“Reform, Modernization and Transformation of the Public Sector in Africa”

by

Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo

To Be Presented in A Seminar on “How to Achieve the Emergence Vision of African Countries by the Year 2025?” (Strategies, Capacities and Challenges)

Pan African Seminar for Coordinators and Officials in Charge of the National Vision for Emergence
Tangier (Morocco)
24-26 September 2012
FIRST DRAFT ONLY, PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE

Introduction: General Issues and Objectives

Examing the topic of “Reform, Modernization and Transformation of the Public Sector in Africa” is not a simple technical or a legalistic exercise in which one creates a menu of correlated input-output model and intellectualizes about their universal values in a given social context. Rather, it is a philosophical, historical and political analysis with prescribed policy implications in a long-term. It is to theoretically interrogate the existing nature of the public sector and critically review how to establish sets of capability this sector needs in order to define itself effectively and acquire new properties and prerequisites of change from within itself and the development of an ideological agenda that should shape and guide its mission for the benefit of all.
The public sector within African state and society in general, despite the differences in its origins and its functioning forms in each country, is currently going through a global and multilayer crisis, which includes: its deontology, its legitimacy, its ownership, the nature of its relationship to society, and that of its relationship relations to liberal globalization. When most African countries can their nominal political independence, public sector was considered as an all-thing machine for every one—our elephant as it is called in Liberia. About two decades after the independence, it was reduced to be a smaller and weaker machine of the state, which operated to promote and support interests of a fewer people. After the end of the Cold War politics (1947-1991), it has been an area with various types of partnership to work both domestically and internationally with the corporate world with a dual mission: growth and development on the one hand, and liberal democratization and human rights on the other hand. Although this is not the first time, the need for new reform, modernization and transformation has become imperative, especially in the context of the people’s demands for a shift in paradigms in economic and political models in Africa. The public sector has to be reconceptualized between the forces of liberal globalization and the imperatives of nationalism, which in this paper is summarized as a pan-African framework.

This presentation is divided into eight sections: within the first part, which is this introduction, I define my objectives, posing questions that are used as intellectual guidelines, I raise the general issues related to the subject matter and identify the elements of the problematic; In the second section, I discuss my the main elements of the problematic, general arguments and approaches; the third section, I clarify the concepts of reform, modernization and transformation; in the fourth heading, I examine the concept of public sector; the fifth part is on public administration arena in which public mission has to be actualized; The sixth part addresses the question of why transforming the state; in the seventh, I discuss the strategies for transforming the public sector; The eight heading is the conclusion.

With the end of the first Cold War politics, despite various forms of national and informal resistances to the trends of unipolarity in world politics and consequences of the failures of liberal economy as reflected in the current conditions of protests in most countries, we have entered in the era of liberal globalization and its the emphasis on privatization, free market, and liberal democracy. Does the public sector matter in the process of creating new strategies and formulating new policies needed toward implementing the African vision of 2025? For whom does it matter? I think that it matters; this is why this topic is the object of my critical analysis. What has been its mission? How has this mission been produced? Within the current changes in international political economy within the rise of the newly industrial countries, how can it be reformed, modernized and transformed for the benefit of the majority of the African people?
Although this author draws the premises and experiences about the public sector from the past contemporary history, the structures of the political economy of Africa and elements of her state formations, he has put more emphasis on the need for an understanding and re-conceptualization of the public sector. Within this perspective, it addresses broadly the issues of its deontology, its forms, its intended objectives and the nature of its outcomes.

My main interrelated objectives in this paper are: (a) to critically discuss and raise the issues about the concepts of reform, modernization and transformation as important tools within the discourses on development and globalization in Africa; (b) to examine why I think the request to transform the public sector should be as part of the African national agenda discourse; and (c) to develop strategies needed to be formulated and implemented toward the advancement of the claimed developmental model in Africa associated with the vision of the emerging economies by 2025. Within the last objective, I expand on the notion of pan-Africanism as a neo-realist and relevant regional political framework in which the public sector can be built, nurtured, consolidated, and expanded in Africa. Although this approach is not new, the imperatives of neo-liberal globalization, its contradictions and its impact on the local and regional economies and markets, peoples’ conditions, have forced us to revisit this intellectual and political agenda within the framework of implementing the vision 2025.

I argue that the pan-African framework, which is transnational as both a strategy and a political philosophy, to re-organize the public sector is politically, economically and culturally relevant because it contains the elements of self-reliance, multiculturalism and diversity, sharing collective interests and values, and a broadening an understanding of the working forces of liberal globalization and promoting the African location in geo-political interests.

One of the key factors toward implementing any political vision and in this case, the vision 2025 in Africa, is the construction of a legal/political framework that would facilitate the process of its gradual change of the public sector. However, before talking about the mechanisms of its implementation, it is necessary that we ask if this new vision is philosophically and politically African – that is to say, is it originally conceived in Africa by African political forces (citizens) and for the advancement of the benefits of the majority of Africans, or was it conceived elsewhere but negotiated through the African political elites as part of international platform to assess the level of progress in the World system? The origin of this vision is very important as we look at how the public sector plans to carry it out. If it was not originated in Africa, then the question becomes: How can Africans appropriate if it deems to be relevant?
It is accepted by a large number of African experts, activists, international and regional organizations and agencies, and by a significant number of African political leaders within the African Union that Africa of today is no longer a “lost continent” of popular imagination without any consistent economic vision or any national political agenda, or any substantive creativity. For more than 4 decades, the continent was considered as a dumping ground of so many irrelevant and inappropriate developmental experiments entitled models, which were either imposed on Africa or only partially negotiated with the states on “bad faith.” The outcome is well known by many about where the continent at large has been.

However, since the beginning of the 21st century, economically the African region by large has been growing rapidly, even when some countries were in civil wars, for over a decade, the private sector is relatively expanding as compared to the last decades, and a new class of consumers is wielding some considerable spending power. Even so, on ground, social and economic conditions of the majority of peoples have not been improving significantly among the segments of the African youth, women, rural and lumpen-intellectuals. In fact the overall situation is not getting any better; the public sector has been severely handicapped to promote and support progress, as this sector has been suffering from the multitudes of malaises, including the effects of global privatization, corruption, political instability, civil wars, economic marginalization at global level, the consequences of implementing the orthodoxy of the first and second generations of the structural adjustment programs and lack of a strong national political leadership.

Furthermore, as argued in this paper, liberal democracy or multipartyism in its practical form in many African societies is not enough. It has been inadequate to mobilize tangible resources needed for economic and social development—progress.

Most of us also agree that Africa is no longer the "lost continent" of popular imagination. With a relatively stable political institutions in many countries, a vibrant civil society, an elected political leadership, the region has been growing rapidly for over a decade, the private sector is expanding and a new class of consumers is wielding considerable spending power. Because of its young and growing population, the sky is the limit for future growth. Between 2010 and 2020, the continent is set to add 122 million people to its labor force. An expansion of this magnitude should set the stage for dynamic growth, but capturing this potential will require a change in economic development strategy.

Unless, the current conditions and political and economic structures that are producing these malaises are eradicated, with the application of genuine African based political vision, the public sector will continue to mirror of the failed or failing states. Furthermore for the youth and working class, at its current pace, Africa is not generating wage-paying jobs rapidly enough to absorb its massive labor force,
which will be the largest in the world by 2035. By and large, despite economic growth, poverty persists in many African countries.

