Being, Belonging and Becoming in Africa: A Postcolonial Rethinking

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the nature and significance of belonging and its intersection with Identity and being in the world. Its primary impetus is to address the question of belonging as it arises in postcolonial multi-ethnic, language, religious and racial identities in Africa. Where does ethnic and national Identity intersect and diverge? It remains a highly politicised and contested issue. Narratives on African belongings provide insights into the shape and complexity of the contemporary African debate and illustrate how, in the presentation of belonging as having multiple and competing manifestations, what it is to belong per se is rendered indistinct. This exemplifies the critical problem where Belonging is concerned. While Belonging is invoked as an issue of crucial existential concern in public discourse and across a broad range of disciplines, there is an apparent and troubling lack of conceptual or linguistic apparatus. The notion can be grasped and critically analysed. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore and redress this problematic situation. Consideration of Belonging also involves Identity and thinking of how these two concepts are articulated together in theory. This latter question is explored by surveying the theoretical and conceptual frameworks from which 'senses' of Identity and Belonging are commonly expressed in postcolonial Africa. Belonging qua correct relation represents an entirely new way of understanding, in existential terms, what it is to belong (or not), not only in the postcolonial African context but wherever and whenever the question arises.

Keywords: African Identity, Becoming, Belonging, Ethnic, Language, postcolonial, Racial

1. Overview

Belonging is necessary for being and becoming since it moulds the political framework, which reflects how our brain is constructed or wired as a result of our sociological upbringing. The entire purpose of identity development is to endow us with our Identity (what we can become as individuals and what kind of role we can have in society). Belonging and the politics of belonging have been central themes in psychology and sociology throughout their histories, and these theories encompass both classical and contemporary perspectives (Yuval-Davis 2006: 198). Identities are a component of an individual's sense of Belonging; economic, political, and sociocultural dimensions are present in philosophical perspectives, whether explicitly addressed or not. That is when we observe ethnic entrepreneurs cultivating specific forms of ethnic Belonging for the purpose of political instrumentation via an institutional system that places a premium on ethnic group rights. Elites discover a new type of entitlement by looking back in time: the ascriptive right of kinship, which is assumed to be a 'natural right' of belonging to a specific ethnic group (Kebede 2003: 14). As a matter of course, the concept of representation, ethnic groups, and power appears to be a natural right based on shared group membership. However, representation entails much more than simply belonging to a community.

Occasionally, delineating distinctions is possible when the concepts of Identity and Belonging are infused with specific elements they possess (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013: 15). In other words, because notions of Identity and Belonging are defined by the specific elements they contain, the elements that comprise those concepts may or may not be distinct. Perception is extremely important because it matters how you construct your worldview. Their application must be heuristic, as they do not necessarily carry any inherent analytical value; instead, it is how we apply them that this value is conferred. As a result, it is impossible to make a definitional distinction between them at this level, as if doing so resolves any debate about their analytical or political utility. The very same conclusion applies, but it is also possible to discern some broad patterns in the ways they have been and continue to be used, which point to a heavy's theoretical baggage. According to Phelps and Nadim (2010: 136), belonging can refer to a variety of interconnected group borders that imagine common descent; belongingness can also refer to ethnic groups that share national, racial, religious, or other culturally

shared characteristics (e.g., language, norms, or values).

While concepts are always required, we must distinguish between heuristic and definitional concepts, which ascribe a static and predefined meaning to the terms we use. Identity has undergone reappraisal, and now it is imperative to remember that it has continuing relevance to a concept with meaning for actors. Its infiltration into a common understanding in the Western world, most notably with the rise of possessive individualism (MacPherson 1962: 240), makes its use a potent instrument for making and contesting political claims. It raises the question of how Identity has become intertwined with everyone's assumptions about the social world and thus must be engaged with rather than disregarded entirely. This demonstrates how Identity pervades everyday perceptions of the social world and thus requires engagement rather than being ruled out of court altogether. It can be compared to the similar argument, for example, made on the issue of race, as illustrated by (Solomos, Findlay, Jones, and Gilroy 2004: 11). Racial Identity is ascribed meaning and significance not because their existence is referred to as race but because it has been a necessary discursive ontology informing social relations in the modern period. This is because race has become a new tool for achieving hegemonic dominance in an era of crisis management strategies. In the context of a society that is in a state of structural crisis, the race is more likely to play a central role in maintaining existing power structures than to challenge those structures. Simply refusing to engage with or use it implies that the social ties it creates and is entwined with are rendered invisible or marginalised.

