

JUCHE IDEA AND COLLECTIVE SELF-RELIANCE (The African perspective)

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It is not a deniable fact that Africa has had problems for several decades even after many countries on the continent went through transitions from colonialism to independence. Though the situation may not be as bleak as portrayed in the media or by Africanists. When it comes to political instability in Africa, it is also undeniable that the continent has had some difficult moments during the last fifty and so years. But what is still unexplained is the fact that in almost all the cases of political instability in Africa, it is evident that the major problem is leadership. It is also true that in many instances, Africa has seen its freedom heroes turn into dictators, while plunder of natural resources, politics of exclusion and deprivation to tilt the balance of power continues to dominate the public sphere.

However, we can argue here that the major issue affecting and has continued to affect African continent is the absence of a clear and effective common ideology that can be appreciated by all citizens and followed to the later, that can ensure collective self-sustenance for all its citizenry.

It is also nota secret, that there have been regimes imposed upon the continent, through the complicity of the international community and this has continued to bleed problems for the continent and citizens have continuously rejected this leadership imposition with dare consequences. This is basically as a result of leaders with no clear vision of what it means to be self-governing, these kind of leaders have ideological deficiency and are easily swayed by the carrot baskets promised and provided by their western masters and they end up accepting the puppet role as leaders in the continent as long as they are assured of the presidency and the seat at the UN general assembly.

Presently, almost every country in Africa is haunted by historical injustices and oppressive structures that were bequeathed to the post-colonial leadership. This is an aspect which informs the weak institutions of the state, flawed legislative systems and constant struggles for political power to the detriment of the wellbeing of many nations, and people of Africa which could have moved on a path of development as part of modern societies. While the international community, whose geo-security and resource interests benefit from the status quo in Africa, has not been pro- the establishment of functioning systems in Africa, instead, their involvement, continue to undermine Africa's stability through the militarization of conflicts for accumulative purposes and helped by what we saw above as ideological bankruptcy of some puppet leaders on the continent.

Though Political instability in Africa may owe much of its cause to "internal" factors, however the interpenetration of internal and external factors especially geo-political and economic interests of the international community constantly play a significant role in undermining the very processes and institutions that are expected to nurture democracy and

to instil a sense of stability for societal development in Africa. But a question also lingers into our minds about the type of governance system that is suitable for the continent, is it the full-fledged so called western liberal democracy that we should adopt? Do we understand it in the first place, are conditions favorable for its full implementation, does it fit into African value systems, cultures, traditions, historical perspectives and people's aspirations? Does it bring about and promote a collective self-reliance for our people? Or we need another system that is suitable for our continent, one that is home grown and sustainable? Which other place is as confused as we are, in terms of governance system? How did DPRK do it? What can we learn from this DPRK story that can inform our future strategic decisions? Shouldn't we be taking lessons from the DPRK's super Juche ideology?

Unfortunately, the aftermath of the leadership confusion that has belittled the continent, is an unequal development, poverty, disease, violence and the manipulative tendencies of the local elite, political and economic instability in Africa. This threat is however not emanating from within the continent but from external interests whose thirst for African resources, continue to shape the dynamics in areas related to governance. Resources in Africa if well managed would be capable of effectively providing for its entire population, hence the potentials for a more stable environment and self-reliance, however, it is well documented that stolen wealth from Africa often end up in banks abroad (Africa Focus Bulletin, 2006), be it money stolen by the political elite (the case of Mobutu of Zaire, Abacha of Nigeria, just to mention a few or the recent Kibaki regime Anglo-leasing scandals in Kenya), still end up in banks in the western capitals. And this is what sustains their economies.

Without a common ideology regarding our wellbeing, each one of us seem to be on his own and God for us all, the ideologically bankrupt leadership cannot steer a sustainable development agenda, cannot ensure a stable political and economic environment for all, such leaders only pursue a selfish ideology that doesn't obey systems or principles.