As articulated in the concept paper on “How to implement the vision of becoming an emerging country by the year 2025,” African people through various types of contestations and protestations, the forces associated with liberal globalization with its imperatives, and the new types of political leadership are demanding for change in the ground with people’s participation and the transformation of their socio-economic conditions. These changes framed with the policies and guidelines of reform, modernization and transformation are about the adoption or advancement of the pre-requisites of becoming an emerging country. Thus, the ambitions of African countries are to become economically either like Brazil, China, India, Russia, Malaysia, South Korea, to cite only a few, or to imitate their development processes that might lead to reproducing an emerging country’s economy or behavior.

I take the concept of an emerging country to be a philosophical and political concept or an exemplar and not a replica. It is a new developmental model that has its historical and philosophical foundation in globalism with its particular features. As I argue in this paper, duplication is not historically, culturally and politically a relevant possibility.

Indeed, today, there are multitudes of efforts from different origins such as various African governments and their public administrations, their political elites, the non-governmental organizations, various groups of civil society and African peoples who are committed to changing positively the African institutions and conditions, and the African image for the benefits of the majority of people. It is expected that by 2025, African states, their institutions, their peoples and their traditions, their education systems, their technologies, and their bureaucracies would be able to produce the functioning, competitive, and productive economies, nationally respected political institutions and political behaviors, and education systems with processes and the outcomes that would be internationally and regionally comparable to those of the emerging economies.

It is intellectually and politically agreed upon that this will never take place as an organic process or a natural evolutionary process. It is also assumed that the dynamics of those new economies, their systems of production and management, and their mechanisms of distribution would be considered socially and locally transformative and sustainable.

On the other hand, in order to produce such economies, there is a need to build new systems of managerial systems of human and physical resources, new inward looking political and social institutions, solid infrastructures and new systems of social and physical security and the people and bureaucrats who believe in their system. Furthermore, it can also be assumed that the African priorities
have been set up to pursue such a ‘linear way of thinking’ and that such a linear way of thinking is universally good in itself. To advance in this kind of logic, the nature of the intent of the African states, their resources base, the mechanisms and strategies developed and the place and the role of people must be systematically studied.

Until recently, especially toward the end of Cold War politics, which manifested itself in a high level ideological and military tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies, the African geo-political landscape – especially its states and its people – faced serious or almost endemic managerial problems, which were reflected at various levels by corruption, mismanagement of public finances, wastage of resources, social ad ethnic conflicts and wars leading to political instability, high degrees of gender and social inequality and injustices, and the deepening of poverty at household as well as at state levels.

Since the 1990s, there has been a high level of optimism associated with a resurgence of democratic institutions. Within this context, African parliaments are playing a central role in proposing criteria of, and institutional needs for, measuring the outcome of democracy. Thus, it is necessary in this seminar to examine, for instance, the theories and practices of the African parliamentary systems at large, their rules and policies. These practices should help identify and analyze the processes, guidelines, and mechanisms of how the parliamentary systems are working effectively in this transition in some countries in dealing with the issues of financial allocations, their accountability, and the criteria they have used to allocate money or why and how they are still not working well in other countries.

**Main Elements of the Problematic, General Arguments and Approaches**

This work is essentially a critical thinking on the notion of the public sector. It raises the issues about what is the public sector? How has it been functioning in Africa? How was it conceived? What have been the beneficiaries of its performance and its services? This thinking is shaped by the dynamics of the African state and the African political economy and its division of labor. Although there is a dose of political realism in this paper, the arguments are historically, structurally and philosophically based. Thus, we must ask the question of about what kind of political community and economic systems that the public sector should articulate. What should be its origins? How should the public sector perform its tasks within a constitutionally and politically designed African society? I intend to produce elements of critical knowledge necessary for rethinking the African public administration as a space where the activities and policies related to public sector are actualized.

The nature of the public sector in Africa, its form, its rules and its functioning should tell a big deal about the nature of the African state, its political and cultural history and its structures and its relationship
with the society at large. The public sector is the most important subsystem of the state. It is in the center of the life of the state, the people (citizens) and the society, which is not just the sum of the individuals who constitute it but it implies a totality. It has to deal with all the elements of the subsystem of the state dynamically. Some of these elements include: ethnicities and their various claims, religions, spiritualism and morality of the life of state and society, cultures, civil society, social class organization, gender, social and other social organizations.

In this presentation, it is argued that the claims, the demands and the outcomes of reform, modernization and transformation of the public sector in Africa should be looked at in terms of the dynamic state-societal relations and also from historical-structuralist perspectives. It touches on the systemic interactions between the governmental agencies and bureaucrats in the public administration, and the managerial capacity of the institutions to change and deliver services effectively and efficiently. It requires an interactive approach and well-defined interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary social science analytical and intellectual perspectives.

My basic perspectives, which guide my analysis, are a combination of a historical structuralism, systems analysis, and interactive approaches. The aim is to understand how reform, modernization and transformation of the public sector in Africa are being conceived the way they are? And what kinds of political and ethical guidelines have been produced in order to pose the question of kind of African emerging countries or emerging economies would they be in 2025.

In short, one needs to understand the rules of the game within a holistic perspective in order to assess its shortcomings and successes. And this study goes beyond the symptomatic analysis in tracing the functioning of the parliaments in their origins systematically. This framework is holistic in its philosophical basis for understanding a social and human phenomenon. This holistic approach is used to analyze this phenomenon structurally and historically. My holistic approach puts emphasis on change. Things do not just happen. Contradictions are not all the time or always pathological. We have to distinguish between primary contradictions and secondary contradictions. If contradictions are well studied they can also serve as a foundation for paradigms shift.

The component of this interactive approach focuses on identifying the multiple factors at work on the African political scene and tracing its diverse dynamics over time. It promotes an understanding of the nature of linkages among the disciplines of social sciences.

**Concepts: Reform, Modernization and Transformation**
It is necessary to review briefly how these concepts were used first in Africa, then, project how they are being used now. They are not ideologically and philosophically neutral.

Upon the independence of most African countries, the public sector was perceived and defined as the central engine of progress in Africa. The public sector had a total mission in order to transform the African societies. Within this the framework, all the African countries in the post-colonial era adopted some reforms in the structures and the functioning of the public sector. The reforms were intended to support the decolonization of the processes and actualization of the new states. As indicated earlier, the goals and achievements related to many reforms in the public sector or in the public administrations depend very much on the nature of political decolonization or how the countries gained their independence.

Reforms in almost all the sectors of the African political structures and economies were a necessity. The conversion of new demands and desires into policies required that these reforms be made and resources be allocated to the neediest groups. But in some countries the neediest groups were almost the whole national population. Thus, relationship between high demands, the shrinking resources and the claim of the new state to be strong within a divided global politics led to contestations and conflicts. Furthermore, these reforms were based on rationality and unilinearity of modernization principles and values such as universality of education, exported based kind of industrialization, and the creation of capable institutions to deal with many demands related to the new rights of citizens. In most countries, investments were needed in almost all the sectors of the new political life.

The process of actualizing the reforms was incremental, slow, and guided with slogan of nationalism in some cases or in other cases with the slogan of political liberalism namely: individual rights, liberties and freedoms. But the first generations of African reforms were aimed at supporting the idea of strong states. It was believed that with strong states, Africans would be able to become fully effective members of the international system with rights and obligations.

In the past, modernization meant a European-American value system. It implies a way of life, a way of producing goods and services and away of managing resources. Development meant to organize economy and industrialization schemes within the notion of the Rostowian catch-up premises and top bottom approaches as perceived by the dominant Americo-European perspectives. Obviously, these approaches have not worked in Africa.