It is also important to revisit some of the more challenging aspects of Identity here because identity delivers complex ideas. Identity formation has the benefit of assisting in recognising that each individual's identity is complex and multifaceted and formed in response to his or her circumstances (Alcoff, Hames-Garcia, Mohanty, Hames-García, and Moya 2006: 112). Additionally, contrary to critics, the concept of Identity is complex and dynamic; Identity is neither monolithic nor static. These include notions of the Self, i.e., Identity as denoting both the 'core self' and the aspirational Self (e.g., see Erikson 1968), as well as notions of primary Identity, Identity as a form of categorisation we assert (e.g., in relation to authenticity but also to symbolic and material resources) or that others attribute to us.

Additionally, it encompasses the concept of Identity as a practice, as

performance (e.g., as in lived everyday performativity or as impression management). Identification can occur in numerous ways. For instance, putting up with these organisations' dictates causes a conviction in the individual that they are the most effective means for achieving his goals (Kirloskar-Steinbach 2010: 38). The concept is founded on the idea of shared spheres of being with similar others (found most prominently in the related and perhaps less problematic concept of identification), such as shared emotions (for example, toward a 'group' or homeland), shared values and beliefs (e.g., religious, political, cultural), or shared gender, ethnic origin, or class. Naturally, none of these latter formulations can be understood without taking Identity into account as a battleground for power, recognition, representation, and redistribution methods.

Several things here can raise potentially distinct analytical issues, which makes lumping them all under the identity term highly problematic. The concept of Identity is founded on three fundamental ontological premises: Belonging, being and becoming (Peers and Fleer 2014: 914). Another critique is to assert that Identity presupposes a static 'being' that obscures the processes at work, i.e., the methods of becoming is part of being interconnected by kinship ties, i.e., having a sense of commonality; being shaped by the natural setup (Phelps and Nadim 2010: 14). Being a person in the modern world entails making one's own decisions – which, of course, varies depending on one's circumstances (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013: 28). Therefore, it is linked to the kind of positivistic framing that 'being' potentially hails. Construct Identity is a continuous process of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong; this duality is frequently reflected in identity narratives (Yuval-Davis 2006: 202). The assumption is that 'belonging' means 'being like others' and that there is an implicit sense of 'coming together.' On the other hand, the concept of 'belonging to' relates to the theory of individualisation, which conflicts with communitarianism; during the process of individualisation, individuals become increasingly unconstrained by encompassing collective orders (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013: 28).

Assuming the Identity of I; developing competence, and taking into account the identity of a social being; the concept of becoming contains ideas of potential and growth, transformation and self-actualisation in each of these contexts (Wilcock 1999: 5). Becoming is a process that enables both change and transformation and the recognition of practice and agency, though each entails its own set of provocations. For we might ask: Who is the subject

capable of 'becoming' and under what circumstances? What processes at various levels contribute to this becoming? The issue is located at the intersections of several different constricting environments or spaces. For instance, the narrative constraints what and how she can do; our future vision is inextricably linked to our cultural identity. Hegemonic and particular but marginal public discourses that the subject can access or embrace also impact the limitations of society's repertoire. The narrative provides accounts of experience and access to more extensive descriptions to the social observer. Narration is not only a flawed method for eliciting subjects' lived experiences, i.e., it can yield the experiential level with the caveat that the account is always partial and intersubjectively constructed, but it also goes beyond this. It is never divorced from both the societal framing and the intersubjective field in which it is told, and thus it is linked to more significant power dynamics.

2. An Analytical Perspective on Belonging and Becoming Through the Identity Lens

Rwanda is a noteworthy case study because the genocide was founded on issues of constructed Identity over time; it is critical to spend time with people and observe their reactions to the past. The creation of a distinct ethnic identity and the roots of the Hutu/Tutsi divide must be reconsidered in light of the political, social, and economic context. Rwandan society fractured in 1994 as a result of ethnic identity labels; division is created when compassion can be extended and limited, which gives racial ideology its destructive power (Hintjens 2001: 27). Hintjens continued by inquiring how and why the shift from a more fluid social identity to the formation of barriers that prevented any compassion for the ethnic Tutsi in Rwanda occurred. Identity politics legitimised violence against members of the victim group and their adversaries, and it provided cover for both mass and political violence. Apart from various other factors, such as colonial narratives and administrative practises, the early 1990s economic and political crisis, and the state's use of ethnic-based national foundation myths.

