

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Internationalists, sovereigntists, nativists: Contending visions of world order in Pan-Africanism

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Abstract

Contrary to common assumptions that the liberal world order was ‘made in the West’, this article argues that it was produced in interaction with Pan-African ideology and actors. Developing a morphological analysis, it identifies three contending visions of world order within Pan-Africanism: a world of continental unity and transnational solidarity; a world of national sovereignty; and a world of racially defined units. It concludes that Pan-Africanism contains intellectual and political resources for the defence, reinvigoration, and invention of a more just, equal and rule-bound multilateral world, but that this cannot be taken for granted. Pan-Africanism is neither inherently progressive, nor reactionary, and can support multilateralism and sovereigntism in equal measure. Pan-Africanism’s nativism also carries particular risks at a time when similar identitarian viewpoints are promoted by Radical Right movements. Understanding the manner in which Pan-Africanism informs and legitimises diverse political agendas is thus of crucial importance for IR, for Pan-Africanists, and for the future of world order.

Keywords: World Order; Ideology; Pan-Africanism; Africa; Radical Right; Nativism; Afropolitanism; Afrocentrism; Liberal Internationalism

Introduction

In the current chorus of concern for the vanishing or declining liberal world order, the voices of Africa and Africans are seldom heard. When the continent makes a rare appearance in these discussions, it is primarily as a passive bystander, possibly seduced by the rise of China or negatively affected by the retreat from liberal internationalism and multilateral cooperation, not as an active participant contributing to the direction of world events and the shape of international relations.¹ This sidelining of Africa is reminiscent of past world order debates, as for example during the Cold War when the continent was assigned the role of pawn to the superpowers. As President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania observed at the time: ‘The big question is always: Is this country pro-East or pro-West?’ These kinds of views, he charged ‘are based on a very fundamental mistake – and I would add, an unwarranted degree of arrogance! They imply that Africa has no ideas of its own and no interests of its own.’²

¹See Anthony Dawkin and Mark Leonard, ‘Can Europe Save the World Order?’, European Council on Foreign Relations (May 2018), available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/can_europe_save_the_world_order.pdf; Robert Kagan, ‘The Twilight of the Liberal World Order’, Brookings (24 January 2017), available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-twilight-of-the-liberal-world-order/>; Anne Marie Slaughter, ‘The return of anarchy?’, *Columbia Journal of International Affairs*, 70:1 (2017), pp. 11–16.

²Julius Nyerere, ‘Stability and change in Africa’, in Julius Nyerere (ed.), *Man and Development* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 43.

Nyerere's lament is as relevant today as it was in 1974. The corollary of a discourse that reduces not only Africa, but also most other Southern actors to passivity in the course of global events is the assumption, explicit or implicit, that 'the current international order is the product of exclusively Western authorship'³ and that its main ideologues are 'white male scholars who were privileged enough to be able to travel the world, lecture to educated audiences, and publish their ideas in widely read outlets'.⁴

This article, by contrast, examines the visions of world order expressed by black (mostly male) scholars and activists, who despite their marginalisation travelled the world to spread their ideas of global transformation. Put differently, it takes Nyerere's admonition to heart and investigates African ideas about international order and world politics. It does so by taking Pan-Africanism seriously as an ideology, demonstrating its past, present, and possible future influence on global order. As such, the article contributes to a growing body of scholarship that highlights the role of non-Western actors in world politics,⁵ and argues that while frequently ignored or derided, the discipline of International Relations has much to gain from engaging with Pan-Africanism, both as an intellectual resource for political action and for developing a more global, inclusive, and less Western-centric discipline.⁶

Taking non-Western thought seriously, however, should not entail an uncritical embrace, nor does it suffice merely to excavate or pinpoint Southern perspectives. Instead, the same critical sensibilities must apply to non-Western thought as to Western thought, and in discussing Pan-Africanism I show how, like any ideology, it is far from monolithic or unified, but contains internal tensions and fissures, multiple variations and inflections, all adapting and mutating in interaction with global events. More specifically, I identify three contending and evolving visions of world order within Pan-Africanism: a world of racially defined units; a world of continental unity and transnational solidarity; and a world of national sovereignty. Unlike most accounts of Pan-Africanism, I do not regard this as a chronological evolution where one vision neatly replaces another, but drawing on morphological approaches to ideology, I treat each vision as consisting of overlapping ideas and fluid building blocs that continue to exist and compete for influence within the broad collection of concepts and values that make up Pan-Africanism.⁷ The value of this approach is its ability to demonstrate the manner in which Pan-Africanism constitutes a patterned way of thinking about international politics that confers meaning and legitimacy on political strategies and actions, as well as the manner in which different configurations of Pan-Africanism can be invoked by different political agents with varied political ends.

The argument is not merely of historical or disciplinary significance. In recovering Pan-African influences and voices in world politics, I show that the ideology cannot be analysed

³Andrew Phillips, 'Beyond Bandung: The 1955 Asian-African Conference and its legacies for international order', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70:4 (2016), p. 330.

⁴Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 16.

⁵Amitav Acharya, 'Studying the Bandung Conference from a global IR perspective', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70:4 (2016), pp. 342–57; Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (eds), *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moment and Movements, 1880s–1930s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Eric Helleiner, *Forgotten Foundations of Bretton Woods: International Development and the Making of the Postwar Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70:4, Special Issue (2016); Special Section: 'Principles from the Periphery: The Neglected Southern Sources of Global Norms', *Global Governance*, 20:3 (2014).

⁶Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds', *International Studies Quarterly*, 58:4 (2014), pp. 647–59; Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver (eds), *International Relations Scholarship around the World* (London: Routledge, 2009); Robbie Shilliam (ed.), *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2010); Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

⁷Michael Freeden, 'The morphological analysis of ideology', in Michael Freeden and Marc Stears (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford Handbooks Online, 2015).

with reference to the African continent alone, but must be understood as part of global constellations of ideas, power relations, and problematics. Just as Pan-African ideas in the past interacted with broader international dynamics and contributed to shaping the postwar world order, Pan-Africanism today relates and responds to the ideas and forces that give rise to widespread anxieties over a vanishing liberal internationalism, including the spread of nationalism, the withdrawal from multilateralism, and the emergence of illiberal powers like China and Russia.

Discussions of the 'liberal world order' frequently proceed as if the term is self-explanatory, and slip easily from description and analysis to normative endorsement of the status quo as a defence against chaos, violence, and civilisational decline.⁸ Bringing African visions into these debates shatters any illusion of the postwar world order as harmonious and equal, and highlights instead the persistence of international domination and hierarchy. World order is accordingly used here in the sense suggested by Robert Cox as the 'way things usually happen', not as the antithesis of turbulence and domination.⁹ Pan-African visions of world order, past and present, are acutely aware of structural power differentials in the international system, and constitute demands for a domination-free and more egalitarian world. From this perspective, the possible passing of the liberal international order as we know it is not necessarily to be mourned, but may instead offer opportunities for its reform and transformation. My suggestion is that Pan-Africanism contains resources for a defence, reinvigoration, and invention of a more just, equal, and rule-bound multilateral order. The progressiveness and internationalism of Pan-Africanism cannot, however, be taken for granted; the ideology has at times served to reinforce sovereignty and shield repressive state practices, while in today's political climate Pan-African notions of identity and difference carry particular risks as strikingly similar values and visions are promoted by Radical Right movements across the globe.

I illustrate the contemporary relevance of the argument with reference to African states' position on the International Criminal Court, a position that has all too frequently been represented as a crude defence of state sovereignty, and by implication impunity, but which on closer inspection embodies complex contestations between various Pan-African ideas and values, including not only sovereignty but also unity, justice, and equality. Finally, I examine the intersection of Pan-African notions of difference with the identitarian appeals of the Radical Right, showing how in the current political landscape progressivism and nativism blend, laying waste to traditional distinctions between the left and the right. In this new constellation of ideas and practices, understanding the manner in which Pan-Africanism informs and legitimises diverse political agendas is of crucial importance, not only for IR and Pan-Africanists, but also for the future of world order.