It also meant borrowing methodologically and politically from the Dominant Social paradigms elements that should inject modern technologies in Africa. The scope was mainly the one of imitating the European models of economic development based on the emphasis on the export of raw materials and
weak local manufacturing. In politics, it implies political stability of the institutions without which one cannot effect policies and implement them.

Strategically, it can be considered the easiest and fastest way to move on. But politically, it was very costly, as it did not promote vigorously an active local participation. Despite difficulty, the first generalizations of reform had some political objectives. The public was valued as an important sector through which state and citizenry should be defined. Heavily centralized, the public sector was exhausted.

As is known, the second generation of reform associated with the structural adjustment programs since the 1980s was aimed at depolitization of the African society. With a weak political agenda, this reform was focused on technical reduction of deficits, the injection of the free market economy, and consequently, the weakening of the public sector. All this led to extremely weaken the public sector in all its forms. Its capability, distribution, protection, and planning were all negatively affected. The public sector was figuratively decapitated with all consequences that we know about.

At the end of Cold War politics another important reform, which is essentially political was added. This is the rise of liberal democratization. Coming from various sources and with different meanings this part of the reform is about people’s rights. It is the creation of institutions that should protect individual and collective rights. New constitutions were created through complex processes of national conferences, national dialogues, and the emergence of the new civil society. With this dimension of reform, the strength of the public sector has been revived.

However, we need to look at how the public sector has been working since the rise of multipartyism in relations of the domination of liberal globalization, the militarization of the African societies, and the dysfunctionality of the market and the rise of civil wars. There is a need to look critically at transformation option of the public sector. It means essentially structural changes. What does that mean in the context of the African state and its public administration models. One cannot target the transformation of the public sector without talking about the transformation of the state and the state apparatuses. As developed here, for the public sector to be transformed, there is a need for political national agenda; the establishment of its capacity and the agencies of transformation, and resources available to do the work.

A Reflection on the Public Sector and Its Complexity in Africa
Any public sector is heavily influenced by the forces and the values of political setting of the state, its dominant ideology, the forms of the government or political regimes, and the place and the role of the country in which this sector is part of, in the dynamics of the division of labor within international political economy. From this perspective, public sector is essentially a political sphere. It is far from being an ideological neutral entity with only rationality of self-interest.

It is an arena where public policies should be executed, managed and consolidated. I reiterate that contemporary African states and societies have produced various forms of public sectors depending on the histories of state formations and the outcomes of their political decolonization processes and the nature of the post-colonial politics at large.

From the ancient time to the contemporary world, and from city-state to nation-state, philosophers, political activists and figures, including major political leaders and thinkers such as Saint Augustine, Aristotle, Samir Amir, Plato, Ibn Khaldun, Khatilya, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Marx, Kant, Max Weber, Charles de Gaulle, Mahatma Ghandhi, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Jom Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, Nasser, Nelson Mandela, Winnie Mandela, Julius Nyerere, Mao Zedong, and Claude Ake each of these figures defined the concept of common good or social good in his/her works contextually as a philosophical unit of the public life. Historically, the concept of common good has been interpreted differently depending on the nature of the state and its political regime. The concept, in its practical usage has not been static. It is a construct that reflects an idea and ideal of the state or the people. It is not a natural phenomenon. It has concrete purposes. It is known as a rational sector of the state. Thus, as indicated earlier, it is both a philosophical and political concept. From this perspective, it has universalistic and international attributes.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the majority of African countries gained their nominal independence from European domination through armed struggles as well as negotiation. Zimbabwe and Namibia finally gained independence in 1980 and 1990 respectively, and South Africa adopted the majority democratic rule in 1994. And South Sudan was born as an independent country in 2011. In all these cases, there were strong convictions and faith in the state building. The public sector was viewed as the central sector with which to build the strong states. All forms of negotiations about changes and all the intrigues of the states were manifested in the public sector (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2004, p. 63.)

Within the current imperatives of liberal globalization, electoral democracies, and digitization, the public and private purposes have not always been divided by a neat line. More and more their interests are coincided as they are articulated by the same managerial and ownership forces in the corporate world. However, political history of each state and its practices, especially the history of state formations may
help distinguish the features of both the public and private sector. Social locations of the citizens and their interests and social needs may also help distinguish these two sectors. I am not concerned about the private sector here exception in clarifying my poi also  It is not possible both conceptually and practically to examine the subtopic of the transformation of the public sector without talking about the nature of the state in generally. My intent here is not to expand on the state but to analyze the claim or the call for transformation of the public sector within the challenges that the African state has been facing over the years both philosophically and politically.

In this section, I clarify how this concept of the public sector is being used and how it became the center area in analyzing the African vision of 2025. Thus, it is necessary to pose a series of the questions that serve as guidelines in this work. What is the public sector? Who owns it? How does it operate? And who benefits from its performance? How to transform it for the benefit of the majority in Africa?

In relation to the public sector, some of the problems that African states have been facing since countries have gained their nominal political independence in the search for political stability, economic development and social progress have been the dysfunctionality of their public sectors. The public sector has been ill defined with its eclectic and dualistic base with the domination of its urban culture, its technical and philosophical ambiguity due to its origins, its claims of its linearity and its lack of inclusivity. However, not all African public sectors have functioned the same or have produced the same results. But, for the sake of this workshop we have to start with the general informed intellectual framework to allow us identify its features and end with its particularisms. This is a scientific perspective that we also use in social sciences

In general, especially in contemporary world, the public sector is a complex sector of both the state that deals directly with the issues about ownership, production, sale, the provision of goods and services, and the human and physical security of citizens and a legal system to protect all these activities. It is the domain of the state *par excellence*. It is projected as a central sector, without which there would not be any long-term development in any African country. It is an arena of common interests and common good. It is articulated by the public administration of the state.

In principle, the public sector is the collection of the state’s institutions and their behaviors and those of the society that are owned by the state and which pursue public goods. These goods in my view are not measured by the individualistic market values. As alluded to earlier, within the era of liberal globalization, many institutions in Africa as well as elsewhere are owned by the states but they managed by the private institutions. Furthermore, there are some state’s institutions that are organized to make profits on behalf of the public. Means, goals and their impact on society are as important as the legal
values of these sectors. Thus, making profit and articulating public goods are not always dichotomously set up goals. However, it should be noted that the private sector is always valued on its market values. All depends on the nature of the public administration, which provides the rules of the game of the functioning of the public institutions. Public administration is the mirror of the state.

The most important point that helps differ further between the public and private sectors in my presentation is the fact that public sector access is articulated on the principle of right and that private sector’s activities are values on their market price and individual interests.

The mission of the contemporary African state both colonial and neo-colonial states was generally very complicated because it had to create a nation. Thus, it has to have full and total power to do this. In most cases, it did not tolerate any differences and oppositions, which contributed to the establishment strong dictatorships with the support of the forces and ideologies of Cold War politics.

In most cases during the colonial era, even the so-called indirect rule used at ad hoc level by the British, the prevailing model was assimilationism. The existing local histories either did not matter much or were instrumentalized to support the Western model of the state and its apparatuses.

The nature and the structures of the contemporary African state have been extensively studied. It has also been noted that despite their various traditional origins, some with strong monarchical, or secular unified kingdoms or empires or clan based political organizations, most of the African states have consistently been challenged through their 4 features namely, the basis of their sovereignties, their constituencies/population/citizenry, their borders, and the structures of their governments. It is in 1962 that the emerging African political elites through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) decided not to alter the colonial boundaries with the fear to open the Pandora box. Whether a country was a protectorate under British, the French, or South Africa, after World War II, its status did not solve the issue of cultural and historical belonging of some ethnic groups with their cultures and political experiences.