According to Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, and Longman (2008: 669), the nearly imperceptible phrase is 'new Hutu-Tutsi-Twa identities.' In this case, this can be taken to mean that colonists established these identities as 'new,' in accordance with the official storey. Another noteworthy aspect of Rwandan clans is their wide

array of ethnicities. Clans were commonly used as identification elements before introducing the new Hutu-Tutsi-Twa identities imposed and circulated by the colonial and postcolonial bureaucracy. We frequently distinguish origin myths based on objective factors such as 'ethnicity, origin, skin colour, or blood relatives' from those based on subjective factors such as feelings of Belonging, linguistic abilities, or nationalistic sentiments. The fatal myth of Identity developed in colonial Rwanda dates back to that period (Hintjens 2001:42). In its efforts to reconcile its past, Rwanda considers those who exist on the periphery of ethnic or national Identity. However, there is no conclusive argument that polarisation between Hutu and Tutsi, or between Rwandans and non-Rwandans, will not occur. However, it is necessary to develop stronger consociationalism because it is a lengthy healing process. Several African countries have the opportunity to learn from Rwanda's history of encounters between people of different ethnicities and languages. Recently, a schism has developed between anglophone and francophone Cameroonians, owing to colonial linguistic separation. Similarly, ethnic differences and conflicts exist in South Sudan between ethnic Dinka and Nuer, in Kenya between Kikuyu and Luo, and a recent major confrontation between the Tigray and the central government in Ethiopia are some striking examples.

Rwandan history is acceptable as long as it is understood that everything was fine in Rwanda prior to colonisers assigning ethnic identities that were used to incite ethnic conflict (Hintjens 2008: 15). These are the colonisers in reference to the construction of 'pseudo ethnic' identities within Rwandans. These identities never existed prior to colonisation or were constructed solely for political purposes. The tactics of European colonial powers and the ethnic ideology they spread helped contribute to the tragedies of the Rwandan genocide. Regardless of their disparate backgrounds, the identities of those involved in an identity-based conflict generate interpretive tensions (Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy and Longman 2008: 669). Furthermore, it was elaborated that this official narrative complicates the task of promoting a unified national identity while overcoming persistent ethnic divisions. A unified national identity is sought to be ingrained in the collective consciousness of the populace. Given the possibility of entrenched unofficial histories and divergent interpretations of the same event, it is critical to dissect and debate to avoid a recurrence of the situation.

Efforts to understand and elucidate the depth of ethnic versus national Identity

in Africa are extremely important. As is the case for many things, it varies between individuals and communities according to their level of education, exposure to rural and urban areas, and the influence of different factors. Individuals living in rural areas and those living on the state's frontiers are far more politically aware than previously believed in most African countries; they have a stronger sense of national Identity than ethnic Identity (Miles and Rochefort 1991: 394). It is partly because fewer Africans are exposed to numerous identities that conflict with their moral and national identities. Comparing and contrasting national and ethnic identities can be difficult in any society. Some of these are linked to each other, but others are distinct; what stands out is how we phrase the question, aside from the effect of ethnocentrism, economic deprivation, and the majority or minority status on individual and group harmony.

Ethnicity is still widely used as a social identity, and ethnic subgroups exhibit distinct ethnocentrism toward their own subgroup, in contrast to a favourable view of otherness in Africa. African studies and discourses, when examining the changes within the dominant symbols, it is necessary to recognise that the meaning of African conversion has remained constant. However, only the policies governing its expression and practice of ethnocentrism and ideological racism have changed (Mudimbe 2020:32). First, I cannot entirely agree with Mudimbe's assertion that the African knowledge system is deficient in explaining cultural and ethnic bias; second, Africa is not a homogeneous society. I do agree there are some communalities but not indefinite terms. Zeleza (2006: 16) argues that a victory for Western-centric narratives beginning with Greek myths about Africa and progressing through colonial libraries and postmodernist discourses is a defeat for African-centric narratives. He believes that African intellectuals have been subjected to this ethnocentric epistemological order, a product of Western material, methodological, and moral standards, while simultaneously resisting and harnessing this influence. This paradigm represents the entire African continent and each individual country as being in various stages of 'affirmation,' 'denial,' 'inversion,' and 'reconstitution,' respectively. According to Alumona and Azom (2018: 293), for Africans, the community serves as both a physical and ideological identity; they place a high priority on community life and communalism as an essential aspect of their culture. The approach of African communalism is rational and has an immediate effect on the lives of the people.