Pan-Africanism as ideology

IR has rarely taken Pan-Africanism seriously, whether as a political movement, a theoretical approach, or as a body of scholarship. Standard introductions to IR at best make a brief mention of Pan-Africanism and African intellectuals, perhaps in discussions of regionalism and as illustration of regionalist ideals sacrificed at the altar of national sovereignty. IR scholars working on Africa provide valiant exceptions, insisting on the importance of Pan-Africanism,¹⁰ while Robert

⁸Sanjay Chaturvedi and Joe Painter, 'Whose world, whose order? Spatiality, geopolitics and the limits of the world order concept', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 42:4 (2007), pp. 375–95; Hans Kundani, 'What Is the Liberal International Order?', German Marshall Fund of the United States, Policy Essay no. 17 (2017).

⁹Robert W. Cox, 'Social forces, states, and world orders: Beyond International Relations theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10 (1981), pp. 126–55 (p. 151).

¹⁰Rita Kiki Edozie (with Keith Gottschalk), *The African Union's Africa: New Pan-African Initiatives in Global Governance* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014); Thomas Tiekou, 'Collectivist worldview: Its challenge to International Relations', in Scarlett Cornelissen, Fantu Cheru, and Timothy M. Shaw (eds), *Africa and International Relations in the 21st Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Tim Murithi, *The African Union: Pan-Africanism, Peace-building and*

Vitalis and Paul Gilroy have both demonstrated beyond rebuke the centrality of African-American scholars to the emergence of the discipline of IR and the development of transnational perspectives.¹¹

Pan-African thought is by its very nature international thought and its focus on African unity necessarily entails the question of how Africa and Africans fit – and should fit – into the world, and hence by implication the question of international relations and world order. Throughout its lifetime, Pan-Africanism has been trans-territorial and transatlantic, and the very idea of African unity was made possible by distance and alienation from the continent. In the words of the leading Pan-Africanist and African-American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois, the ‘idea of one Africa to unite the thought and ideals of all native peoples of the dark continent belongs to the twentieth century and stems naturally from the West Indies, and the United States ... where various groups of Africans, quite separate in origin, became so united in experience and so exposed to the impact of new cultures that they began to think of Africa as one idea and one land’.¹² For the early Pan-Africanists of the New World, Africa was the natural future home for all black people who had been forcibly ripped from the continent by the slave trade, and in their thinking unity was intimately linked to the welfare and equality of Africans in the United States and the Caribbean.¹³ Their vision was of a transatlantic, black international, stressing African unity but also transnational solidarity and the humanity of all colonised and subjugated people.

In this way, Pan-African thought was from the outset simultaneously inward-oriented, concerned with the dignity, welfare, and development of Africa and Africans, and outward-looking, concerned with the world and the status and power of Africa and Africans in that world. This concurrent inward- and outward-orientation is clearly evident in the statement by Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie at the inaugural summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963:

We stand today on the stage of world affairs, before the audience of world opinion. We have come together to assert our role in the direction of world affairs and to discharge our duty to the great continent whose two hundred fifty million people we lead ... Men on other parts of this Earth occupied themselves with their own concerns and, in their conceit, proclaimed that the world began and ended at their horizons. All unknown to them, Africa developed in its own pattern, growing in its own life and, in the nineteenth century, finally re-emerged into the world’s consciousness.¹⁴

For Selassie, Pan-Africanism thus embodied a simultaneous ‘duty’ to the continent and its people, and to the world in terms of ‘asserting’ Africa’s role in international affairs. Exactly how this twofold duty should be performed and combined has varied greatly over Pan-Africanism’s lifespan, and there are significant divisions and disagreements between Pan-African thinkers both in the past and in the present. Yet, at the level of ideas about the international there are clear lines of continuity stretching from the very first identifiable Pan-African articulations by Alexander Crummell and Edward W. Blyden in the mid-1800s to the independence-era intellectuals Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, through to Thabo Mbeki’s stirring ‘I am an African’ speech in 1996 and the African Union’s ambitious relaunch of an agenda for continental integration in the 2000s.

Development (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005); Valery B. Ferim, ‘Reassessing the relevance of the Pan-African discourse in contemporary International Relations’, *Theoria*, 153:4 (2017), pp. 85–100.

¹¹Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Vitalis, *White World Order*. For a similar argument regarding the discipline of Sociology, see Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

¹²W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part which Africa has played in World History* (New York: International Publishers, 2015 [orig. pub. 1946]), p. 7.

¹³*Ibid.*; William Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994 [orig. pub. 1888]).

¹⁴In Edozie, *The African Union’s Africa*, p. xxi.

In order to capture this continuity with difference, I draw on contemporary morphological approaches to the study of ideology. Moving beyond traditional Marxist analyses of ideology, these approaches build on the linguistic turn in the social sciences, recognising that language does not simply reflect the social world but is partly constitutive of it.¹⁵ Ideologies, in this view, are neither monolithic, grand narratives, nor mystifying, obfuscating ideas designed to deceive or conceal political realities. They are instead ‘the actual modes of political thinking’,¹⁶ or political thinking in practice. Best described as typical or patterned ways of thinking about politics, ideologies occur at all levels of society from political elites and parties to ordinary people and groups. In the words of Michael Freeden, they are ‘those systems of political thinking, loose or rigid, deliberate or unintended, through which individuals and groups construct an understanding of the political world they, or those who preoccupy their thoughts, inhabit, and then act on that understanding’.¹⁷ As socially shared beliefs, ideologies are axiomatic in the sense that they structure and organise other socially shared beliefs and values.¹⁸ A socialist ideology, for example, will structure positions regarding state provision of welfare services, just as a Pan-African ideology will delineate attitudes towards the International Criminal Court.

The building blocs of ideologies are political concepts, and ideologies are distinguished by their particular combination of concepts. Some concepts can be considered core or fundamental to the ideology, while others are adjacent or peripheral in terms of their pervasiveness and the breadth of meaning they impart.¹⁹ In Freeden’s assessment, for example, liberalism always includes the core concept of ‘liberty’, while adjacent concepts such as ‘well-being’, ‘democracy’, and ‘property’ can in different combinations pull liberalism towards either a welfare state or a free market. Through their various combinations of concepts, ideologies interpret the social and political world and offer ‘a semantic “solution” to its ‘messiness and indeterminacy’.²⁰ That is, they offer particular ‘decontestations’ of essentially contested concepts and carve ‘temporary stabilities’ out of ‘fundamental semantic instability’.²¹ Ideologies are thus strategies for conferring specific meanings to contested concepts, rendering them meaningful in relation to other concepts and within a particular political discourse.²² They are, in other words, languages of politics deployed to legitimate political action, and to establish and/or alter a society’s moral identity.²³ As such strategies, ideologies compete for control and influence over public political language, understandings of the world and political action.

This competition is constant and evolving. Concepts can be combined in different ways and assigned different weight and meaning depending on time, space, and cultural context, making ideologies fluid and mutable. Particular ‘decontestations’, or stable meanings and interpretations, can also be challenged and changed in interaction and response to broader social and political developments. Financial crises, terrorist attacks, mass migration, and environmental disasters will, for example, influence ideologies. As Freeden explains, such events may be compared to a ‘continuous bombardment of Earth by meteorites and asteroids, all of which have a variable

¹⁵Aletta J. Norval, ‘Review article: The things we do with words – contemporary approaches to the analysis of ideology’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 30:2 (2000), pp. 313–46. Norval shows how the study of ideology has much in common with the tradition of intellectual history fostered by John Dunn, Quentin Skinner, and James Tully, seeking to recast the study of the ‘history of ideas’ in a manner akin to Michel Foucault’s by emphasising the importance of language and context.

¹⁶Freeden, ‘The morphological analysis’, p. 1.

¹⁷Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 3.

¹⁸Teun A. van Dijk, ‘Ideology and discourse analysis’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11:2 (2007), pp. 115–40.

¹⁹See Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, ch. 2.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 6.

²¹Freeden, ‘The morphological analysis’, p. 5. Freeden draws on Gallie’s analysis of essentially contested concepts. W. B. Gallie, ‘Essentially contested concepts’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56 (1955–6), pp. 167–98.