Public Administration: the Location of the Public Sector\(^1\) and the National Project

How should the public sector be transformed for the benefit of the majority of people? The Public sector is still a public space where the majority of African people live. The public implies the people, their values, their wishes and their interests.

If progress should take place in Africa, the content of the Africa’s public sector has to be organized through the national agenda. How have the African governments and public administrations projected the notion of national projects in their practices? As already stated that the ideas of national project were influenced by many factors internal and external factors of which the most important are reflected in the way colonization came about and the various mechanisms and process used for decolonization. It is the dialectical relations between these two related power relations, which produced national projects in Africa.

Through the articulation of the national project, various political regimes attempted to Africanize capitalism, socialism, or to project African socialism or politics of authenticity. The African States with strong national projects were perceived as prerequisites for producing strong nations. As Kwame Nkrumah wrote: “On achieving independence, almost every new state of Africa has developed plans for industrialization and rounded economic growth in order to improve productive capacity and thereby raise the standard of living of its people” (1971, p. 6.).

African States had the mission to create new nations even where old nations existed. It was believed that the national project was going to accelerate the processes of building of the nations. The new African elites embraced this mission with force and enthusiasm. They thought, some naively and other consciously, that it was possible to transform the colonial states and appropriate them. All African states claim to have had some forms of national project in their state building and political agenda.

It is argued in this paper, that no African state and society will be able to improve significantly their citizens and people’s social, economic and political conditions, without injecting into their policies, their mode of thinking and doing a strong sense of nationalism.

Although some people associate nationalism with the questioning or judging of others and self-definition, no country in the world has been able to progress without such a strong sense of nationalism visible or hidden in its actions and cultures. However, on the basis of the existing conditions of liberal globalization policies and their socio-economic consequences, extreme underdevelopment, political instability and uncertain democratic liberalism in most parts of Africa, what does the concept of the national project and its policy and political implications mean for the majority of African people and also as for the African political leaders? Does the notion of national project matter any longer in the current conditions in which global capitalism has been expanding in articulating the dogmatic claims of the world of less or no borders: ethnic, geography, religion, and history? Is this notion is still relevant in our attempt to reconceptualize new or alternative perspectives on the African political and public space?
Historically, national projects have been defined through African socialism and humanism, nationalism, the Marxism, and capitalism. These various types of nationalism have also had impact in the organization of various forms of public administration in Africa.

Furthermore, because the concept of national project implies that there exists in a country, a law of nation, a national political culture, a national language, a national government and loyal citizenship, I define and discuss the common characteristics of the African nation-state. To what extent does or does not the functioning of the public administration in Africa reflect the ideology and values associated with the national project?

It is important to observe that as compared to other dimensions of African politics and society, the specific studies on African public administration have been less searched and less expanded on than topics such as African states, political parties, ethno-politics, social and popular movements, etc.

Yet, it is in the public administration, its structures and its values, its objectives that the concept of public sector is expanded and actualized. Public administration is the mirror of the public sector.

In this seminar I raise the issue of whether or not the philosophy and the mission of African public administration in different political and cultural contexts have reflected the content of the national projects as articulated in this essay. Have national projects been supported by the nature of the African public administration? Not all these questions have been addressed here systematically. However, an informed generalization provides a theoretical perspective in which to explain, why this topic is very important.

It is argued that no contemporary state is able to effectively render services that, in the long run, can be translated into solid infrastructures without building a public administration that is relevant, effective and appropriate as part of the state’s national project. Public administration should be an apparatus of the public space in which integrative ideas; public management, societal values, and collective citizenry are articulated.

I am also interested in understanding the nature of the relationship between the national project

---

as an ideology of the state and the public administration as the functional foundation of the state in Africa and see how this relationship can foster the thoughts about the notion of public agenda or the public space. Behind this analytical reflection, the broader issue is the idea that the concept of the ‘political public’ defined through the relationship between national projects, public administrations, and the civil societies should be viewed as the cement for the collective political culture.

The intellectual debates on this institutional space in the West have been dominated by the classical Weberian scholarship, which looks at the public administration as a formal, ideologically neutral and rational organisation called bureaucracy. This is conceptualised to function with efficiency toward the ultimate objective of increasing productivity based on technical knowledge and the rules it offers for the benefits of a greater number of people (Weber 1978). This perspective is challenged in the light of the complexity of the forces and factors that have shaped the state formation in Africa. I argue that in Africa there is a need to emphasize more on the role of the national project and how it can shape the structures and the deontology of the public administration than on the concept of rationality (self-interest or self-guidance). This national project in the case of this presentation is pan-Africanism.

In short, in my re-conceptualisation of the national project as part of the public administration, I consider professor Nnoli’s as authoritative as he stated:

Public administration is the machinery, as well as the integral processes, through which the government performs its functions. It is a network of human relationships and associated activities extending from the government to the lowest paid and powerless individual charged with keeping in daily touch with all resources, natural and human, and all other aspects of the life of society with which the government is concerned. It is a system of roles and role relationships which defines in as clear and practicable terms as possible and in as much detail as possible the intentions and programmes of government; the means available internally and externally to accomplish them; where, when, and how they are to be accomplished; who is to benefit from them; and finally, it is a system that causes these intentions and programmes to be realized in real life. It is a pattern of routinized activities, involving decision-making, planning, advising, co-ordination, negotiation, conciliation, arbitration, command and data gathering, through which the government carries out its responsibilities (Nnoli 2000:44).

All the African states can make claims that their public administrations have been making some progress toward some kind of Africanisation of the public good, efficiency and political
institutionalization. However, the changes of political regimes have directly affected the management and the functioning of public administration in the way it does not in industrial countries, for instance.

Its main objective should be to render public service within a clear articulated process with potential predictable outcome. Public administration should have regulative, distributive, responsive, judicial and symbolic capabilities. Furthermore, if it has to reflect the national project, public service must operate or be rendered within the context of a given political and social context. Public servants should make sure that the public administration effectively works for the interest and the benefit of the public. As such, the ideology of the national project should be, in principle, the foundation of the philosophy of the public administration.

In Africa, the functioning of any public administration and its efficiency have depended very much on the nature of the political system in any given country and the quality of the relationship between the bureaucrats and technocrats—generalists and specialists—and their relationship with the political leaders and their institutions. Political leadership makes a difference in the way public administration should be run.

All contemporary African states have inherited most or all aspects of their public administrations from the European colonial experiences. Even the countries that were not formally colonised by the European colonial powers, such as Liberia or Ethiopia (though it was invaded and occupied for a relatively short period of time by the Italian colonial power), have adopted some styles or modes of administering the public domains of the Western colonial experiences or models. However, it was expected in the ideal of independence by the African people that with political decolonisation, the new independent states would be able to modify or transform the nature and the structures of the public administration to be shaped by the national projects.

Thus, when we deal with public administration in post-colonial Africa, we are referring to the governmental unit that should set up infrastructures to support changes, which affect people’s lives directly and positively. In general, despite differences on how African countries were colonised and the different paths they took toward the political decolonisation, contemporary African states at the time of independence produced initially highly centralised public administration systems and styles. The claim was that unity in purpose should be the priority in building strong states. However, it should be noted that since the 1980s and 1990s, many states have modified their systems of government through legal, political and economic reforms.

The main assumption here is that these reforms should improve the decision-making process for development, budget management and allocation (budget process), statistics and data collection. Thus,
institutes or schools of public administration were either built, or expanded, or redefined in most African countries to teach and conduct research projects on some of the issues indicated above.