3. The impact of African postcolonial ideologies on Identity and Belonging

The primary concern is determining what pattern underpinned postcolonial governance and how that governance model was constructed. The postcolonial Africa quest is primarily concerned with accounting for the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social effects of European colonialism and imperial cultural legacy. Additionally, the human impacts of colonised peoples' and their lands' control, marginalisation, and exploitation. Second, the installation of the postcolonial governance model was to subvert ideological norms regarding how to hold political office and address prevalent notions of social inequality. Positive programmes lack the contrariness and imprudent anger associated with corrective or retributive agendas, but they also subordinate your Identity to your relationships with others; former colonial masters continue to exert influence over the postcolonial mind (Sen 2007). In other words, postcolonial African political ideologies inherited from the colonial past or copied from the socialist camp. The postcolonial African political environment was defined by colonialism's legacy, mingled with the emerging influence of Eastern and Western political ideologies of socialism and capitalism, respectively (Kidane 2018: 33). Postcolonial Africa underwent significant political and demographic changes due to the introduction of new doctrines, resulting in the emergence of two distinct political factions; Stalinists, using their definition of the Marxist nation and national question, characterise one of these factions as an African national-populist movement.

Most postcolonial African political leaders chose a socialist path for two fundamental reasons. As one would expect, the primary motivation for socialism's rise was that, because the Capitalist camp had colonised Africa, socialism was seen as an excellent way to combat prior inequity in wealth distribution. Additionally, the only method to seize control of production from the capitalist monopoly is through legal appropriation justified by socialist ideologies. To be sure, the term 'class' or 'caste' is not indigenous to African languages; in African society, the concept of 'class' or 'caste' does not exist (Nyerere 1987: 7). Socialist thought generates an entire lifestyle; a European socialist finds it impossible to conceive of socialism without developed capitalism. This policy had one serious flaw: it was based on ideology rather than applying socialism to African reality and was

misused by the regime to preserve power. Kebede (2003: 16) establishes unanimity around the canonised leadership as the sole interpreter of the ethnic group's interests; as with Marxist-Leninist groups, this justification for concurrence serves to justify dictatorial regimes and undemocratic methods of rule.

Numerous intelligent African leaders convened to debate why scientific socialism should not be considered a part of African societies, and countless compelling arguments were advanced. The argument was that there was no class contradiction. Most Africans are agrarians and rely on subsistence farming methods that do not foster socialist ideals in their societies. That is why Julius Nyerere popularised the concept of Ujamaa, which translates as 'family hood in Swahili, as an indigenous socialist ideology for Africa, specifically Tanzania. Compared to European socialism, African socialism was never able to capitalise on the Agricultural or Industrial Revolutions; conflict did not arise from pre-existing social class divisions (Nyerere 1987: 7). Though he did so from the start, true socialism is a state of mind rather than a plan or programme. However, the wrong interpretation of socialist ideology (pseudo socialism) has negatively impacted African countries' ethnic and religious identity relationships. Among numerous incorrect interpretations of Stalin's philosophy, nations and nationalities were divorced from socialist theory, distorting the sense of Identity and belonging in some African countries. African social security is derived from the extended family network's social bonding. In most African countries, there is no formal retirement plan or health insurance, as in developed countries, and this is one of the aspects of African socialism: family ties are a part of it, and African socialism is fundamentally based on this kind of social network.

One of the consequences of ethnic, tribal, and language dynamics is that the Marxist concept of nation and nationality has found its way into political arenas. 'A nation is a relative community of character' (Stalin 1913). The nation is described as made up of several physical and spiritual characteristics that separate the people from each other based on their nationality. Stalin defined 'nation' as 'a historically determined, long-term community comprised of people who share the same language, inhabit the same territory, engage in the same economic activities, and exhibit the same psychology manifested in a shared culture' (Karat 1975: 5). Similarly, he continued, ''nationality' or a group of nationalities were used to form a nation once capitalism was developed, with the onset of the bourgeoisie revolution (and thus the bourgeois-democratic revolution) coming

to completion.' An abridged definition of 'nation' holds that it is a mature entity capable of forming a nation-state and possessing collective self-consciousness. On the other hand, 'nationalities' that have developed cohesiveness as a community have no material prerequisite for nationhood.

