements.

But be it known that it is the desire, whether morally sound or in ordinate, to effect change that bring about the formulation of ideologies. It is worthy of note also that, due to the growing tendency to making things happen or prevent them from happening, the avalanche of ideologies in, around, and from Africa, as a theatre of constant change among its human race, is indeed becoming enormous. Let us now look at African ideologies as they play out.

African Ideologies

The word *ideology* was first coined by a French philosopher, Antoine Destutt de Tracy, in 1796 Hart, (2002) when he proposed it as a term to designate the science of ideas. He delineated two types of ideologies, namely political ideology and epistemological ideology. Besides these enunciated ideologies there are five trending major political ideologies, namely: socialism, liberalism, absolutism, conservatism and anarchism. We shall place our focus generally on political ideologies and leave the rest of definitions and delineations to philosophers.

There is an emerging plethora of ideologies among African nations due to unprecedented reversals in the dependency of African nations and Africans on the colonial and imperialist nations of the west and America. With African nations, colonialism and imperialism had reigned supreme and leaving Africans to be gratefully dependent on the west as kind sustainers of African existence.

Even when Africans find some difficulties with present day mis-governance, neo-colonialism plays out with people both the educated and stark illiterates as well as the expected well informed, calling for a return of the colonial masters. They out of desperation, forget that they have been bewitched with the imperialists' way of life and there is need for a separation from that spirit, so that total independence can be enjoyed. We must not forget as pointed out by Akude (2007:1) that "successful decolonization implied the transfer of political power to a political elite that was born and bred in colonial practices, structures, ethos and, in variably interests".

It is notable that earlier African leaders were trained alongside colonialist patterns and their disposition reflected the west. As at then, their political ideologies were capitalism, communism, socialism, and Marxism. When African political movement leaders arose, quite a spate of them added, the suffix "*ism*" to their political selves or natural names other than well formulated theories or beliefs that chat their course of political leadership. Such that you can have Zikism, Nkurumaism as ideologies.

Without trading the names, it is notable that some of the political leaders of Africa advanced deep rooted ideologies such as: Kwame Nkwurumah's, *consciencism*, Julius Nyerere's Uhuru na Ujamaa.

However, since the collapse of slave trade and further down the years of political independence of many African nations, Pan-Africanism first mooted by Du Bois has become a movement for the African people in search of true independence, both politically, socially and economically. This movement has in fact, metamorphosed into an ideology. For example, in May 2013, the African Union, while celebrating its fifty years of existence, adopted the theme of the summit as "Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance". According to Aihie, (2014:2).

The celebration was underpinned by the collective African aspirations namely: protection of their civilization, emancipation of the African people to fend off slave conditions, racism and colonialism among other historical injustices that were meted on the continent by global powers.

These guiding subthemes have in no small measure helped in shaping what either may, strictly or loosely, be called African ideologies for political emancipation.

The major ideologies that have resonated from the consciousness of being really African, while struggling to extricate Africans from the shackles of colonialism or the power of pseudo-colonialism according to Hendrickson and Zaki, (2013) are: African Abolitionism and anti-colonialism, African socialism and Marxism, the non-aligned movement, Negritude, Ujama, Ubuntu, African feminism, environmentalism and post colonialism.

These are areas of interest that need to be critically examined and cross-marched for potency when considering effective African ideology in a world of change.

Summary of Conclusion

I have consciously made effort to avoid going into the main themes of the subsequent papers that shall be discussed for two major reasons.

The first is that I am possibly avoiding the chances of repeating better enriched opinions on the issue and only hazard and verging critically into the areas of the specialists and secondly, I only wished to skirt around the possible areas of discussion in order to really rouse interests for in-depth discussion at the plenary session.

What I have really done is to be pedantic in exposing the fundamental aspects of the thematic: *“African ideologies in a world of change”* and ensuring that we are at grips with the operational key words and thereafter regurgitate their implications as we move on in life.

Believing very strongly that this conference is well constituted, discussants shall indeed have a field day in engaging these multi-dimensions of ideologies for the growth, development and sustainability of the African continent and Africans the world over.

If I have sensitized you by the little I have said so that you be about the conference theme more critically, then I must thank you for listening.

Thank you all for your attention.

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