Three dominant models of public administration, namely the highly centralised model, the decentralised model and the regionalised model, have been experienced in Africa. Although the first model was articulated more immediately after the post-colonial period, and decentralisation and regionalisation have also been more associated with the era of economic reforms, these models have also been developed and used simultaneously in some countries.

At the time of the one-party state, for instance, public administrations were subordinated to the ruling parties like in the extreme cases of Mobutu of the Democratic Republic of Congo or Eyadema of Togo or the self-declared Marxist regimes in Ethiopia and Benin. Most of the federal systems, such as those of Nigeria, Cameroon and Ethiopia, for instance, have had both strong national public administration and strong local public administration. In a country like South Africa, for instance, the local government has increased its role in the development project, despite the fact that the local traditional chiefs who are not elected do not have the same power as those people elected within a given political party.

Although decentralisation has not been a popular model of public administration among the African political leaders, its three dimensions mentioned above have been experienced either on an ad hoc or temporary basis. Recent liberal economic reforms have been promoting different types of decentralization.

While economic reforms supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) put emphasis on the ‘good’ governance, transparency and efficiency, their policies not only undermine the values of the national projects that many African states produced earlier, but they also weaken the importance of the public administration. Those institutions did so by privatising the agencies of the states that should provide the services to the public. As such, they contributed to the process of accelerating the degradation of the respective public administration systems. De facto, public administration has been functioning as a peripheral agency of governance with its main mission dictated from the external institutions and the global market environment. Thus, it has lost its legitimacy. Regionalism, like the one developed in many countries in Western Europe, has been found appealing in Africa. It has motivated Africans to look at functional regionalism based on ethnicity. Ethiopia, for instance, since 1991, has created 11 regional administrations.

Objectives of regionalisation are based on the need for decentralization of effective power to the regional administration (2000:240) on a reality of peripheral capitalist economy. It has been intended to
promote alliances between the national political forces and those of the region. Ghana, for instance, is known for its well-elaborated regionalism model (Ladouceur 1979).

The British colonial rule established this regionalism. It was expanded by the post-colonial political leaders after Kwame Nkrumah. Yet, public administration is a public arena where policies of a given government are localised, concretised and implemented. It is the classical governmental organisation in the centre of the state that deals with how it manages its resources, and how it distributes them. It is located in the centre of the issues of development and nation and state building.

There are also the views that development administration in the 1950s and 1960s, shortly before and after the independence in many African countries were in essence as a continuity of colonial administrative training programs, and was largely focused more on technical aspects of bureaucratic organization. Even as African governments were traumatized by coup d’état, personal rule, clientism, and economic decay, the study of administration remained essentially divorced from the analysis of the African politics (2000:449). Göran Hyden, for instance, thinks that the movement of development administration in Africa did not survive long and by the 1970s lost its distinctive quality.

Another important point is not only about borrowing techniques from other settings as most of the contemporary societies have done, but borrowing for what purposes. The question of national project is central in the question of borrowing from the external political environment. It should be noted that in most African societies, civil servants have, over the years, had serious difficulties developing consistent, effective and needed dialogues for better decision-making with the managers of the political arenas—politicians and elected officials. Bureaucrats have not been independent enough of the political machinery of the executive powers to foster public projects that could benefit the public directly.

Despite reforms and/or because of the nature of these reforms, Rwekaza Mukandala (2000) also reiterated the issues raised above in identifying some of the most important challenges that African public administration has been facing at large: the crisis of institutions; continued domination of the colonial logic in public administration; poor or non-implementation of legislated policies; persistent and endemic corruption; and the articulation of structural adjustment programmes with privatisation and civil service reform. The role of ideology (national project), and that of the state structure, and the dynamics of society (its civil society and culture) are important in the determination of what kind of public administration may be relevant in a given social context in Africa.

**Why Transforming the African State?**
I argue that African State has to be reconceptualized if it is to meet the challenges of social and popular movements because despite its claims of legalism, sovereignty, and independence, in its current form, it is highly dependent on the capitalist world that is dominated by the North and extremely weak in international relations. It cannot produce a program that can consistently and systematically promote a comprehensive agenda of social progress. It has produced many misleading, weak, or ad hoc projects of the so-called development. But at large, these projects have been parts of the peripheral capitalism and its structural contradictions. Until recently, this state has been highly exclusive and militaristic. It still has tendencies of monopoly, militarism, and tyranny.

If we are serious about transforming the African public sector, we have to start the debates on reconceptualizing the African State or structurally rethinking the African State. This reconceptualization should promote a new role, responsibility, legal body, and social progress agenda for Africa. And this process and its supportive mechanisms should create new African leadership, new definitions of citizenship, and new concepts of territoriality in its legal, political, and economic terms.

The working proposition here is that transforming African state is the sine qua non for transforming the public sector. This sector is has a vital role to play in the process of setting up an agenda of progress and actualizing it. This is why the above question is important in this presentation.

Noami Chazan characterized the African State—as ’omnipresent but hardly omnipotent (1988, p. 327). It is the center of the African drama and saga. In the abstract of the book edited by Alfred G. Nhema (2003) entitled: The Quest for Peace in Africa: Transformations, Democracy and Public Policy, CODESRIA, the image of Africa is described in the following:

Africa is mire in a range of intra—to inter-state conflicts, caused by the fragile nature of the African States, endemic poverty, economic inequality and exclusionary governance systems that do not allow participatory political arrangement. So conflict has become distinguishing feature of Africa, the plague of war is the most devastating challenge to the African people. Hence, the quest for peace. To be able to come up with practical solutions, we need a better understanding of African conflict (African Review of Books, 2004, p. 12).

The nature of African State, its political regimes, and the quality of political leadership matter in the equation of the pursuit of political participation and economic justice that are part of the claims associated with the vision 2025. Although the basis of the state power and its legitimacy have also been consistently challenged by the African people through their struggles for social justice, in general, as indicated earlier, the postcolonial African State is a complex entity that should be understood both in terms of its structures, its vision and its relationship to the African society.
Additionally, we need to make a critique of this political entity so as to help understand why in general terms it has disappointed and failed more than 300 million Africans who live in 2007 under a dollar or two a day, if any. And Africa comprises of 32 of the world’s 48 least developed countries (LDCs) and 34 of the lowest-ranked countries (Kankwenda, et al, 2000; Opoku, 2001, p. xi). Why are there so many wars, refugees\(^3\), so much political instability, brain drain, and social and gender inequality in Africa? What should be done about this situation? The reasons for being interested in the African State are embodied in an attempt to answer to some of these questions.

First of all, it should be noted that for more than four decades of Africans’ preoccupation with the policy related to development has only yielded very meager returns in many sectors. Some people tend to believe that Africans made a fallacy of analyzing a phenomenon that has not yet been seriously part of the national agenda. We have been dealing mainly with symptoms related to behaviors of the state instead of its substance, the argument goes. Second of all, all the available evidences point to one inescapable conclusion that “political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development” (Ake, 1996, p.1).

Third of all, despite the explosion of a multitude of actors in the world system and deliberate efforts and policies of mega financial multinational and multilateral institutions to weaken the African states, and also despite the fact that the African systems of delivering services or performance at the national level are the most problematic of all, for better or worse, the African State is still the most visible actor of the continent in world politics.

Fourth of all, the fate of Africa as peoples and cultures has been historically defined by the dynamics of this state, especially its role in international political economy and also in making alliance for its own immortality. Fifth of all, this state is essentially a socially constructed phenomenon that has been naming Africans and making all claims in the name of Africa. Thus, The Africans have a right to rethink it.

Fifth of all, the efforts of the past and current policies and politics of privatization of the Africa state since the 1980s has led to depolitization of the African state and further weakening of the foundation of the nationalism because nationalisms in most African countries have been linked to the dynamics of the state.