²²For this reason, Freeden argues that ‘we have no access to political ideas and thinking except as ideologies’. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³James Tully, ‘The pen is a mighty sword: Quentin Skinner’s analysis of politics’, in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 7–25 (p. 13).

impact on the body they enter'.²⁴ The purpose of morphological analyses is to decode the specific and evolving meaning assigned to concepts and clusters of concepts within ideologies, investigating their interplay over time and space and the way in which they contribute to shaping our worlds, our understandings, and our political actions.

One of the strengths of such approaches is the fecundity of their theoretical and methodological tools, and the manner in which they open up multiple avenues for the study of ideological configurations.²⁵ The approach is especially well suited to explorations of intra-ideological changes over time, or in Freeden's words, to the analysis of 'the diachronic mutation of an ideology'.²⁶ This is also the direction of my analysis, although in what follows I do not attempt an exhaustive exploration of Pan-African ideology or an in-depth exegesis of its intellectual foundations.²⁷ Neither do I seek to provide a complete list of its core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts, nor to establish the boundaries of Pan-Africanism – all possible paths of morphological inquiry. My purpose is more specific, seeking to capture the evolving and contending visions of world order contained within Pan-African thought from its inception to the present.

To do so, I treat unity as a core concept within Pan-Africanism. Unity stands in relation to adjacent concepts, including sovereignty, equality, and justice in the international system, as well as African identity and difference. The exact meaning of these concepts has varied over time and place, as have their relative weight and importance *vis-à-vis* questions of world politics and global order. In other words, different ideological configurations of Pan-Africanism offer different decontestations of unity, competing to confer meaning on social and political life and provide guidance for action and decision-making. Approaching Pan-Africanism from this perspective reveals continuity, change, and tensions, uncovering an ideology that is far from monolithic or static but contains multiple variations and inflections, adapting and mutating in interaction and reaction with global dynamics and events. Yet despite such adaptations, the various elements and concepts that make up Pan-Africanism rarely die or completely fade from view, but continue to exist within the ideology as potential resources for political agents.

A world of continental unity or sovereign states?

The story of Pan-Africanism is frequently told as a contest between supporters of continental unity and promoters of national sovereignty, where the former ultimately lost to the latter, ushering in an African continent (and world order) of multiple sovereign states rather than a Union of African States. There is a great deal of truth to that story, although its easy chronology and sharp binary are challenged by a morphological perspective that recognises Pan-Africanism as capable of multiple conceptual combinations and nuanced variations, offering different and varied decontestations of unity – depending on how it is conjugated in relation to the desire and demand for other political ends, most notably sovereignty and equality, and correlated with world events and historical circumstances.

Pan-African thought was born in the New World, but came to political maturity at the time when its leadership migrated from the diaspora to the continent. This coincided with the turbulent aftermath of the Second World War and the intensifying struggle for decolonisation, and it is in this global context of deep political divisions that Pan-Africanism's two main contending visions of and contributions to world order must be analysed. The imperial order was in visible decay and sorely lacking in legitimacy, but it was not given up for dead and the future organisation of world order was still under intense debate and negotiation. The Soviet Union and the

²⁴Freeden, 'The morphological analysis', p. 13.

²⁵Norval, 'Review article', p. 342. Freeden analyses liberalism, conservatism, socialism, feminism, and green ideology. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*.

²⁶Freeden, 'The morphological analysis', p. 3.

²⁷For such treatments, see Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and the Movement, 1776–1991* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1994).

United States sought to dismantle the European empires, but were far from unambiguous supporters of national self-determination for the colonies. On their part, Britain, France, Portugal, and Holland envisioned the survival of a world of empires, albeit as some form of enlightened imperialism reinvented for the modern age.²⁸ The United Nations' Charter, agreed in San Francisco in 1945, contained no clear commitment to self-determination or decolonisation. Instead, mandates were turned into trusteeships and colonies became dependent territories, breathing new life into a deeply unequal world order and arguably cementing the dominance of the great powers.²⁹ The rights of colonised peoples were, as Du Bois thundered, entirely neglected by the UN Conference. 'We have conquered Germany', he wrote, 'but not their ideas. We still believe in white supremacy, keeping Negroes in their place and lying about democracy when we mean imperial control of 750 millions of human beings in colonies.'³⁰

Against this background, the Fifth Pan-African Congress met in Manchester in October 1945. Adopting the slogan 'Africa for Africans', the Congress launched a powerful call for an end to colonialism and the imperial world order. Under the intellectual leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, Pan-Africanism became both 'an expression of African nationalism' and a tool of resistance against colonialism and neocolonialism.³¹ It was, as Adom Getachew argues, a programme of radical 'worldmaking' that anchored self-determination in a domination-free international order.³² For Nkrumah, Pan-African unity meant a united, federal Africa. Rejecting the borders bequeathed by the colonial powers, he argued for the creation of a supranational entity; a 'Union of African States'. Unless 'Africa is politically united under an All-African Union Government, there can be no solution to our political and economic problems', he stated in no uncertain terms. Without federal unity, political independence would be meaningless, as imperialism would adopt and extend 'its economic grip'.³³ African countries would thus forever be the slaves of powerful countries and the subjects of endless neocolonial domination in a hierarchical international system.³⁴

Morphologically, unity and sovereignty were indivisible in Nkrumah's vision, with the core concept of unity absorbing and containing the adjacent concepts of sovereignty and justice and equality in the international system. Nkrumah's decontestation of unity was not, however, universally shared within the Pan-African movement, and as the struggle for decolonisation intensified, an alternative vision emerged that not only decoupled unity and sovereignty, but also regarded the latter as a prior condition for the former.

This split in Pan-Africanism is most frequently illustrated with reference to the thinking of Nkrumah and Nyerere, both of whom invoked unity in their fight for decolonisation.³⁵ But where Nkrumah insisted that independence should come in the form of a federal Union of African States, Nyerere urged gradualism and a step-by-step approach. While he agreed with Nkrumah that 'African nationalism is meaningless, is anachronistic, and dangerous, if not at the same time Pan-African',³⁶ he argued that unity, or a United States of Africa, had to follow national independence: 'Indeed I believe that a real dilemma faces the pan-Africanist. One is the fact that pan-Africanism demands an African consciousness and an African loyalty; on the

²⁸Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

²⁹Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 63.

³⁰In *Ibid.*, p. 63. Du Bois was a consultant to the US delegation in San Francisco. See also Marika Sherwood, "'There is no new deal for the blackman in San Francisco": African attempts to influence the founding conference of the United Nations, April–July, 1945', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 29:1 (1996), pp. 71–94.

³¹Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 135.

³²Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*.

³³Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Colonialism* (New York: International, 1965), p. 33.

³⁴Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, p. 217.

³⁵The split gave rise to the so-called Monrovia and Casablanca Groups. See Adi, *Pan-Africanism*.

³⁶Julius Nyerere, 'A United States of Africa' (1963), in Julius Nyerere (ed.), *Freedom and Unity: A Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952–65* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 194.

other hand is the fact that each pan-Africanist must also concern himself with the freedom and development of one of the nations of Africa. These things can conflict. Let us be honest and admit that they have already conflicted.³⁷

Nyerere's honesty captures the tension-filled relationship between two of Pan-Africanism's main building blocs. While both Nyerere and Nkrumah, together with their respective supporters, upheld unity as a core concept, they offered different decontestations in modulation with the adjacent concept of sovereignty as represented by decolonisation. Deep-seated fears that continental unity would undermine hard-won national sovereignty and substitute continental for imperial hegemony led to growing support among African leaders for a looser confederation of independent states, or what the Nigerian Pan-Africanist Nnamdi Azikiwe referred to as a 'concert of states'.³⁸

These debates were not confined to the African continent, but interacted with global developments and constellation of ideas, and in particular with other Pan-isms and Southern movements for decolonisation.³⁹ They also coincided with the enthronement of the nation-state as the normative unit of the international system, a development that was buttressed by the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. The representatives of the 29 Asian and African states and territories that gathered at Bandung issued a powerful challenge to the colonial order, and their ten-point 'declaration on promotion of world peace and cooperation' demanded a strengthening of the global norms of human rights and universalism.⁴⁰ Their call for decolonisation contributed to the extension and deepening of the norm of universal sovereignty, which was at the time 'a deeply emancipatory idea for countries that had lost it to predatory and profoundly immoral Western powers for centuries'.⁴¹ Sovereignty, in other words, was a step towards a more just and equal world order, and part of a project for reordering the world. The legacy of the 'spirit of Bandung' is, however, contradictory, as the emphasis on national independence simultaneously weakened more internationalist visions of transnational and continental unity. Bandung thus stands as a key marker both of the South's contribution to world order and of the entrenchment of sovereignty as the main objective and endpoint of the independence struggle.⁴² It was, as Andrew Phillips observes, radical, conservative and order preserving at one and the same time.⁴³