The African country's hope dimmed due to imported ideological misconception, and its nation-building process stagnated, leaving it unable to guide the society toward its goal. Part of the result of such a crippling effect was parochialism, myopia, and a lack of ownership, making it impossible to lead by analysing social growth and need rather than appeasing European ideological fantasy. European socialism arose due to the Agrarian Revolution and the subsequent Industrial Revolution; these movements established the landed and landless classes in society (Nyerere 1987: 6). I do not doubt that ideology is necessary for societal progress; however, it remains artificial unless it conforms to actual conditions. There was a dearth of exposure to various epochs of political and ideological change. As a result, colonial Africans were never exposed to an era of political transformation and ideological experimentation, leaving them with a void to fill to determine what was best for the general population. Additionally, certain African countries lacked a critical mass of population conducive to political debate and an adequate level of public discourse about governing structures. It is unthinkable to establish a socialist system without industrial development, organised labour unions, or a politically active peasantry.

The only economically sustainable system for a country with a bourgeoisie population is based on liberal capitalism. One might imagine that developing an ideological framework for the state of postcolonial African peoples, which has been shattered by a century of colonialism, would be difficult. The contrast here is that the protagonist, Mamdani, is portrayed as an equal or embodiment of disparate cultural identities, such as 'worker' and 'capitalist,' or 'landlord' and 'tenant' (Mamdani 2005: 15). As Mamdani has stated, one should distinguish one's political, economic, and cultural identities from those imposed by the colonial state. In Africa, the flawed nation-state project fuels inter-group struggles for limited economic and political power, frequently involving ethnic or other culturally accessible oligarchies. As was the case during colonialism, bureaucratic authoritarianism, ubiquitous patron-client relationships, and a broad ethnic dialectic of assimilation, fragmentation, and competition have persisted in postcolonial Africa (Berman 1998: 331). Numerous political philosophies reflect

these underlying proclivities toward various aspects of today's African political environment.

4. Identity as a Political Instrument of Otherness

Researchers in numerous academic disciplines have studied this problem, including the social sciences and the humanities, employ a new concept known as identity politics to refer to issues as varied as multiculturalism. Multiculturalism embraces diversity and historical postcolonialism, social ethnicity, religious fundamentalism, and global terrorism; however, multiculturalism is frequently defended because cultural freedom requires it (Sen 2007). By their very nature, identity politics ostracises otherness in the name of accommodating within an imagined society that aspires to monoculturalism across the broader social structure. On the other hand, multiculturalism has accelerated anarchy in postcolonial Africa and formerly communist Eastern Europe by promoting women's and civil rights, separatist movements, and violent ethnic and nationalist conflict. Identity was formed and expanded by incorporating more 'modern' characteristics derived from colonial and postcolonial administrative and political structures; postcolonial experiences are consistent with distinct national and ethnic consciousness levels among ethnically identical individuals (Miles and Rochefort 1991: 395).

These initial seeds of cross-disciplinary conversation were evident from the first time a scholar used the term identity politics in a context other than their own. As such, the general understanding of Belonging, referred to as identity politics, is a political strategy used by individuals to advance political agendas directed at members of particular genders, religions, races, social backgrounds, classes, or other identifying characteristics. In 1979, Anspach coined the phrase 'identity politics' to refer to disabled people's activism focused on changing their own and societal perceptions of disabled people. Bernstein (2005: 47) the term 'identity politics' was used abstractly to refer to ethnicity as a contemporary form of politics, in the sense of critical pedagogy that connects social structure and poststructuralist ideas about subjectivity. Additionally, it is well established that political assessments of identity politics intersect with sociological examinations of the relationship between Identity and politics.

As a result of this understanding of otherness and the emergence of

philosophies such as négritude or black personality and African philosophy have become significant African ideologies on the subject of otherness (Mudimbe 2020: 436). Otherness emerged from a discursive process in which an in-group engaged in a 'us vs them' contest. As Staszac put it, 'Us', the Self creates one or more marginalised out-groups 'Them', the 'Other' through stereotyping a difference as a means of avoiding potential discrimination. *The ultimatum for bringing peace and tranquillity into our lives is to reject the concept of themness and accept and practise the fact that 'them' lives within us. That is, we must recognise 'being' as humanness and cultivate a sense of 'belonging' within our respective communities, which will culminate in our 'becoming' as one global humanity.* Aspects of this 'otherness' can be seen in the emergence of various self-definitions associated with cultural or political nationalism, as well as the contribution of this reactive viewpoint to fundamentalism (Sen 2007; Staszak 2009: 6). When people have unequal power and social status, they are more likely to be othered. Staszak further underlines that 'exotism' or exoticism, which is in direct opposition to another place's 'abnormality', refers to things that are 'normally' normal in this place. However, it is important to note that the exotic phenomenon is not an attribute of the exotic location, object, or person.