And finally, the world system is still defined by the state as the most important element of the dominant social paradigm (DSP). African people are part of the world through the state. Thus, the debates

\(^3\) As of 2007, there are more than 7 million refugees in Africa and more than 2 million internally displaced people within their own countries.
on the nature of the African State are still epistemologically relevant and politically and economically significant as through it we deal with the issues of development, citizenry, ethnicity, liberty, territoriality, and sovereignty. Thus, it is still a link to international relations and the international political economy. African State is still the major political entity that has had political power and “historical legacy” to determine how developmental paradigms have been articulated and used.

Since the 1960s, various dimensions and/or processes of the African state formations have been studied such as the various struggles and movements that led to the independence of African countries and the state’s policies of economic reforms and its efforts to reaffirm itself within the world system. However, the need to systematically historicize the nature and the structures of this state within its internal dynamics and international context cannot be exaggerated. An understanding of why a state behaves the way it does is an important stage in re-conceptualizing Africa. This process can contribute to the recapitulation and the ownership of the African State. This re-conceptualization can promote new roles, propose new African leaderships, and invent new criteria for defining citizenship, territoriality, and an agenda for social progress in Africa.

The concepts of the state, democracy, development, and society must be reconceptualized dialectically in light of the current people’s struggles for changes, global economic and political reforms, and civil societies’ agendas for either challenging the states’ rules or allying with the states for the main objectives of sharing power and in context of the rise of various forms of resistance to unipolarity and tendencies of monopoly of global liberalization.

**Strategies For Transforming the Public Sector**

**(A) Pan-African Perspective and Its Significance**

From an analytical perspective, I do not separate strategies from their political philosophy basis. They are part of the national project. As argued in this paper, the public sector that is founded on national project is not likely to sustain people’s demands and transform their desires and wishes into good policies. I have been claiming that in order to transform the public sector in Africa, one needs to construct a national project as its vision.

In my view, pan-Africanism has been the most difficult type of nationalism that has not been applied yet in the business of the state, despite the existing of the African Union and its institutions. The claim of sovereignty prevails on any attempts. May other forms of nationalism have been tried in various
periods but with less success in Africa. This author believes that political pan-Africanism as both a national ideology and strategy can produce a public sector that is transnational, regional, and inclusive in the long term and thus, can be more relevant and more competitive in the global and international economy. Briefly we have to define what pan-Africanism and justify why it can be an instrumentalized ideology of political change.

Pan-Africanism is considered as the most important form of nationalism in Africa with strong connections with international relation theories. Its dynamic is essentially international. All the African countries and their leaders in different periods have been influenced directly or indirectly by Pan-Africanism. Thus, some aspects of its expression have been part of the national project as it has shaped the African political agenda in many ways. As it is stated elsewhere:

As an ideology and intellectual discourse among Africans scholars and political activists, Pan-Africanism is not new in terms of its intellectual positions as to what directions Africa should take and the kind of projects that should be developed to allow Africans to set up institutions of societal transformation. But at the policy level, Pan-Africanist advocates have not seized or created any real opportunity for its actualisation. Pan-Africanists have not succeeded in capturing state power and actualising Pan-Africanism in public policies and development projects. In order words, they have not been creative, imaginative, and daring enough to translate this ideology into political actions (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2003: 87-88).

The above citation raises some fundamental issues concerning the real functioning of Pan-Africanism in the Black world, especially in Africa. Why is it that Pan-Africanism is still in general an intellectualistic and artistic concept, which has not reached the public or the majority of the African people yet?

In contemporary world politics, Pan-Africanism has been one of the expressions most used by African scholars and the black scholars in the Diaspora but at the same time, it has been less

---

4 For instance, On 24-26, March 2004, Africa Institute of South Africa organized international conference on “South Africa: Ten Years After Apartheid.” Among the 11 panels, with more than 40 presenters among hundreds of participants, the panel on “Pan-African Perspectives on South African Transition,” was one of the most debated panels. This author chaired the above panel. The issues raised included the nature of African Union and its significance, immigration laws, movement of
understood and less tolerate by the African states and the capitalists in the North (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2003: 89.).

I am do not intend to expand on the historicity and intellectualism of pan-Africanism as they have been fully searched and published by so many African scholars in Africa and the Diaspora, and the Africanists in the Diaspora. However, a summary of what has been agreed up by scholars and political figures as the main common characteristics help elucidate my points about the intellectual vibrancy and political values of pan-Africanism as a way of defining the new public space in Africa.

A contradictory phenomenon that has been taking place in African politics since the 1960s, is while the African states have been talking more about pan-Africanism and building the so-called pan-African institutions within the defunct Organization of the African Unity (OAU) and the African Union, at the same time, the same states have become less pan-African in their actions, behaviors, and policies and more antagonistic vis-à-vis each other in making the pan-African practices real and pragmatic. The African Union was created in 2002 with enthusiasm and high expectations, the continuing the efforts of the Organization of the African Unity (Mutume, 2004: 19).

Despite the media, African Union has not been able to consolidate itself in most countries because, for obvious reasons, it has not reached at policy and political levels the majority of the ordinary African masses. African states and their political leaders seem to have become more suspicious of each other and less trustful. Some leaders continue to perceive and/or accuse others as potential or real threats to the stability of their countries as if there were during the Cold War era. Within the existing domestic and international laws against the so-called international terrorism, job market scarcity, and the domestic political violence, African geographic boundaries are becoming more tightened today for different reasons than 20 or 30 years back. More the African economies are less productive with low growth, less optimistic people might become about any possibility of sustaining pan-Africanism. It is argued in this paper that despite the fact that there is an African Union and African Parliament created in 2004, the African economies of conflict, the African psychology of survival and the African structures of the state cannot and will not soon produce any functional and productive Pan-Africanism as an ideology of social transformation. As Lumumba-Kasongo stated:

__________________________
goods and people, labor laws, South Africa’s perceptions of Africa, democratic and social rights, and gender and women’s rights were unexpectedly discussed with passions. Generally panelists called for re-thinking pan-Africanism. Another important issue was a story of the failures and disappointment of the role of Organization of the African Unity (OAU) in the search for new paradigms of social progress. The keynote speaker was Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the last Secretary General of the OAU.
Despite the existing fragile economic organizations, which have been responding more to the imperative of globalisation than any African national economies, and the creation, by imitation, of an European Union, the Pan-African agenda has become weaker than ever before. One cannot talk about Pan-Africanism when our land, water, and air have been almost totally sold to the foreign investors and multinational companies within the context of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) or neo-global liberal globalization. In my view, African Union is founded on the flawed historical principle of ‘one size fits all,’ the so-called Adam Smith invisible hand, and the massive selling of African resources as the only roads to industrialisation and development, cannot structurally and philosophically advance the cause of Pan-Africanism (2003, op. cit.,: 89).

The concept of ‘neo-realist’ Pan-Africanism, as a different interpretation of nationalism is transnational and it also should rehabilitate the state, ethnicity, cultural identity and the African economies as they are. As argues here, this kind of pan-Africanism should be global in its political economy and cultural in its respects to the African histories and languages. Thus, it is also a potential to address the contradictions related to capitalism, the structures of the African state, and the exigencies and the conditions of the localism. It should be noted that I do not think that ethnicity as such is responsible for political violence in Africa. It is the instrumentalization of ethnicity or politicalization of ethnicity both by the colonial administrations and neo-colonial political leaders within a peripheral capitalist economy that has led to political violence in many parts of Africa.