After Bandung, Pan-African unity increasingly came to signify a collective struggle against colonial oppression with the aim of achieving sovereign self-determination rather than a Union of African States and transatlantic unity. The foundation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 institutionalised this vision of unity and world order. While continuing to fight for decolonisation, the OAU declared the borders of Africa sacrosanct and cemented national sovereignty and territorial integrity as the principles of continental cooperation. That said, the vision of continental unity did not die with the birth of the OAU. It receded and transformed in relation to the concept of sovereignty, but the moral and political force of appeals to unity as a means to a more just and equal world order survived both within Pan-African

³⁷ Julius Nyerere, 'The Dilemma of the Pan-Africanist', Speech (16 July 1966), available at: {<https://blackpast.org/1966-julius-kambarage-nyerere-dilemma-pan-africanist/>}.

³⁸ Nnamdi Azikiwe, 'The Future of Pan-Africanism', Speech (1962), available at: {<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/1962-nnamdi-azikiwe-future-pan-africanism/>}.

³⁹ See Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007); Mark Ledwidge and Inderjeet Parmar, 'Clash of the Pans: Pan-Africanism and Pan-Anglo-Saxonism and the global colour line, 1919–1945', *International Politics*, 55:6 (2018), pp. 765–81; Max Paul Friedman and Tom Long, 'Soft balancing in the Americas: Latin American opposition to U.S. intervention, 1898–1936', *International Security*, 40:1 (2015), pp. 120–56.

⁴⁰ Acharya, 'Studying the Bandung Conference'; Phillips, 'Beyond Bandung'.

⁴¹ Acharya, 'Studying the Bandung Conference', p. 350.

⁴² Joseph Hongoh, 'The Asian-African Conference (Bandung) and Pan-Africanism: The challenge of reconciling continental solidarity with national sovereignty', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70:4 (2016), pp. 374–90 (p. 383).

⁴³ Phillips, 'Beyond Bandung'.

discourses and within the practices of the OAU and individual member states.⁴⁴ One illustration of this is what Thomas Tiekou has described as the ‘Pan-African solidarity norm’; a distinct collectivist, consensual approach to decision-making that prevents African leaders from publicly criticising each other while at the same time acting as an informal collective defence mechanism against external interventions and condemnations.⁴⁵ Put differently, the solidarity norm developed from a particular decontestation of unity rooted in the anti-colonial struggle and solidly anchored in state sovereignty, drawing on Pan-African resources to portray a continent united against external domination.

During the lifetime of the OAU the solidarity norm was often practiced in a manner that earned the organisation the reputation of being a cosy talking club for dictators, shoring up their sovereign power and doing little to advance the freedom and prosperity of their peoples. The reigning conceptualisation and practice of unity, in other words, increasingly conflicted with other key building blocs of Pan-African ideology that the OAU also claimed to endorse, especially those relating to the rights, dignity, and freedom of African people. The transformation of the OAU into the African Union (AU) in 2002 entailed a significant recalibration of the relative importance of these values, and in particular of the meaning of unity.⁴⁶ While the birth of the AU clearly cannot be explained with reference to ideas and ideology alone, appeals to Pan-Africanism played a key, legitimising role. The statue of a forward-looking Kwame Nkrumah at the AU’s headquarters in Addis Ababa is highly symbolic in this regard, indicating a return to a more ambitious integrationist agenda: ‘A united and integrated Africa; an Africa imbued with the ideals of justice and peace; an inter-dependent and virile Africa determined to map for itself an ambitious strategy; an Africa underpinned by political economic, social and cultural integration which would restore to Pan-Africanism its full meaning ...’⁴⁷

The AU’s reference to Pan-Africanism is a striking indication of the ideology’s continued power and the ambition to restore its ‘full meaning’ shows how the concept of unity is not set in stone, but ripe for political reinterpretation and reawakening, given the right conditions. In the post-Cold War climate of intensified globalisation, the AU revitalised more integrationist, internationalist understandings of unity, including breathing new life into the notion of transatlantic unity by designating the diaspora as Africa’s sixth region. Economic unity has also been furthered through the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, while the Non-Indifference Clause permits the AU’s Peace and Security Council to authorise legal intervention in sovereign states in cases of gross human rights violations.⁴⁸

This is not to say that the tensions and contestations between the two concepts of unity and sovereignty have been resolved, or that Pan-Africanism has abandoned a vision of world order based on independent nation states in favour of continental unity, shared sovereignty, and transnational solidarity. Instead, the two visions continue to rub up against each other, co-existing alongside other adjacent concepts as political resources to be employed by actors in their struggles for influence and control. Debates about the International Criminal Court (ICC) are a case in point; here Pan-African ideals have been invoked in support of the Court as an instrument for a more just world order and in virulent attacks decrying the institution as a neocolonial oppressor. The debates illustrate not only the continuing relevance and mutability of Pan-African ideology, but also its potential impact on questions of world order and multilateral cooperation.

⁴⁴It also continued, as Getachew argues, in the form of demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), supported by many Pan-Africanists. Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*.

⁴⁵Tiekou, ‘Collectivist worldview’.

⁴⁶A full explanation of the emergence of the AU is beyond the scope of an article focused on ideology. See Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, ‘Explaining the clash and accommodation of interests of major actors in the creation of the African Union’, *African Affairs*, 103:411 (2004), pp. 249–67.

⁴⁷Commission of the African Union, ‘Strategic Plan of the Commission of the African Union Volume 2: 2004–2007’ (African Union, Addis Ababa, May 2004).

⁴⁸Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

Continuing contestations: Africa and the ICC

Much has been made of the African continent's opposition to the ICC, and hence it is important to recall that when the Court entered into force in 2002 its founding treaty had been signed by a disproportionately high number of African states.⁴⁹ African states also played an important role in negotiating the Rome Statute, and as early as February 1998 the OAU affirmed its 'commitment to the establishment' of the ICC and underlined its 'importance for Africa and for the world community as a whole'.⁵⁰ The continent's leaders, regional organisations, and civil society actors similarly expressed strong support for a new institution for global justice. Today's widespread perception that 'the ICC was shoved down the throats of unwilling Africans who were dragged screaming and shouting to Rome' accordingly does not correspond to the historical record, which instead evinces 'an international will of which Africa was a part'.⁵¹

Within a decade of the ICC's inauguration, however, the African mood had soured. All of the Court's cases were in Africa: Uganda, the DRC, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Kenya, Libya and Côte d'Ivoire, and African leaders and the AU were lining up to denounce the ICC for unfairly targeting the continent while grave human rights violations went unpunished in other parts of the world. Charges of infringement of sovereignty and of neocolonialism dominated these attacks. In 2008 President Paul Kagame of Rwanda argued that 'with the ICC all the injustices of the past including colonialism, imperialism, keep coming back in different forms. They control you. As long as you are poor, weak, there is always some rope to hang you'.⁵² Former AU Chairperson, Jean Ping, accused the court of 'bullying' Africa, suggesting that it was guilty of 'double standards' by not going after human rights violators in Gaza, Colombia, or Iraq.⁵³ The Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in 2013 accused the Court of racism, stating that there was consensus among African leaders that the ICC process 'has degenerated into some kind of race hunting'.⁵⁴ President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, himself at that point under investigation by the ICC, went further, describing the Court as 'a painfully farcical pantomime, a travesty that adds insult to the injury of victims. It stopped being the home of justice the day it became the toy of declining imperial power ... Our individual and collective sovereignty require us to take charge of our destiny, and fashion African solutions to African problems ... We would love nothing more than to have an international forum for justice and accountability, but what choice do we have when we get only bias and race-hunting at the ICC?'⁵⁵

In 2013 the AU accepted a declaration condemning 'the politicization and misuse of indictments against African leaders by the ICC', stressing 'the gravity of the situation which could undermine the sovereignty, stability, and peace in [Kenya] and in other member states'.⁵⁶ A few years later, in January 2017, the AU Assembly adopted the ICC Withdrawal Strategy, which despite its rabble-raising name stopped far short of advocating a mass exodus from the Court. Instead, the non-binding resolution rather ambiguously confirmed the sovereign right of states to withdraw from the Court and welcomed 'the sovereign decision taken by Burundi, South Africa and The Gambia as pioneer implementers of the Withdrawal Strategy', while at the same time committing to continued engagement to reform the ICC.⁵⁷ In Pan-African

⁴⁹Phakiso Mochochoko, 'Africa and the International Criminal Court', in Evelyn A. Ankumah and Edward K. Kwakwa (eds), *African Perspectives on International Criminal Justice* (Accra: Africa Legal Aid, 2005), pp. 247–51.