The African political instability and other related problems is basically a consequence of its leadership that lack a clear ideology for the continent and its people. At domestic level, African governments are run in ways that have been regarded as far from the modern western state systems, (Osei Tutu, 2004) upon which they are modelled. However, it should be noted that leadership per se is not a new concept to African traditions or cultural practices. The forms and context could be different, but systems of governance in many cultures had characteristics that can be found in modern systems of governance that had it been adopted and natured would have led the continent to higher levels of advancement, however African values of leadership were discarded and bedeviled in preference of western type of democracy that was alien to the continent and we have continued in that state of confusion to-date, and we will continue in this quagmire until we can develop system that can best fit into our value systems and customs, traditions and experience, otherwise we can't perfect what was imposed on us in the first place, yet we are not being given enough time to study, appreciate it before implementation, make mistakes and learn from them for perfection, but we have a devil breathing at our neck about our democratic failures, in other words we can't dance with the devil on our shoulder. We simply need space for our own home-grown system that is sustainable.

But in the context of adoption of the modern western state system, many African communities abandoned their ways during the colonial period, and where they embraced the western models, with the ushering in of independence”, the implementation was distorted and entailed a lot of arm twisting at the height of the transition from colonialism to independence. The colonialist did not leave the continent willingly. The post-colonial Governments “sought national unity through the centralization of political and economic power, employing vestigial colonial laws and institutions to stifle and suppress pluralism” (Annan, 2008) For example, the constitutions that were bequeathed to the newly independent states were the products of protracted negotiations in western capitals, whose outcomes were in most cases favorable to the departing colonial powers. It was not in the interest of Africans; they were even not part of the makers of these evil documents as they were busy admiring the western way of life and just waiting to append their signatures and return home to tell everyone what they had seen in Europe.

It can therefore be argued that from the very start, leadership problem crept into the new states, as the new African leadership became the neocolonialists, while the liberators turned into oppressors of their own people. Instead we have an African leadership which is not in Fanons, words "engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and be part of the racket" (Fanon, 1967).

As argued by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), “Domestic factors play a predominant role in the transition”. These domestic factors often range from “corrupt rulers, repression, a colonial legacy, “swollen” states, and insufficient political structures and a destruction of democracy from above (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1989; Diamond and Plattner 1999). However, the international context often plays an important role in both the transition in general and the presence of violence in particular (Lupo, 2004).

Though some African economies are doing well, we have many cases where countries are still experiencing difficult times in terms of political stability, economic development and challenges posed by poverty and diseases, trade imbalance and low volume of foreign investments. However, the political instability in Africa, which also underpins the economic development often, has strong links to internal and external special interests time and again. Africa’s resource in this case has never been its blessing, but a curse, there is no way we can explain why DRC is among the poorest of the poor yet it is the world’s source of raw material, there is no explanation for the under development of the continent while it sits on massive natural resources. For decades, western companies involved in extraction in Africa have never declined in numbers nor have their profits plummeted. Rodney (1981: 244) asserts that "previous African development was blunted, halved and turned back" by colonialism without offering anything of compensatory value. Moreover, these profits have never trickled down to the very basic level in Africa where they are used to improve the living conditions of populations whose resources are being exploited. If that was the case, we could have not had the Ogoni plight or the recent revolt in the Niger Delta, or witnessed the recent atrocities in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The existing economic conditions based on western

policy prescriptions also play a significant role in the deprivation of African populations, of the essential services, which are key to development.

While it can be argued that it is not the responsibility of the “investors” to improve the living conditions of the people in the regions where they make profits, notwithstanding the calls for or cosmetic expression of corporate responsibility policies of multinational companies, the integrated nature of global economy and security concerns, dictates that such factors cannot be ignored. The economic policies in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) packages entailed sweeping economic and social changes designed to siphon the indebted country’s resources and productive capacity into debt payments and to enhance international (TNCs) competition (Hong, 2000:14). Examples included “massive deregulation, privatization, currency devaluation, social spending cuts, lower corporate taxes, export driven strategies (i.e. export of agricultural products and natural resources) and removal of foreign investment restrictions (Clarke 1995:301). The consequence of these economic conditions in Africa has obviously had serious ramifications for essential services such as health, education and infrastructure. Cuts in public expenditure under SAPs led to a drastic decline in control and prevention measures against diseases such as cholera, yellow fever and malaria that were once under control while new diseases remain a big challenge. The absence of these fundamental services implies that generations and generations go through deprivation which impacts upon their potential to be productive members of their own societies.

All these impositions were possible because Africa as a continent did not have a muscle to say no, it was in no position to reject the suggested policies with their consequences, yet it also didn’t have its own policy to pursue, so it was very ease for the west to dictate these economic interventions as we were in no position to tell them off.

