

Thoughts and Considerations

AFRICA IN THE 21TH CENTURY: PROSPECTS AND CAUSES; EFFECTS ON AFRICAN STATES

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Preamble

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded on May 25, 1963, and aimed at unifying all African nations, recently independent as a result of their fight for independence; in July 2002 and upon a not-so-innocent proposal by Muammar Kadhafi, the OAU becomes the African Union in the Durban Convention. The new AU aimed and aims at political and economic integration of the African Member-states.

We are currently commemorating the 50th anniversary of the African Union.

Since the beginning of times, Africa has been a continent of migration, in cultural- especially due to gatherer and sheep-farming movements - commercial and military terms.

These migration movements allowed the Egyptians their golden age, their contacts with the Nubian kingdom or the contacts between the Nubian and the people from the Monomotapa - a region between Mozambique and Zimbabwe where, according to some legends, the mythical kingdom of Sheba was situated -, the migrations of the Carthaginians beyond the Pillars of Hercules and as far as the "gulf of the Western Horn" and "the mountain of the Gods' Chariot"¹. From this place did Hanan, in his journey, bring furry skins that, according to his companions, were of female gorillas but

¹ The gulf of the Western Horn would be between Boujdour and the mouth of the river Geba (Guinea-Bissau) and the mountain of the gods' chariot would be in the area where the Cameroons are today (according to legend, this would be a word of Phoenician origin *camer* + *ayoun* = *gods' chariot*); the pillars of Hercules correspond to the strait of Gibraltar.



which, for authors such as Ki-Zerbo, were of pygmies (rather difficult, in my opinion, because pygmies are not furry) or of chimps.

However, the first big migrations, which almost caused the disappearing of a people, the Khoi-san² (also called bushmen or hottentot, depending on the area) people with yellowish skin and almond shaped eyes, took place after the invasions of the Negroes, negroid people from southeast Asia who crossed the Sinai and the Red Sea over 20 thousand years ago. Among these, two sub-groups were most noteworthy: those from western Sudan and the Ba'Ntu (Banto).

Initially, the Banto went as far as the Equator, where they stayed for thousands of years. With the Arab migrations, in particular, the group moved down towards the Cape, where they arrived almost at the same time as the Dutch Calvinists, the ancestors of the Afrikaner. In both cases, the worst off were the khoi-san, who were limited to a small region between the Angolan desert of Namibe and the north of Botswana (though there are a few in the north of South Africa), i.e., almost all the Namibe/Kalahari desert.

Currently, the Banto are considered the real African natives. Either due to political or sociological issues, all other genealogical members are forgotten, in particular the Bushmen, probably the first continental people, descendants of the "*Kenyanthropus africanus*", of the "*Homo habilis*" and of the "*Boskop man*". On the other hand, and though recent events in the northern region evidence otherwise, partly due to the Arab Spring, Caucasian peoples from the north, the Arabs, or from the south, the Afrikaner, tend to be forgotten.

Introduction

Between the creation of AUO and it becoming the African Union, Africa went through many important political, economic and social difficulties, namely, the fact that former European colonies became potential magnets of economic, political and military development.

In the late 1980s, in particular after the implosion of the USSR, the end of the Marxist myth and the reinforcement of conservative neo-liberalism, in the style of Fukuyama or Friedman, has been viewed and defined as accountable for the references to the democratization of Africa and the consequent eruption of political movements in that continent, in particular in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

The north of Africa is also struggling with a crucial problem: the coexistence of religious rulings which are, in temporal terms, still medieval or which is thus represented, unchangeable and the basis for national political systems, and democratic ideals, defined as western and secular, in which the law of the state is above religious law. The "Arab Spring" is a true example of this.

The election processes in Angola, Democratic Congo, Ghana, Mali and Nigeria, among others, are or were or will be (just like the continuously awaited but never announced elections in Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar) the result of illegal coups d'état,

² They are divided into bushmen (san-khoi, hunters) and hottentot (the khoi-khoi, shepherds).



condemned by international institutions, namely the African Union, and whose regional decision offices are not able to control.