5. Ethnic Vs National Identity in Africa

Identity politics, ethnic group formation, and the processes by which people identify as an imagined community within a nation-state occur concurrently, with ethnic group formation being the most important. The question is to find out which came; first, some people believe that one must resolve the chicken or the egg causality conundrum, which frequently appears as 'which came first: the chicken or the egg?' Additionally, ethnic group identity must be linked to the country's national Identity, as various ethnic groups within a nation-state conceptualise ethnic group identity differently. Prior to the turn of the twenty-first century, several studies on rural African populations challenged the prevailing wisdom that ethnic solidarity trumps national consciousness (Miles and Rochefort 1991: 393). Partly because periphery populations relied on local chiefdoms for administration; additionally, postcolonial African governance was deficient in consolidating central power and promoting patriotism.

Individuals who believe they face more group discrimination are significantly

more likely than those who believe the faceless group discrimination to identify as ethnic minorities, immigrants, or settlers. This could be a conflict between a minority and the majority, or it could be a conflict between national and ethnic identities. From this vantage point, it is believed that it is up to the individual to ensure the development of national Identity while minimising ties to primordial ethnic groups affiliation (Molina, Phillips and Sidanius 2015: 225; Mežnarić 1993: 119). Various factors may influence the scenario, including economic, political, and sociocultural structure, but this is not always the case. In postcolonial Africa, the depth of the colonial effect of divide and rule and the nation's homogeneity and heterogeneity are also critical. According to Kirloskar-Steinbach (2010: 31), belonging to a cultural community and developing a sense of national Identity is traditionally viewed as a social phenomenon that enables me to comprehend 'who I am,' my place in the chain of being, and the world I inhabit. To put it simply besides, settlement patterns, identity issues, and being ethnic minorities all have a considerable influence on society and can grant or ban you from being categorised as an ethnic minority.

Identity and identity politics are inextricably complicated. However, one could argue that being a human comes first, followed by national Identity and, if necessary, ethnic personality. Sen (2007) explains that in addition to distinguishing between contrasting and noncontrasting identities, we can also differentiate between different groups that may belong to the same category, such as citizenship, or distinct categories such as citizenship, profession, class, or gender. There may be no discernible distinctions in 'belonging' when dealing with distinct categories such as citizenship and profession. Although these ambiguous identities do not challenge territorial claims to 'belonging,' they do vie for our attention and priorities. When competing demands collide, an individual's loyalty to his or her race, religion, political commitments, professional responsibilities, or citizenship may become incompatible. The distinct possibility of feeling at home and 'belonging' only grows worse over time, as you reflect on how much you used to enjoy being at home and yet realise that achieving it will be extremely difficult as you search for a new one (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013: 17). Country House does not necessarily refer to a residential location or a constructed home; instead, it has a broader connotation that refers to a nation or a state of being in villages or neighbourhoods that provides a sense of belonging from a psychological standpoint.

6. Racial and language Identity in the Continental Realm

Africa is home to diverse ethnic, tribal, and racial groups, including the Bantu, Hamitic Berber, Cushitic, Mande, Guinean, Nilotic, Nubians, San (Bushmen), and African Pygmies. Moreover, there are minorities, Caucasians, Indians and Chinese, who emerged through migration trade and the effect of colonisations. These are the roots of tribal and racial lines without undermining another group and subgroup may exist. African civilisations, particularly in African history, have been known to adapt to their ethnic or religious surroundings; ethnic groups arose throughout the colonial period, and individuals have been known to adapt to their ethnic or religious circumstances (Smedley 1998: 692). Africa's ethnolinguistic classifications are as follows. Afro-Asian, Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Khoisan, Austronesian, and Indo-European. However, additional research and reconfiguration-based scientific identification mechanisms are required based on indigenous knowledge systems. Greenberg (1948: 24) categorises the continent's languages into five families: Semitic, Hamitic, Bantu, Sudanese, and Bushman. The classification process begins with examining linguistic types, with each linguistic family defined by a set of structural features. Yet, under each main category, sub ethnolinguistic classifications such as Afro-Asian consist Amhara, Hausa, Oromo, Somali, Tachelhit Berber, Tigrayan; Niger-Congo comprises Akan, Fula, Igbo, Kongo, Mande, Mooré, Yoruba, Zulu, Shona. Nilo-Saharan language families are Dinka, Kanuri, Luo, Maasai, Nuer. Similarly, other ethnolinguistic classifications contain languages under them.