⁵⁰In Patryk I. Labuda, 'The International Criminal Court and the perceptions of sovereignty, colonialism and Pan-African solidarity', *African Yearbook of International Law Online*, 20:1 (2015), pp. 289–321 (p. 292).

⁵¹Mochochoko, 'Africa and the International Criminal Court', p. 243.

⁵²In Labuda, 'The International Criminal Court', p. 306.

⁵³Ibid., p. 307.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 310.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Assembly of AU, 'Decision on Africa's Relationship with the International Criminal Court' (12 October 2013).

⁵⁷Assembly of AU, 'Decision on the International Criminal Court' (30–1 January 2017).

vernacular, the Strategy encouraged ‘the adoption of African solutions to African problems’ and sought to ‘Preserve the dignity, sovereignty and integrity of Member States.’

It would be easy to dismiss African opposition to the ICC as a crude defence of sovereignty, or even a rejection of human rights in the name of impunity and the protection of heads of state. There is undoubtedly some truth to such interpretations, especially in the case of individuals like President Kenyatta, but self-interest alone cannot capture the full extent of discontent, or its articulation in a distinct Pan-African lexicon.⁵⁸ Neither can self-interest account for the hostility expressed by heads of state and intellectuals who have nothing directly to fear from the Court, nor does it fully explain the AU’s disillusionment with an international body that it helped establish and whose principles of international justice it still endorses.

From a morphological perspective, the debate about the ICC is illustrative not of raw self-interest or *realpolitik* – although it does not deny the importance of interests – but of a typical, patterned way of thinking about international politics. As a ‘system of political thinking’,⁵⁹ Pan-Africanism offers an understanding of the political world and informs, guides, and enables the reactions and behaviours of individuals and groups *vis-à-vis* the ICC. As such, the debate demonstrates the enduring impact of Pan-African ideology on modes of acting in the world, and shows how over time its various building blocs – unity, sovereignty, justice, equality – have evolved and been differently combined and flexibly interpreted in strategic political games in reaction and interaction with the practices of the Court. Thus, the longstanding Pan-African commitment to an equal, just and rule-bound legal international order, as seen previously in the fight against colonialism and oppression, informed early African support for an international mechanism for the pursuit of justice. But as the Court proceeded to indict only Africans, including heads of state, and the UN Security Council declined to consider the AU’s repeated deferral requests and suggestions that ICC interventions may negatively impact national peace processes,⁶⁰ its actions were readily framed with reference to infringement of sovereignty and inequality in the international system. Put differently, the core value of unity, especially in its established practice as the solidarity norm, came to guide the oppositional voices and led to a reawakening of the colonial trope of ‘Africa against the West’ and the Pan-African principle that Africans must stand as one against external criticism.

Reacting to the AU’s denouncement of the ICC, Archbishop Desmond Tutu argued that ‘Far from a fight between Africa and the West, this is a fight within Africa, for its soul’ – and we could add, a fight for the soul of Pan-Africanism. Tutu insisted that as ‘Africa begins to find its voice in world affairs, it must strengthen its commitment to the rule of law, not undermine it. These principles are part of our global moral and legal responsibility, not items from a menu we can choose only when it suits us.’⁶¹ From a morphological perspective, however, Pan-Africanism is precisely such a menu, and its values and ideals can be mobilised both in defence of and in opposition to the ICC – and both positions can legitimately claim to be a continuation of the struggle for a more just and equal world order. One lends support for multilateralism and internationalism, the other for sovereigntism and possibly regionalism, but both are Pan-African.

Pan-Africanism’s two main contending visions of world order are clearly at play in these struggles, and at a time when multilateral cooperation and the rules-based international system are under threat these are not merely intra-African debates. Just as Pan-African ideals helped push the international community towards decolonisation and the expansion of human rights in the postwar period, so Pan-Africanism’s longstanding support for justice and equality was instrumental to the creation of the ICC as a mechanism of global cooperation. Conversely,

⁵⁸Labunda, ‘The International Criminal Court’.

⁵⁹Freedon, ‘The morphological analysis of ideology’.

⁶⁰Labunda, ‘The International Criminal Court’, p. 312; see also Sarah M. H. Nouwen and Wouter G. Werner, ‘Doing justice to the political: The International Criminal Court in Uganda and Sudan’, *European Journal of International Law*, 21:4 (2010), pp. 941–65.

⁶¹Desmond Tutu, ‘In Africa, seeking a license to kill’, *New York Times* (10 October 2013).

contemporary African opposition to the ICC – based on the decontestation of unity as collective protection against external domination – may potentially play into the hands of less progressive forces seeking to undermine multilateral cooperation and advance more sovereigntist agendas. Pan-Africanism and its impact on world order issues, in other words, is not static or predetermined, but evolving as part of global constellations of ideas and power relations.

A world of races and difference

Pan-Africanism also contains a third, lesser-known vision of world order; a nativist imaginary of a world of distinct races or authentic groups of people each inhabiting their own territory and living according to their own traditions, cultures, and religions. This vision is sometimes deliberately overlooked in accounts of Pan-Africanism, or designated an historical artefact of interest to the intellectual historian but of no contemporary relevance or significance. Such an interpretation does not do justice to the manner in which ideas of difference and authenticity continue to underpin and influence powerful positions, even as the concept of race has faded from the Pan-African lexicon. In order to appreciate the intellectual roots and political significance of today's debates about identity and the meaning of the 'African' in Pan-Africanism, we therefore need first to examine early Pan-African thinking.

Pan-Africanism was born in a time dominated by racial thinking, and it is not surprising that its early articulations reflected a racialised worldview. As Kwame Anthony Appiah reminds us, Pan-Africanism was steeped in the deep discrimination experienced by black people in the New World, and the early Pan-Africanists responded to their discrimination by 'accepting the racialism it presupposed'.⁶² This entailed accepting race as a 'fundamental ontological unit of politics, perhaps the most fundamental of all'⁶³ and a concomitant understanding of the world as consisting of different races. Early Pan-African thinking was thus founded on a 'very European concept of the Negro', not on 'any genuine cultural commonality' among African peoples,⁶⁴ and most Pan-Africanists at the time had limited experience and knowledge of the African continent and its peoples. What the Pan-Africanists vehemently rejected and resisted, however, was the prevailing hierarchical aspects of racialism that placed the white races, and particularly the Anglo-Saxons, above non-white peoples, designating the latter as 'backwards', 'uncivilised', and hence in need of 'improvement' administered by the more 'advanced' peoples.⁶⁵ Early Pan-African visions of the world, in other words, were profoundly racist, but not racist.

Accordingly, in the very first iterations of Pan-African thought in the mid-1800s, Africa is envisioned as a place for black people, or as Alexander Crummell put it in the parlance of the time, Africa is the motherland of the 'Negro race'.⁶⁶ Race, Appiah argues, is the 'single guiding principle' of Crummell's vision, a vision that is widely regarded as providing the foundation for Pan-African thought. Similar views are expressed by Edward W. Blyden, another

⁶²Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 17.

⁶³Duncan Bell, 'Race and international relations: Introduction', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26:1 (2017), pp. 1–4 (p. 1). See also Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: The Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁴Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 62.