Despite the claims of global liberalism and the contradictions related to capitalism and liberal democracy, I am among African scholars who are strongly convinced, based on the current African objective conditions, the power struggles at international relations, ethnic alienation, state fragmentations, and the state’s fruitless approaches to produce positive change, that only political pan-Africanism in its realist forms can contribute to produce national project needed for mobilizing human and material resources for genuine social and political integration and progress in Africa. This conviction is also rooted both on the well known extremely poor policy performances and undisputable political zigzagging that the current African states, in most cases, have produced and also on the assumption of optimism, which is related to the dynamics of the African societies, people, and social and political movements.
For me, the issue is what kind of pan-Africanism would be transformative and transnationalist at the state and public administration levels with the potential to address critical issues related to the local conditions of poverty and endogenous social systems? As I said earlier, much has been extensively written and said about complexity of Pan-Africanism.\(^5\) The issues about political Pan-Africanism still come and go depending essentially on the dynamics in African politics and social movements in the Diaspora, which tend to revive the calls for more unity in Africa and more *rapprochement* among the African people the world over. For instance, the national liberation struggles and the struggle against Apartheid did unify Africans including the reactionaries to fight the White rules and their supporters in Africa. As referred to elsewhere in this paper, under the Pan-African movements with its various interpretations and branches in Africa and the Diaspora, Africans succeeded to dislodge European colonial powers from their powers in Africa. Let’s discuss some of the major claims of Pan-Africanism at large.

Pan-African ideas and movement did not start in a linear fashion in Africa. They started in the Diaspora, especially in the United States among the former African slaves. These ideas were used as historical references to Africa. From Edward Blyden, Marcus Garvey, W.E. DuBois, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kwame N’Krumah, Julius Nyerere, George Padmore, Sékou Touré, Thomas Sankara to Kwame Touré and many other prominent figures such as Adedeji Adebayo, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, the aims of Pan-Africanism include the search for common cultural specificities and affinities among African people the world over, and for intellectual liaison among them based on ethnicity called also as “race” and “Africanity.” All these objectives were supposed to lead toward fostering an understanding and appreciation of the African culture in a historical context.

---

Thus, Pan-Africanism embodies a racial, cultural, or continental unity of some kind. While historically in the United States, Pan-African ideas were used as intellectual and cultural tools for articulating unity among Black people and strong cultural attachment with Africa, in Africa, however, in the 1950s and 1960s, Pan-Africanism was more of an political idea to be used for fighting colonial powers and building new nation-states.

Pan-African advocates, moderate and reactionary African political leaders produced the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) on May 25, 1963 with the participation of all independent African countries, most of the nationalist political organizations sent the delegates to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. As it is well known, the OAU was created as an ideological and institutional compromise among various political tendencies that developed among African nationalists in the 1950s and the 1960s. “With the creation of the OAU, Kwame Nkrumah’s ambition to realise the formation of the continental union government as a political reality and a monumental dream were defeated by the African leaders” (Lumumba-Kasongo, p. 104). Following many discussions, meetings, and consultations prior to May 25, 1963, three political tendencies emerged as African élites were trying to deal with the mechanisms of decolonization. These blocs were: The Monrovia group, dominated by Nigeria. It included: Nigeria, Liberia and former French colonies, except Sékou Touré who voted no to the 1958 referendum. This bloc opposed the idea of the union and the creation of African federal system of government. The second bloc was Brazzaville bloc, which was formed essentially by the former French colonies when they moved away from the Monrovia bloc. The Brazzaville bloc was heavily influenced by Charles de Gaulle and Paris at large and it feared radical Nkrumahist union government because this idea was ideologically socialist and Pan-Africanist at once. It should be noted that in 1962:

Despite the tendencies of power struggle and suspicion that had developed between Houphouët-Boigny and the Nigerian political élites, the Monrovia and the Brazzaville blocs merged into the Lagos group, which strongly rejected the idea of the union government or political integration of sovereign states that they considered to be immature at that time. Furthermore, they did not define when this idea might become mature in the political development of the African politics. And third bloc was the Casablanca bloc (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2003:105).

---

6 Lumumba-Kasongo,”Can a Realist Pan-Africanism be Relevant, op. cit: 93.
This third bloc, which was composed of the North African countries under the influence of Nasser of Egypt, supported the idea of creating the continental united African government. Thus, Ghana and Guinea-Conakry were also members of this bloc. In East Africa, Tom Mboya of Kenya and Milton Obote of Uganda were also the supporters of the idea of a united African government. Even the leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania did not believe at the time for creating a united African government.

Gradualism, accommodationism, and radicalism were the approaches through which the question of unity was discussed. Thus, the national projects embodied these philosophical elements which were defined by the nature of the political regimes. These philosophical elements were also strongly influenced by the politics of the Cold War. This is to say that the Cold War politics penetrated the OAU and forced it to produce the national projects which corresponds more to the imperatives of international militarism and the expansion of capitalism than to the demands of the domestic transformation.

Thus, African states were polarized on ideological, personality politics, nation-state and historical differences, and the Cold War struggle. The agenda of the Western powers to stop Africa from formulating its own developmental and political projects was always present in the deliberation processes of the OAU meetings. So, in most countries in Africa, a national project in each country became the political expression of how such a specific country responded to the imperatives of imperialism, Americanism, and Marxism or some kinds of socialism. The nature of the bloc politics within the OAU did not allow the development of any national project that could challenge the existing interests of the capitalist world. While many African states were claiming to foster some national ideas in their general politics, at the policy level, most of them were becoming peripheral capitalist states with either very weak national projects or without any national projects at all.

However, despite the structural and institutional weaknesses of the OAU, its mobilised its resources to support the political decolonization in Africa. With the independence of Namibia and South Africa, the mission of the OAU was almost terminated. All the African states had in their national project some policy aspects of this political decolonization.

In addition to political decolonization, which the OAU made as its main objective, the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) for Implementation of Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa was another important nationalist platform that African heads of state created to advance the unity of African in its economic form. It is generally known as the most important comprehensive and systematic statement of the vision of the Africa’s leaders on development of Africa (Ake, p. 1996, p. 22). It was never implemented.
(B) Liberal Democracy as an Important Step but Insufficient Strategy

Despite its inadequacy, liberal democracy has become part of the dominant social paradigm. It is argued that the public sector that should care for the people’s interest has to be democratized. It has to be inclusive, transparent, and lawful. The advocates of liberal democracy, its principles of individual freedom and rights, and other human freedoms as articulated in the 1948 Human Rights Declaration have some difficulties defending these principles in light of the existing political and economic systems through which states talk about the respect of the bills of rights but they act as enemies to these rights as consequences of their policies.

Thus, the practices of African democracies are strongly associated with rising contestations. These contestations are linked to various aspects of the societal-state relationship, namely the performance of the liberal democracy, its means of operation and its “indirect” relationship with the global capitalist programs. A new phenomenon that has been associated with African democracies is the establishment of the process of constitutional amendments by the elected African presidents or prime ministers, which would allow them to run either for a third or a fourth term, or even indefinitely.

Despite disagreements about the content of the concept of liberal democracy, its origins, how it has been produced, and how it can be maintained, this concept, which has been used interchangeably with multiparty electoral systems, has become a global aspiring value. Indeed, liberal democracy or procedural democracy has become the dominant player in the theater of African politics. The renewal of electoral democracies has produced new presidents, new Prime Ministers, and new members of parliaments or national assemblies. Not only that the claims of liberal democracy have become global but also liberal democracy is being perceived and appreciated in itself as a developmental global value. Although its ideological and philosophical foundation is still weak and its policy implications unpredictable, African politics can be characterized as being in a transition that can be studied in the scholarship of the dynamics of liberal democracy and its critics.