Sen (2007) Sayed that when our shared humanity is attacked and divisions such as religion, community, culture, nationality, or civilisation are consolidated into a single ostensibly dominant system of classification, the universe of plural and diverse categories that shape the world in which we live is obliterated. When it comes to Belonging, one's social location is the most racially and culturally segregated and impenetrable; language, culture, and religion are significantly more amenable to voluntary assimilation with specific groups (Yuval-Davis 2006: 209). Africa is diverse from an ethnic, cultural, and religious standpoint. Several religious groups in Africa, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and traditional religions. Alumona and Azom (2018: 293) Political contestations in Africa are frequently based on ethnicity and religious beliefs; people often make political decisions based on religious affiliation. With the exception of South

Africa, racial dimensions are insignificant or non-existent. The era of racial political identity dominance in South Africa ended with the end of apartheid.

Who is an African? Indigenous people born in Africa, people descended from natives of Africa or people who trace their ancestry to Africans who were already indigenous. To my mind, it is critical to distinguish citizenship from Identity; Identity is inextricably linked to being and belonging, whereas citizenship can be acquired or lost through temporary or permanent residency. The accurate depiction and manifestation of how Identity trumps citizenship following five centuries of forced migration of African descent are African Americans. That is one of my compelling reasons for believing that African Identity, ingrained as Africanness, does not easily fade. According to Zeleza (2006: 15), the conflation of Africa with 'Sub-Saharan Africa' and 'Black Africa' that pervades African discourses ultimately results in a racialised view of Africa, Africa as biology, and Africa as the 'black' continent; it is founded on the metaphysics of difference, a quest for the civilisational and cultural ontology of blackness. I take a contrary position to Zeleza on three fundamental points regarding African Identity and geographical division. Africa and Africanness share a common identity as one Africa that is not divided by Up-Saharan and Sub-Saharanism; additionally, Africa is a melting pot of diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural value systems. What complicates the explanation is that the term 'black' dehumanises and undermines Africans; instead, use the term 'people of colour' or 'human colour', and Africans who are not considered people of colour should be appropriately accommodated. My argument is that apart from colour resemblance, there is no such thing as a 'white' or 'black' person in the world.

The concept of Africans being referred to as foreigners in other African countries stems from insecurity and a desire to preserve the colonial legacy border project. According to Africa Speaks' April 11, 2015 communique, 'no African man can be referred to as a foreign national on African soil', implying that 'no African is a foreigner in Africa'. Further, the communique alluded to the fact that the borders African governments claim today contribute to Berlin's Balkanisation and do not reflect who we are as Africans. By amplifying colonial architecture and labelling fellow Africans who live outside our borders as foreigners, we add insult to colonialism's wounds to our collective Identity. Being African in terms of identities, languages, and cultural diversity provides a unique economic and political reintegration opportunity. African Identity is a constructed reality

based on shared geographical, historical, sociocultural, political, and economic representation in response to dominant conceptions and reconfigurations; the governance structure will bring African nationalism to life, facilitating unification (Kidane 2018: 32). As African unification projects reimagine African Identity, the boundaries of 'Africa' and 'Africanness' shift; as a result, the subject of African identities is as vast and complex as the continent itself (Zeleza 2006: 15). Everyone has a different idea of what these are, but identifying them is essential for analysis.

7. The Politics of Belonging in Africa and the Territorialisation of National Space

The resulting politics of belonging and ethno-territorialization of national politics risk undoing gains made in promoting national Identity and confining people in limited scopes at lower strata in the majority of African politics. Ethno-territorialization of national politics can negatively affect people's sense of national identity and prevent them from participating in more extensive political engagements. Understanding the relationships between cognitive, territorial, and biographical dimensions is critical when studying belonging and Identity formation intertwined with social relations. People's perceptions of territorialisation have shifted away from social groups and toward state structures; for example, the South Sudanese government has focused on establishing borders and extending central government authority throughout the country (Sjögren 2015: 168). While I support the state's efforts to unite South Sudan's national Identity, I believe that an alien ethnic federal structure will eventually allow local identities to flourish and threaten the central government. 'Territorialization' and 'Nativisation' or disassimilation has a dual effect: on the one hand, it promotes economic development; on the other hand, unless culturally enriched, it creates a 'us versus them' mentality. Due to the conflicts inherent in society, these social contexts and immediate life-worlds carry antagonistic forces that affect the identities and trajectories of young people who are 'immigrants' and who form 'strangers' generations after generation (Ålund 1995: 286).