⁶⁵To recall the racial thinking of the time, consider David Hume's 'Of National Characters', published in 1748: 'I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilised nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences ... Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men.' *Hume Texts Online*, available at: <https://davidhume.org/texts/empl/1/nc>.

⁶⁶Alexander Crummell, *The Future of Africa: Addresses, Sermons, Etc., Etc. Delivered in the Republic of Liberia* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1862).

Pan-African forefather, for whom black people all over the world constituted one nation.⁶⁷ Blyden and Crummell shared the conviction that every race was a natural unit with its own territory, and that each had its own special contribution to make to world civilisation. In Blyden's words, 'each of the races of mankind has a specific character',⁶⁸ which in turn gave rise to the notion of the 'African personality'. Importantly, this personality was not the 'Negro' described by Western literature, missionaries and colonial settlers. That 'Negro', accordingly to Blyden, was a 'purely fictitious being' constructed by 'all sorts of absurd stories ... and prejudices'.⁶⁹ The true, authentic African had yet to be regenerated or restored by the return of black people in the diaspora to the continent: 'The restoration of the Negro to the land of his fathers will be the restoration of a race to its original integrity, to itself; and working by itself, for itself and from itself, it will discover the methods of its own development, and they will not be the same as the Anglo-Saxon methods.'⁷⁰

The passage captures Blyden's understanding of races as natural, their distinctiveness ordained by God.⁷¹ Later in the same text, he argues powerfully against racial hierarchies: 'There is no absolute or essential superiority on the one side, nor absolute or essential inferiority on the other side. It is a question of difference of endowment and difference of destiny. No amount of training or culture will make the Negro a European; on the other hand, no lack of training or deficiency of culture will make the European a Negro. The two races are not moving in the same groove with an immeasurable distance between them, but on parallel lines. They will never meet in the plane of their activities so as to coincide in capacity or performance. They are not identical, as some think, but unequal; they are distinct but equal.'⁷²

Given his emphasis on racial distinctiveness, Blyden was critical of the mixing of races and argued for racial purity and the rejection of what he termed 'mulattos' from the African race. He was similarly deeply opposed to social mimicry and the imitation of white people,⁷³ as evident in his sarcastic rebuke: "Let us do away with the sentiment of Race. Let us do away with our African personality and be lost, if possible, in another Race." This is as wise or as philosophical as to say, let us do away with gravitation, with heat and cold and sunshine and rain. Of course, the Race in which these persons would be absorbed is the dominant race, before which, in cringing self-surrender and ignoble self-suppression they lie in prostrate admiration.⁷⁴ In other words, races are as natural as the sun and the rain, and their survival as equals demands their separation.

The Pan-Africanism of Blyden, Crummell, and their contemporaries was transatlantic and the restoration of the African race to its 'full integrity' would be spearheaded by the return of educated, exiled Africans who had been violently torn from the continent by slavery. Africa was regarded as their 'natural' homeland, or as Blyden put it, 'The Negro is drawn to Africa by the necessities of his nature.'⁷⁵ While at times a supporter of British colonialism, he insisted that the 'settlement of civilized blacks from America' was the best policy and 'the most effective

⁶⁷Between 1856 and 1887 Blyden wrote four books: *A Voice From Bleeding Africa* (1856); *A Vindication of the African Race: Being a Brief Examination of the Arguments in Favor of African Inferiority* (1862); *Africa for the Africans* (1872); and *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (1887).

⁶⁸Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*, p. 94.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p.110.

⁷¹As he wrote, 'The law of God for each race is written on the tablets of their hearts, and no theory will ever obliterate the deep impression or neutralise its influence upon their action; and in the process of their growth they will find or force a way for themselves.' *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷³V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 115–19.

⁷⁴Blyden, *Christianity, Islam*.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 124.

way of spreading civilization in inter-tropical Africa'.⁷⁶ True to his words, Blyden migrated to Liberia in 1851, as did Crummell in 1853.

'Back to Africa' was also a prominent theme in the thinking of Marcus Garvey. The controversial Jamaican, who moved to the United States in 1916, was an ardent believer in race and insisted that black people had to live in their own land of origin in order to be themselves. For Garvey the diaspora 'would be the instruments of uniting a scattered race' and would provide the leadership of the new liberated continent.⁷⁷ Garvey's organisation, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), was pivotal to the 'Back to Africa' movement that arose after the abolition of slavery and even founded its own shipping company, the Black Star Line, to facilitate the return. At the height of its popularity in the 1920s, the UNIA had branches across Europe, the Caribbean, and Africa and counted an estimated two million members and sympathisers, testifying to the widespread endorsement of Garvey's views and the belief that Africa was the natural home of all black people.⁷⁸

While Garvey's racialist, separatist Pan-Africanism had a large popular following, other black leaders were appalled by his approach and especially by his connections with other race-based organisations, including the Ku Klux Klan. Garvey's firm belief in the virtue of distinct, but equal races led him to declare that 'I regard the Klan, the Anglo-Saxon clubs and White American societies, as far as the Negro is concerned, as better friends of the race than all other groups of hypocritical whites put together.'⁷⁹ According to Du Bois, this made Garvey 'the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America and in the world'.⁸⁰ Like Garvey, Du Bois was a passionate supporter of 'Africa for Africans', but rather than separation he argued for integration and coexistence between races and peoples.⁸¹ Over time, his understanding of race and the African personality came to negate racial essentialism, emphasising instead social and economic influences. Indeed, his position on the hyphenated identity of black people in the US is not unlike many contemporary postcolonial cosmopolitan positions: 'Henceforth, the destiny of the race could be conceived as leading neither to assimilation nor separatism but to proud, enduring hyphenation.'⁸²

Du Bois's prescience does not render the racialised vision of world order espoused by the early Pan-Africanists irrelevant to contemporary debates. While we look in vain for a present-day Blyden or Garvey, and the concept of race has faded both from the repertoire of Pan-Africanism and the social sciences, debates about identity, difference, and what the 'African' in Pan-Africanism means – or should mean – continue. Morphologically, the early Pan-Africanist notion of 'the African personality' finds its contemporary articulation in notions of 'Afrocentrism' and 'African solutions to African problems'. Indeed, in the context of globalisation ideas of difference and authenticity have returned to the heart of Pan-African discussions, and in drawing their emotional and rhetorical power from opposition to something 'other' they contain audible echoes of a nativist, racialised imaginary.⁸³ There is also a discomfoting

⁷⁶In Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, p. 104.

⁷⁷In Adam Ewing, *The Age of Garvey: How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 42.

⁷⁸Andreas Eckert, 'Bringing the "Black Atlantic" into global history: The project of Pan-Africanism', in Conrad and Sachsenmaier (eds), *Competing Visions of World Order*, pp. 237–57 (p. 247). Garvey was particularly popular and influential in South Africa. See Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century Africa* (London: Longman, 1987).

⁷⁹In Amy Jacques Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey: Africa for the Africans* (2nd edn, Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 71.

⁸⁰In David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2009), p. 340.

⁸¹W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Andromeda: Of the future of the darker races and their relation to the white people', in *The World and Africa*, pp. 226–60; Morris, *The Scholar Denied*.

⁸²In David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of A Race* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1994), pp. 194–5. Du Bois's views on race are much debated; compare Appiah, *My Father's House* and Morris, *The Scholar Denied*.

⁸³Achille Mbembe, 'Afropolitanism', *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (2007). See also Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, ch. 6.

resemblance to debates about identity and culture in Europe and the US that similarly highlight fears of vanishing traditions and values in the face of migration and global cultural forces. As I argue below, in an international context where nationalist, Radical Right forces decry cosmopolitan identities and seek to undermine the associated liberal world order, Pan-Africanism's nativist reflex carries particular risks.