Noteworthy is that this type of democracy, also known as demo-liberalism, currently in fashion in eastern European countries and in Western Europe, is not as widespread in African States. In Eastern Europe, these systems were not able to control the spread of violent neo-national movements as was the case in the Caucasus and in the Balkans.

However, if, at a political level, Africa has moved forwards and backwards, at a cultural level, progress has been inevitable. In fact, the challenge arises from the fact that Africa is a huge mix of cultures. The first part of this paper analyzes one of the cultural issues in Africa - the migrating movements, either internal or external, and their influence on culture and, at a later stage, on the social and political organization of a continent in constant mutation.

What perspective and what prospectivity?

1. The Formation of two Africas

In view of current political movements throughout almost the whole of Africa - some challenging, others revolutionizing - it is legitimate to question whether this is a symptom that the party system we are imposed on is in involution and, therefore, being replaced by cultural pluralism or is becoming proto-Mexican, as made visible in some States.

To analyze this issue, let us resort to a thesis by Fernando Chambino³(Almeida, 2004).

According to him, and considering the thalassocratic implementation model of the European colonizer (only Portugal used a pure thalassocratic model, the English and the French adopted the epiruscratic* model), there are two Africas. One Africa is that of contact and cultural change, usually identified as coastal urbanism, where pedagogy and social massification overcome the conditions of change; the other is the one in which the contact with other cultures was uncommon or even lacking, where custom, privilege and conservativeness is represented by traditional chiefs, whose power is supported by the complex issue of legitimacy of birth and who are opposed to change.

Both these two Africas claim the right to keep and use power and from an egocentric perspective.

Lavroff also refers to three major obstacles to the establishing of the multi-party system in Africa. The fact that new leaders try to define themselves as leaders of all peoples and, as a consequence, allow for no other political parties to exist, though they advocate their existence, so as to gather in a clearly predominant party, described as enlightening, all those qualified for *good governance*. Mr. Mugabe is one of the major advocates of this thesis, but there are more...

³ Fernando Chambino, now deceased, analyzed this issue with me when I was a student at Universidade Lusíada, and suggested I would further this study. I never did because I knew this was an issue he would study in his own PhD thesis.

* Both the word 'Epirus' and the word 'Thalassa' come from the Greek; 'thalassocracy' means 'control of the seas', epiruscracy represents 'control of the land' (continents – continental power or power over the Heartland).



Finally, the creation of true nationalism, still in progress. We must not forget that most African countries are a group of different ethnic groups and that ethnocentricity was promoted during the colonial period. The concept of nation has only recently been implemented in a few countries such as Cape Verde, Angola, Lesotho; Senegal or Swaziland. The others are mere national projects with greater or lesser impact in society; South Africa is one of these cases.

These three obstacles, together with the concept of there being two Africas, are not, *per se*, sustainable bases for allowing political Mexicanization that (almost totalitarian) regimes still maintain.

Based on a thesis by Erik Wright (1981: 69) - though in a different context - the implementation of a truly democratic western-type of regime will only occur when there is "effective economic sabotage by capitalist bourgeoisie" so that an insurrection is successful when facing a repressive system. And this insurrection will only be successful when "... that system divides or crumbles...".

This is what took place in the Soviet Union, in the former Eastern European states, in the Yugoslavian countries, and what is taking place, though in a smaller scale, in African states such as Madagascar, Benin, Burkina-Faso or in Kenya.

2. What Democracy, what Pluralism

Personally, I think ideological diversity will succeed, though there will still be leaders like Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Obiang (Equatorial Guinea), Biya (Cameroon), Museveni (Uganda) or Camporé (Burkina Faso), who advocate and defended the maintenance of power according to their pragmatic vision and their personal "charisma", considering that some of them attained power by means of violent coups d'état.

However, we should consider each case, Country and its specificity. We can never put in practice the same values for an Arab and a European- These values cannot, partly or totally, depending on the case, be put in practice in all African cultures, whose cultural root is epiruscatic, animist, conservative and based on custom, i.e., the "soba", the political chief, the administrative chief and, sometimes, the healer, the manager of a united group, is more important than the individual interests of any given individual not integrated in society.

Thalassocratic Africa, urban Africa, on the contrary, is more receptive to this. The big African metropolises are very individualistic and have no distinctive characteristics. In fact, the African city dweller is by nature acculturated and, as a result, more open to new ideas.