Thus, liberal democracy, often, used as a euphemism for “good governance,” is now considered as a key ingredient for economic development, a guarantor for peace, and a crucial value for social progress in Africa. This democracy is also gradually substituting for other procedures in designating representatives of political, social, and economic communities. Elections have become the mechanism of choice for facilitating change or transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic regimes. They also play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law in a constitutional state. At the same time, within the current practices,
many tendencies of illiberalism and authoritarianism are also slowly taking place under the umbrella of multipartyism.

One of the issues raised in studying democracy in general is that despite the fact that it has become a globally desirable end among many peoples the world over, no model of democracy can claim universal acceptability. We also need to keep in mind that every actual democracy has always fallen short of democratic criteria. And in ordinary language, democracy refers to both a goal or ideal and an actuality that is only a partial attainment of the goal.

Historically, no society has produced universally applicable steps for establishing democracy. Different regions, sub-regions, and countries have produced their own democratic experiments. Each democracy among the liberal democratic societies in Western Europe, the United States, and Japan, for instance, has its own technical mechanisms and procedures that define its uniqueness and particularities. People’s attitudes, expectations, and responses to democratic institutions, and the nature of the democratic institutions and their values in those countries also all vary from country to country. However, in a broad sense liberal democracy can be defined by the following characteristics:

(1) The respect of the rule of law;
(2) An extensive competition among individuals and organized groups;
(3) A highly inclusive level of participation in the selection of leaders and policies;
(4) The existence of a dynamic civil society;
(5) A high level of individual civil and political liberties (with all kinds of freedoms);
(6) And Political pluralism.

Liberal democracy implies constitutionalism and it provides regular constitutional opportunities for changing governing officials, which permits the population to influence major decisions by choosing their leadership. Constitutionalism sets forth the general laws and political guidelines about how to deal with the durability of elected citizens in their public duties. It regulates both the government and citizens’ activities in order to limit abuses of power and to keep the system running (Dahl, 1989).

As Julius Nyerere once stated, “The nation’s constitution must provide the methods by which the people can, without recourse to violence, control the government, which emerge in accordance with it and even specify the means for its amendments” (AAPS, Newsletter, 1999).

The liberal democracy is the system of governance that, in principle, protects citizens’ rights and the instruments of production (land, machinery, factory buildings, natural resources and the like) that are
privately owned by many individuals. The institutions of state should produce social equilibrium. This democracy is called procedural democracy. Citing Joseph Schumpeter, Robert D. Grey in states:

The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote (1942).² Scholars who adopt this procedural, or elitist, version of democracy tend to be concerned primarily with stability of the system. Once the rules are in place, is the system able to maintain itself without experiencing outbursts of violence or becoming oligarchies? Rule of law and constitutionalism help regulate both government and citizens activity to limit abuses of power and keep the system running. (Grey, 1997, p. 83)

Do the people matter in this type of democracy? In general terms, I affirm that people as consumers/voters matter. The routine of rituals of elections brings political elite and electors closer for a short period of time. A fresh start that comes with elections can bring new possibilities for the ordinary people. But the mass values are articulated through elitist filters through which important issues are selected and elevated from their individualistic origins to the local or national agenda. As Grey indicates:

Central to procedural definitions of democracy is the free and fair competition among political parties for the power to make public decisions. This regular competition for power keeps conflictual groups from engaging in violence, much like individuals in conflict might “settle it” through a coin toss or an arm-wrestling match rather than in a fist fight. Hence, in a procedural democracy, conflicts are legitimate and adverse to public interest (p. 87).

With its concern for reason, law, and freedom of choice that could only be properly upheld by recognizing the political equality of all mature individuals, this democracy limits the power of the state to a large extent (Held, 1993, p. 18). As Beetham said:

Democracy I take to be a mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control, and the most democratic arrangement to be that where all members of the collectivity enjoy effective equal rights to take part in such decision-making directly—one, that is to say, which realizes to the greatest conceivable degree the principles of popular control and equality in its exercise (1993, p. 56).

In short, in liberal democracy, individualism or individuals’ rights, free choice, freedoms (or civil liberties), and democratic accountability are among its most important characteristics. Citizens should be capable of choosing their leaders.

The practices and processes of liberal democracy are not consistently doing well in Africa, despite many efforts and the people’s enthusiasm. That does not mean that Africans are allergic to these practices, their processes, and the outcomes of democracy and good governance. The nature of the state and its
relationship to the peripheral capitalism have not been helping the advancement of any solid democratic structures. Obviously, African liberal democracies have produced presidential and legislative bodies. In some cases, a political culture of liberal democracy is being consolidated with the third or the fourth sets of elections. However, while enthusiasm is still high among the majority of people, the outcomes of democratic processes have been generally disappointing despite a few success stories with a stable and predictable circulation of power, reliable institutions for protecting people’s rights, and high levels of citizen confidence in these institutions.

(C) Capacity of the State through Its Institutional Building

The debate about the capacity building of the state is ongoing from all schools of thought and political ideologies. I will not expand on it. Suffice to say that we refer here to social skills, efficiency, knowledge deliver system, and knowledge making and distribution, technocratic and bureaucratic respect to public norms, values and rules that allow a certain degree of consistency and permanency that are associated with the institutionalization of the public sector.

Capacity building of the state’s institutions is not only about infrastructures. It is also about a vision of a given society behind them. It is a complex process in which the state is engaged to produce an effective and productive population that can work and live in a complex world system. Relevant systems of education can contribute to this process. But we have to ask ourselves what should be the content of such an education? What kind of society is it promoting? Many public institutions in Africa lack capacity to produce and reproduce themselves and survive the conditions of political hurricanes. Political instability to many causes as articulated in this paper as reflected in political regime changes cannot contribute toward the creation of strong public sector. The values associated with the public sector are volatile. Political and social instability does not produce confidence in people to invest in the public sector. Furthermore, it does not sustain good memories.

In order to produce the functioning public sector in Africa, it is necessary to think about the establishment of the institutions that are relevant, effective, reliable, and which work and reach their intended objectives. These objectives are verifiable and can reach any citizen who legally qualified to have to those services.

Furthermore, These institutions should be understandable by the majority of people. For instance, many African people, especially those in the countryside do not know enough about the origins and sources of their constitutions. The system of laws were set up for formally educated few, who can
understand them and manipulate them for their advantages. In short, the institutions that are part of the public sector should be consistent, efficient, politically motivated and socially based.

**Conclusion:**

The search for new norms is important in building a new public sector in Africa because the norms should tell us what is permissible and what is not. Norms should guide us in redefining the needed nature of the public sector. These norms should include: (1) The notions of commonness and collectivity; (2) New citizenry or new belonging; (3) Notions of social justice and equality; And (4) Dignity and acceptability regardless of people’s social, gender, ethnic, religious, and regional origins and professional affinities. As examined in this paper, these norms should be founded on rationality and nationalism.

Finally, the features of the public sector that is being articulated in this paper are: (1) Unity in purpose; (2) Democratic in its organization; (3) Federalist in its administrative structures; (4) African in its political cultures; And (5) Socially and ideologically progressive. All this will not occur without a re-conceptualization of the African state.

**Selected Bibliography**


Klitgaard R. “Cleaning Up and Invigorating the Civil Service.” *Public Administration and Development,* (17/5: 487-509.


________________________."Rethinking Pan-Africanism," *Global Dialogue,* Volume 6, Number 3-4 (Summer/autumn 2004).


