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THE PARADOX OF PAN- AFRICANISM: ASPIRATIONS FOR UNITY AMIDST GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Is Pan-Africanism a Vision or an Unfulfilled Promise?

Pan-Africanism was conceived as a guiding principle for Africa's independence, resilience, and self-determination—a unified continent managing its own resources, shaping its policies, and negotiating as a global power bloc. Its pioneers cautioned that political independence without economic integration would be insufficient, leaving the continent vulnerable to external influences and internal divisions.

Today, the challenge remains: how to translate the ideals of Pan-Africanism into tangible progress. While the African Union (AU) and regional bodies continue to emphasize unity, Africa's ability to act collectively remains a work in progress. Rather than a fully cohesive

bloc, the continent still grapples with governance structures that, at times, prioritize national interests over collective advancement.

“CAN AFRICA
OVERCOME
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ACHIEVE TRUE
UNITY?”



The Role of the AU and Africa's Collective Voice

The AU plays a crucial role in fostering dialogue and cooperation, but questions persist about its effectiveness in addressing critical issues. One key challenge is the extent to which AU leadership can openly address governance concerns within member states. Given that the AU Chairperson is accountable to the Assembly of Heads of State rather than a broader electorate, there is often a diplomatic balancing act that influences public statements and interventions.

Visibility and responsiveness are essential for any continental institution to remain relevant. Timely communication on pressing

issues—whether through media engagement or policy action—can enhance the AU's credibility. The absence of a robust continental media network further complicates Africa's ability to set its own narrative. Unlike CNN, France 24, or Al Jazeera, Africa lacks a dedicated news platform with broad continental reach, making external media the primary source of information about African affairs.

Establishing an independent, well-funded continental media network could contribute significantly to strengthening Africa's voice on the global stage. Such an initiative would require commitment to editorial freedom, sustainability, and a shared vision for African storytelling.

Learning from History: Sékou Touré and the Need for Solidarity

The principles of Pan-Africanism were tested early in Africa's post-colonial history. In 1958, Guinea's Ahmed Sékou Touré rejected France's offer of continued economic and defense agreements, choosing full independence instead. His stance led to economic hardship as France withdrew aid, and while his leadership had its complexities, his experience underscored the importance of African solidarity. Had other Francophone nations collectively taken the same path, the outcome might have been different.

History demonstrates that when African nations stand together, they can exert greater influence. The question remains: how can current leaders cultivate the political will to support one another meaningfully in times of need?

The New AU Chairperson: A Chance for Renewed Commitment?

On 15 February 2025, the AU elected Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Djibouti's long-serving Foreign Minister, as its new Chairperson of the Commission. With decades of diplomatic experience, Youssouf has emphasized the importance of financial self-sufficiency for the AU.

His leadership will be closely watched to see whether he can advance meaningful reforms that strengthen the AU's institutional capacity and independence.

Given Djibouti's geopolitical significance—hosting multiple foreign military bases—his tenure also raises questions about how Africa can balance external partnerships with internal self-reliance. His ability to navigate these complexities will be a defining factor in his leadership.

Addressing the Principle of Non-Interference

One of the AU's long-standing challenges is the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states. While sovereignty is a fundamental principle, there are moments when silence in the face of democratic backsliding, electoral manipulation, or governance crises can be detrimental to collective progress.

There are historical precedents for decisive action. In 1979, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere intervened in Uganda to remove Idi Amin, demonstrating that regional solidarity can extend beyond diplomatic statements. Striking the right balance between respecting sovereignty and promoting accountability remains one of the AU's most pressing considerations.

The AU's Symbolism and Structural Challenges

Symbolism matters in fostering unity. While the AU flag and emblem represent continental solidarity, inconsistencies—such as the omission of some island nations from official representations—highlight areas for improvement. Additionally, the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, funded as a donation from China, serves as a reminder of Africa's continued reliance on external support.

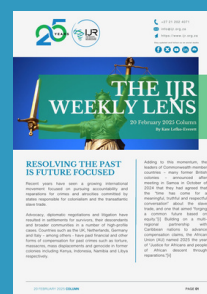
For the AU to fully embody its founding vision, greater investment in African-led initiatives is essential. This includes sustainable funding mechanisms, stronger enforcement of governance standards, and a commitment to transparent leadership.

The Path Forward: Strengthening the AU's Role

The AU was established to advance Africa's political and economic integration. To enhance its impact, the following steps could be considered:

- Strengthening mechanisms for accountability and transparency within member states.
- Encouraging timely financial contributions from all AU member nations to reduce dependence on external funding.
- Promoting an independent continental media network to shape Africa's global narrative.
- Revisiting the principle of non-interference to allow for constructive engagement in governance issues where necessary.

The future of Pan-Africanism depends on a shared commitment to these ideals. While challenges persist, Africa has the resources, talent, and potential to drive its own narrative and development agenda. With strategic leadership and collective resolve, the vision of a more united and self-sufficient continent remains within reach.



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