The best solution for Africa may be the coexistence of a western political system, the so-called democratic liberalism - not that currently in practice in Europe has a mixture between Anthony Giddens' social third way (the theory of structures) with Locke and Adam Smith's conservative liberalism - with the African social custom system.

The best would be to create a political organization where there are two Chambers of Representatives. One of these chambers would be typically western, the National Parliament, having all the features of a democratic system. The other, probably even more important, would be a Consultation and Monitoring Chamber, like the Senate, which would include the so-called "Good Men" from traditional social structure: the



"sobas", the chiefs or the "national monarchs and prices", i.e., the traditional chiefs. This would be a Consultation Chamber with monitoring powers and which could eventually have legislative powers.

3. What borders will there be in 21st century Africa?

The AUO Charter, approved in Addis Ababa in 1963 and ratified by its successor, the African Union, laid down the maintenance and intangibility of colonial borders after the Berlin Conference.

Cases such as those of Biafra, Katanga, Chad or the Tuareg region (Mali-Algeria) confirm that the Charter is being enforced, regardless of the consequences for those infringing the rules, as was the case in Cabinda or Kaprivi. Only the region of Eritrea separated from Ethiopia in 1993 but for political and historical reasons and with Ethiopia's previous agreement.

However, more recently, a fact went against the AU Charter, rather more due to external impositions than to the will of Africans: the secession of South Sudan. This may be a signal of what may occur in other regions where external interests are more important than those of the Africans or of the natives. And there are cases where that may occur...

We may recall that the emerging of a nationalism, closer to the tribal than to the national concept, the affirmation of ancient ethnic and cultural values, the appetite for power of some leaders, who show no mercy to achieve their ends, the case of Sudan being divided into two States, indicates that the unchangeability of colonial borders is not as clear as was stated in the Charter.

The adoption by Uganda of the old regal name Buganda may lead (and, in a way, it does) to questioning of current colonial borders which correspond to the old kingdom. It is not in vain that, every now and again, the issue of the Great Lakes - though with different actors - appears in international news services. This occurred in the recent visit of UN Secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, to the area and to the fact that northern Congo (which is part of the lake region) is in constant political and military instability and its solution is unpredictable.

At a political, cultural and especially at an economic level, the western concept of nationalism is no longer an unquestionable value and it now includes (though it seems a paradox considering its content) values closer to those of a Global Village.

Despite everything, and quoting the Financial Times, Africa is a continent to invest in. The recent report by the consulting company Ernst & Young "Africa Attractiveness Survey", indicates that until 2040 Angola, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Egypt, Kenya and Ethiopia, will be the countries where the majority of external investments will take place and these countries will be among the major drivers for global growth.

It is up to our leaders to state and confirm that investment; we must not forget that, since 2007, the accumulated gain of African growth was 21%, about three times higher than in the so-called developed markets.

Thus, the stability of national borders is a model to consider and to defend by African states or the social development of our countries may be even more compromised.



There can and should no longer be border issues as those between Angola and the Democratic Congo, in the mouth of the river Zaire; the one between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal (in the Casamance region); or that between Malawi and Tanzania/Mozambique, in Lake Niassa, just to mention three cases which are close to us. All these issues are due to one thing: hydrocarbons!

African states may better defend their political and geographic borders through multiple cooperation, whether internal, through different political and economic institutions such as SADC, ECOWAS or CEEAV, or through furthering external political, economic and military cooperation, such as, for example, the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea and/or the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS) (Almeida & Bernardino, 2013) as means of safeguarding water territory.

We realize that the fact that our African states, namely the regional proto-powers of the Gulf area (South Africa, Angola and Nigeria) have or had little interest for navy power has allowed for external powers (the USA, the UK, France, Spain, Portugal and Brazil, among others) to maintain their water routes between the Cape and the western hemisphere.

Noteworthy is that both South Africa (which has ordered 3 submarines) and Angola are now promoting their navy and, thus, trying to stop the Gulf from being a non-African area.

These thoughts, as well as this question, remain: "what will be the borders of our Continent at the end of this century like?".

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