How has the DPR of Korea managed to put off all the pressures from the western imperialists? Simple, they had a home grown system of leadership and economic policies built and premised on their super Juche ideology, while the west would have desired to control DPRK disguising behind economic interventions , they had no entry point, because the leadership in the DPR of Korea was ideologically focused and pursuing a collective self-reliance doctrine, they were able to shake off all the trickery and now we see how self-reliant the DPRK is. With no leadership confusion and governance issues but only pursuing a one common agenda supported by 100% of its citizenry and succeeding at all fonts in the face of enemies around it and stringent sanction imposed on it for ages by the imperial powers.

We can only as a people achieve collective self-reliant by adopting the following suggestion;

Africa too, needs to have its own ideology which can be promoted, natured and supported by everyone regardless of background nationality, our common rallying point should be the fact that we are Africans residing in or not in Africa but with a common enemy to our people, who need to be self-reliant and masters of our destiny and aspirations, people who can stand a test of time and in the face of adversary , be able to say no and maintain our stand even if it means a dagger in the stomach.

We will have to rethink and revamp the pan African ideology which stressed the need for "collective self-reliance". And believe in solidarity to enable the continent to fulfill its potential to independently provide for all its people.

Just like the DPR of Korea Juche ideology, the PanAfricanism ideology which was based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to "unify and uplift" people of African descent, and help in "power consolidation in Africa", which "would compel a reallocation of global resources, as well as unleashing a fiercer psychological energy and political assertion would be ideal for the continent. However, this lost its way when our leaders tasted the sweetness of the presidency and when African union failed to fund its own programs and looked for the west for funding, in the end it lost its focus so did the leaders in the continent who later became a puppet for the west.

Just like the Juche ideology which was adequately implemented in the DPR of Korea as a people's philosophy, the new Pan African ideology needs to be designed as a mass movement and should not remain as an office concept for elites like the existing pan Africanism that is only sang by politicians on political platforms only and conferences.

We require a realistic African union, that can push for an African agenda negotiate for a fair deal of our wealth which can collectively develop our people instead of an individual leader or where we see all our wealth helping other nations in the world as we keep reaping benefits only in terms of expensive loans. An African union that will make sure that our brains develop Africa instead of other nations.

We require a well home grown, home natured and promoted organized economic strategy, that attaches value to every resource we have on the continent, for example our wood, marble, stones, African beauty, good climate artifacts, water, minerals, intellectual property, oils resources, cultures, tourism sites, sportsmen, flora and fauna and also make sure that our human resource receive sufficient and adequate pay for their labor globally.

Through a focused ideology, we will be able to develop our own traditional medicine, cultural values, traditional systems and institutions and stop the importation of dangerous cultures and poisonous medicines that are causing various illnesses among our people that are very expensive to manage.

We need to develop a common language that can be understood by everyone on the continent and not English that is only learnt from school and only creates classes among our people of those who can speak and understand English and those who cannot, as this is very hard if we need to communicate any information or an idea as we will spend resources and time in translations, all countries that have achieved levels of advancement have a common language spoken by everyone, but in Africa even in our respective countries, there is need for hundreds of translators for an information that we intend to pass on, this hinders development and distorts harmony.

We also need to offload our leaders who seem to be over loaded with a lot of responsibilities, with no desire to delegate some authorities, this bogs down a leader and drags decision making processes and creates a big man syndrome that may not speedily move the transformation of our communities. This when coupled with leaders with ideological

bankruptcy makes it hard for the continent to move its desired agenda. In addition we need to establish a leadership training strategies and programs through which future leaders can be nurtured, otherwise we face a situation where we will have no ideologically tune leadership, but those who may ascend to the leadership of our nations on the whim of popular stunts like we are witnessing globally, we may end up with leaders with no family values and basic leadership skills.

Lastly we need develop bench marking programs on how the DPR of Korea has managed to promote the super Juche ideology among its people, acceptable to all and led to the collective self-reliance that the world has witnessed in that country that can stand against the mighty USA and push it to a negotiation table as equals, very few nations have not been able to ascent to that position leave alone a whole continent, USA has been able to bark and push every nation and continent into submission but not the DPRK, so how did they do it? This in my view should be studied and see how we can as continent achieve what they have been able to achieve in less than 50 years. Otherwise we remain an underdog that picks whatever it is thrown to its face.

Thank You