Continuing contestations: 'Afrocentrism' and the Radical Right

Intensified global interconnectedness has given new life to long-running contestations of the meaning of 'the African' in Pan-Africanism, and by implication to the relevance of identity to African unity. The most recent iteration of this debate pits 'Afrocentrism' against 'Afropolitanism'. The latter notion emerged in the mid-2000s, and sought, in the words of Achille Mbembe, to break with the nativist reflex of Pan-Africanism by abandoning the logic 'that identities and political struggles are founded on the basis of a distinction between "those who are from here" (autochthons) and "those who came from the outside" (non-natives)'.⁸⁴ This nativist reflex has, Mbembe argues, ossified Pan-Africanism to such an extent that it is unable to capture the contemporary realities of Africans and revive intellectual life on the continent. It has also internalised a permanent and pervasive sense of victimhood, where the inside/outside, self/other dichotomy endlessly reproduces Africa as a victimised and injured subject.⁸⁵ In this way, Pan-Africanism's claim to progressivism and radicalism, even when uttered as a defence of difference, is constrained by its underlying nativism.⁸⁶

Against this logic, Afropolitanism celebrates the cosmopolitan, transnational, postcolonial, and hybrid identities of globalised Africans, seeking to capture the multiple forms of difference constituted through the constant circulations and mobility of people, ideas and cultures. In this sense, Afropolitanism is, as Obadias Ndaba suggests, 'the Pan-Africanism of the hashtag, Twitter and Facebook realm'.⁸⁷ It also refuses any kind of victim identity, and while recognising past and present violence and injustices, it seeks to assert the agency and creativity of Africans in shaping the world and their own destinies.

Reactions to Afropolitanism have often been vituperative, denouncing its proponents as elitists and sell-outs to Western consumerism. Emma Dabiri, for example, charges that Afropolitanism is but a continuation of 'the [African] elites enduring love affair with achieving the lifestyles of their former masters'.⁸⁸ In this perspective, African difference or Afrocentrism, is a necessary tool in the fight against Western-centrism and oppression. In the powerful language of Molefi Kete Asante; 'Afrocentricity is African genius and African values created, recreated, reconstructed, and derived from our history and experiences in our best interests ... It is an uncovering of one's true self, it is the pin-pointing of one's centre, and it is the clarity and focus through which black people *must see the world* in order to escalate.'⁸⁹

The enduring power of claims to difference based on an essential opposition to something 'other' or Western is thus clearly visible in critiques of Afropolitanism.⁹⁰ Just as the early

⁸⁴Mbembe, 'Afropolitanism', p. 28.

⁸⁵Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 88.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Obadias Ndaba, 'Afropolitanism and its discontents', in Dorothy L. Hodgson and Judith A. Byfield (eds), *Global Africa: Into the Twenty-First Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 366–75.

⁸⁸Emma Dabiri, 'Why I'm not an Afropolitan', *Africa is a Country* (21 January 2014), available at: {<https://africasacountry.com/2014/01/why-im-not-an-afropolitan/>}. Binyavanga Wainaina similarly entitled his address to the UK African Studies Association in 2012: 'I am a Pan-Africanist, not an Afropolitan.'

⁸⁹Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1989), emphasis added.

⁹⁰See Susanne Gehrmann, 'Cosmopolitanism with African roots: Afropolitanism's ambivalent mobilities', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 28:1 (2016), pp. 61–72; Albert Kasanda, 'Exploring Pan-Africanism's theories: From race-based solidarity to political unity and beyond', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 28:2 (2016), pp. 179–95.

Pan-Africanists defined ‘the African personality’ in opposition to whiteness and Blyden raged against social mimicry and the imitation of white culture, so today’s critics of Afropolitanism represent a tradition of essentialism and a rhetoric of difference that glorifies the notion of Africa as a measure of authenticity and that rejects any radical decentering of African identity as fluid, ambiguous, or hybrid as politically dangerous or nullifying.

The significance of these debates is by no means restricted to Pan-Africanism and the African continent, nor should they be understood in isolation from a global context where nationalist and Radical Right movements are on the rise, espousing identitarian politics and nativist visions of world order that are discomfortingly close to those historically found within Pan-Africanism. Radical Right ideologies and Pan-Africanism are of course in most respects poles apart, but they sometimes reach for the same conceptual building blocs and offer similar decontestations. Progressivism, radicalism, and nativism blend easily at this point, and can lay waste to traditional distinctions between the political left and right.

Lest I be misunderstood: My suggestion is not that Pan-Africanism and the Radical Right are one and the same. Far from it! But their morphological resemblances highlight the mutability and fluidity of ideological positions, as well as the need to analyse ideologies in interaction with the broader social and political world. The Radical Right is, to repeat Freeden’s metaphor, part of Pan-Africanism’s external periphery and part of its continuous bombardment by meteorites and asteroids.⁹¹ In other words, the Radical Right is an important component of contemporary global constellations of ideas, values, and forces, and its efforts to strengthen and promote identitarian discourses and politics shape and condition the landscape within which Pan-African appeals to difference operate.

While contemporary Radical Right groups across Europe and North America are diverse and varied,⁹² they are all virulently nationalist and advocate a defence of white traditions and values against ‘*le grand remplacement*’, or the great replacement of white people by immigrants.⁹³ While it is tempting to dismiss these movements as mere populism – or worse – the Radical Right is also marked by a self-conscious intellectual vanguard that provides a coherent theoretical foundation for the defence of ‘diversity’ and the right to ‘difference’.⁹⁴ The starting point of this intellectual project is a wholesale attack on liberalism and Western universalism, not unlike the standard left-wing or Pan-African critique of imperialism. As Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier put it in one of the Radical Right’s key texts:

The West’s conversion to universalism has been the main cause of its subsequent attempt to convert the rest of the world: in the past, to its religions (the Crusades); and today, to its economic and social model (development) or its moral principles (human rights). Undertaken under the aegis of missionaries, armies, and merchants, the Westernization of the planet has represented an imperialist movement fed by the desire to erase all otherness by imposing on the world a supposedly superior model invariably presented as ‘progress’.⁹⁵

Against the blandness of cosmopolitan identities created by liberalism, the Radical Right maintains that the ‘true wealth of the world is first and foremost the diversity of its cultures and peoples’.⁹⁶ Accordingly, they seek to replace the liberal world order with a domestic and international order centred on a return to the ‘ethnos’, or to what has been evocatively captured as a ‘basic unit of homogenous cultural energy’ distinct from the modern nation (and state).⁹⁷

⁹¹Freeden, ‘The morphological analysis’, p. 13.

⁹²See Mark Sedgwick (ed.), *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁹³Renaud Camus, *Le Grand Remplacement* (Neuilly-sur-Seine, David Reinharc, 2011).

⁹⁴Jean-François Drolet and Michael C. Williams, ‘Radical conservatism and global order: International theory and the New Right’, *International Theory*, 10:3 (2018), pp. 285–313 (p. 305).

⁹⁵Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance* (London: Arktos, 1999), p. 28.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Drolet and Williams, ‘Radical conservatism’, pp. 301–02.

While multiple, diverse visions exist, the desirable endpoint is a world order consisting of smaller, grounded ‘ethno’ units, possibly affiliated into larger regional orders or ‘empires’ that share broadly similar cultural foundations. The Radical Right thus lays claim to a ‘differentialist anti-racism’, not unlike Blyden’s notion of ‘distinct but equal’, that recognises ‘the irreducible plurality of the human species’ and that values difference above all else.⁹⁸ As such, the Radical Right claims to be identitarian, but not racist, arguing that ‘Others’ should not be hated or despised, but have an equal right to respect for their difference.

The Radical Right has self-consciously borrowed and appropriated the vocabulary and the rights-talk of the political left, strategically reversing an ostensibly ‘critical’ terminology to defend the identity and difference of *all* cultural and religious groups. In so doing, they employ the same concepts as Afrocentric Pan-Africanism, embracing diversity and defending white traditions against the onslaught of globalisation and imperialism. In the process, they reify and ossify ‘diversity’, just like racial theories in the past did with the concept of ‘race’, and while their policies have reactionary ends, they can no longer be effectively countered by a vocabulary of rights and difference. In other words, the ideological terrain on which debates about identity and difference are fought has shifted, and with it also the potential effects of the concepts employed by political actors as strategic resources.

To illustrate, consider Kémi Séba, a Franco-Beninese writer and Pan-African activist who in 2017 was named ‘African of the Year’ by the news network AfricaNews. Séba advocates a radical racial separatism, or *ethno-differentialisme*, and liberally sprinkles his discourse with quotations from Pan-Africanists and Afrocentrists like Garvey, Samora Machel, Thomas Sankara, and Cheikh Anta Diop. His *Supra-Négritude* stands for ‘total and real separatism in relation to the Western world’, politically, economically, spiritually, and psychologically.⁹⁹ This stance has endeared him to many of Europe’s leading Radical Right thinkers and prominent ultra-nationalists, including Alan Soral who runs the webzine *Egalité et Réconciliation* and Alexander Dugin, the leading Russian radical conservative intellectual. He has also made common cause with the populist Italian Five Star Movement, joining the Italian government in blaming French imperialism for the on-going migration crisis.¹⁰⁰

Acknowledging that these personalities and groups are frequently perceived as reactionary and racist, Séba makes no excuses for associating with them. Instead he situates himself within ‘the long tradition of Black Nationalism’ seeking the ‘organisation of Afro-descendants ... as an autonomous people’. ‘Black nationalists’, he argues, ‘historically rejected integration into Caucasian society, which inevitably results in the loss of African identity’.¹⁰¹ In words strikingly similar to Garvey and the ethno-pluralism of the Radical Right, he states that ‘My dream is to see whites, Arabs and Asians organizing themselves to defend their own identity. We fight against all those monkeys (macaques) who betray their origins ... Nationalists are the only whites I like. They don’t want us, and we don’t want them.’¹⁰²

Séba, as well as the Afrocentric critics of Afropolitanism, demonstrate how in the current geopolitical climate Pan-African ideas of identity and difference not only intersect with, but can also end up supporting, directly or indirectly, political agendas that are far from the progressive values normally associated with Pan-Africanism. The Radical Right, as Jean-François Drolet and Michael Williams convincingly argue, is deliberately seeking to reconfigure political life as an all-consuming struggle between supporters of the liberal world order and those seeking to dismantle

⁹⁸de Benoist and Champetier, *Manifesto*, p. 34.

⁹⁹Kémi Séba, *Supra-négritude: Autodétermination, antivictimisation, virilité du peuple* (Paris: Fiat-Lux editions, 2013), p. 189. All translations are mine.

¹⁰⁰RFI Afrique, ‘L’étrange lien tissé entre le panafricaniste Kemi Seba et le gouvernement italien’ (RFI, 3 February 2019), available at: {<http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190202-etrange-lien-tisse-panafricaniste-kemi-seba-gouvernement-italien-franc-cfa>}.

¹⁰¹Seba, *Supra-négritude*, p. 144.

¹⁰²In Cristiano Lanzano, ‘Twisting Pan-Africanism to promote anti-Africanism’, *Africa is a Country* (9 September 2018).

that order in favour of nativist and neo-traditionalist alternatives.¹⁰³ As ‘Gramscians of the right’, they seek to transcend what they regard as out-dated left/right dichotomies and instead build broad-based theoretical, cultural, and political support for their opposition to the liberal world order. Alliances are thus sought within any group willing to oppose Western liberalism and globalisation in the name of identity and difference.

In the words of Dugin, ‘a possible anti-globalist and anti-imperialist front’ should include all ‘the forces that struggle against the West, the United States, against liberal democracy, and against modernity and post-modernity ... This means Muslims and Christians, Russians and Chinese, both Leftists and Rightists, the Hindus and Jews who challenge the present state of affairs, globalization and American imperialism ... They are thus all virtually friends and allies.’¹⁰⁴ No wonder then that Dugin and Séba have eagerly embraced, with Séba declaring the Russian intellectual the ‘star’ of the multipolar world order and Dugin stating in the preface to Séba’s book *L’Afrique libre ou la morte* that ‘at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Kémi Séba is not just a chance for Africa. [He] is a hope for all the forces of multipolar resistance.’¹⁰⁵

The Radical Right’s political promiscuity in terms of alliance building and its co-optation of the language of identity and difference expose the contradictions of Pan-Africanism’s nativism and the fragility of its progressivism. Ideologies, as I have argued, are not static, but constantly evolving and adapting as part of global constellations of ideas, relations, and practices. Their impact and effect must also be understood in their historical specificity, and just like Blyden, Cummell, and Gravey’s racialised visions of world order intersected with the dominant political forces of their time, so today’s invocation of essentialised difference interacts with growing nationalist sentiments. Put differently, in the current geopolitical climate, Pan-African political strategies intended to defend African difference and interests may simultaneously lend support and legitimacy to the anti-liberal, nationalist agenda of the global Radical Right, with significant implications for world order.

Concluding reflections

This article has made a case for taking Pan-Africanism as ideology seriously within IR and within contemporary debates about world order, arguing that contrary to common assumptions, the postwar liberal world order was not ‘made in the West’ but produced in interaction with Pan-African ideas, values, and actors. By focusing on ideology as a patterned way of thinking about politics, the article goes beyond merely demonstrating Southern agency in international affairs and draws attention to how Pan-Africanism’s multiple configurations can be invoked to bestow legitimacy on varied political strategies and ends, depending on time and place. The morphological perspective thus negates any easy defence or dismissal of Pan-Africanism as either progressive or reactionary.

Just like in the past, Pan-Africanism today is part of global constellations, interacting and responding to dominant forces, ideas, and world events. At a time when the postwar world order is challenged by the rise of nationalism, the withdrawal from multilateralism, and the emergence of illiberal powers like China and Russia, the various positions and actions that Pan-Africanism’s contending visions of world order can support merit careful consideration. My suggestion is that Pan-Africanism contains valuable intellectual and political resources for the defence, reinvigoration, and invention of a more just, rule-bound multilateral world order, but that this cannot be taken for granted. Being aware of Pan-Africanism’s shortcomings,

¹⁰³Drolet and Williams, ‘Radical conservatism’, p. 305.

¹⁰⁴In *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹⁰⁵‘African and Russian Sovereignty: A Natural Alliance’, Sputnik interview with Kémi Séba’ (22 December 2017), available at: {<http://amoreliberta.blogspot.com/2018/01/sovrانيتi-africani-e-russi-una.html>}; Alexander Dugin, ‘Free Africa or Death! Kémi Séba: African goal of a multipolar world’, *Fort Russian News* (20 May 2019), available at: {<https://www.fort-russ.com/2019/05/dugin-free-africa-or-death-kemi-seba-african-goal-of-a-multipolar-world/>}.

weaknesses, and potential blind spots, as illustrated in this article, is thus both a precondition for, and an encouragement to, more critical and creative engagements with its intellectual legacies and insights.

My argument that Pan-African discourses of Afrocentrism and African difference intersect and overlap with the Radical Right's valorisations of culture, community, and tradition may seem counterintuitive, and even harsh, given the continued violence of racism and the vastly different positions of power from which these viewpoints are espoused. But as Paul Gilroy argues, identity has proved 'an ambiguous resource in the analysis of race, ethnicity and politics'.¹⁰⁶ The habitual resort to 'culture as unbridgeable division' is often 'a defensive gesture, employed by minorities and majorities alike' to relieve the anxieties of the postmodern world, but it also inevitably risks recasting the complexity of the social world in Manichaean oppositions.¹⁰⁷ This, at least, is food for thought, and my analysis, like that of Gilroy, encourages renewed engagement and interpretations of the aspects of Pan-African ideology that lead towards novel forms of cosmopolitanism, be it Afropolitanism, the hyphenated identity and humanism of Du Bois, or the internationalism of Nkrumah.

Nkrumah's quest for a united Africa is a reminder of how Pan-African decontestations of unity have often been inextricably linked to the desire for a domination-free international system. It is also a reminder of the fragility and difficulty of that project and the manner in which it can be hijacked or sidelined to defend and reinforce narrow conceptions of national sovereignty and shield repressive state practices from external scrutiny. Recent debates about the ICC are a case in point, and illustrate how Pan-African ideology can support multilateralism and sovereigntism in equal measures. Other key organisations and practices of the liberal world order, including the UN Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions, are open to similar charges of Western domination and in dire need of reform, repair, and transformation. For this reason alone, thinking critically and strategically about how Pan-Africanism responds and relates to the contemporary ideas and forces that give rise to widespread anxieties about a vanishing liberal world order is of crucial importance – for the discipline of IR, for Pan-Africanists, and for the future of world politics.

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¹⁰⁶Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. xv.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 6.