There are only limited instances where political systems can restore equilibrium, and they can only do so if accompanied by legal structures, if not completely lacking. In reality, the complexity of the identity politics community

frequently views social systems as non-equilibrating systems. On the other hand, political institutions can create and sustain identity politics by motivating people to belong to or not belong to a specific constituency. Bouzas (2017: 219) Belonging entails tracing a relationship in which a degree of ambiguity and distance is implied when defining the membership boundary. Additionally, it was demonstrated that identity definitions leave less room for doubt about the group's boundary. Some can be more permanent over time, not to mention that specific identity characteristics, such as language and sex, are challenging to change. Similarly, as a form of Identity, Belonging is relational and does not necessitate the same boundary-drawing as the latter.

Politics as a 'The politics of belonging,' as defined by John Crowley, is 'grubby boundary maintenance work' His emphasis was on the divisions that exist between 'us' and 'them' in the global population (Yuval-Davis 2006: 204). According to Benedict Anderson, nations are 'imagined communities.' They are imagined communities, according to Anderson, because while the majority of members of even the smallest nation will never meet, know, or even hear of their fellow members, the image of their communion lives on in each member's mind.

It demonstrates the vital link between the development of modernity, which is frequently viewed as a construction, and the retention of tradition, which may manifest as an outmoded image of a mythical past (Mudimbe 2020: 9). The downside of modernity is that it brings many difficulties with it, some of which have remained unchanged for centuries and others that are brand new. In Africa and throughout the world, modernity creates new problems that it cannot adequately address, from the hardships of poverty and inequality to the collateral damage caused by entitlement and corruption that impede development. According to some scholars, Yuval-Davis (2006: 198), such as Anthony Giddens and Manuel Castells, modernity has transformed people's sense of Belonging, with effective belonging shifting away from a nation- and state-level civil societies and toward reconstructed defensive identity communities. According to Giddens, the time has become more uniform and interconnected due to modernisation and globalisation (Giddens and Pierson 1998: 63). Prioritising changes over time makes it possible for people to easily connect with one another and the surrounding world. Both Castells and Giddens concur that self-identity is not a unique characteristic of a person; it is the Self as understood reflexively by the individual in connection to her or his biography (Castells 2011: 10).

8. Identity and Belonging as a Weapon for Ethnic Chauvinism

Identification and recognition are the processes that result in the sense of Belonging, which is a relaxed attitude toward oneself and one's surroundings that is achieved through the use of relational and negotiated processes of identification and recognition. Ethnicity has evolved into a critical but contentious analytical concept in the broader social sciences and an increasingly important aspect of social identities in contemporary multicultural settings (Phelps and Nadim 2010: 13). Many scholars agree that ethnicity refers to the classification of people and group relationships in which myths or ideas about a shared origin or history are used to draw boundaries between different groups. People across the globe are experiencing 'ethnic' conflict, and 'ethnicity' appears to be a relatively new concept referring to human identities marked by elements of exclusivity, opposition, competition, and antagonism (Smedley 1998: 691). Ethnic chauvinism, prejudice, and political opportunism can be defined as the general attitude of someone who places a higher value on their own people or nation than others. Another unfortunate consequence is that it enables narrow-minded ethnic chauvinists, rabid nationalists, and political opportunists to infect the rest of the population with their pernicious agenda. When you move beyond an identity-centred language, you can identify alternative modes of self-understanding, alternative identification idioms, and alternative social locations (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 32; Lichterman 1999: 111). We must move beyond 'identity' to better understand society.

Appropriateness and ethnic Identity are two aspects of appropriateness. All focus group discussions included themes of Belonging, origins, and ethnic identities; feelings of belonging were frequently ambiguous and contradictory, as many participants appeared to struggle to position themselves in relation to a concept of national Identity (Phelps and Nadim 2010: 15). Belonging can contribute to theoretical debates about the framework of international reality by challenging political realism's disregard for individual subjecthood and constructivist perspectives' tendency to view Identity as embodying a high degree of cohesion (Bouzas 2017: 117).

The theoretical and contextual debate should address whether 'belonging' or 'identity' comes first; this will aid in understanding how an individual or 'being' is depicted, as well as the fundamentals of identity and belongingness constructs

from context and conduct perspectives. The four items were as follows: 'I identify strongly with other members of my ethnic group'; 'I have a strong bond to my ethnic group'; 'I frequently consider myself to be a member of my ethnic group'; and 'I have a strong sense of belonging to my ethnic group', which means that four items were used to assess an individual's level of ethnic/racial identification (Molina, Phillips, and Sidanius 2015: 213). Nevertheless, other concepts may elaborate on belonging from a sociocultural and political perspective.

9. Problematics of Belonging and The Rise of 'Elitism'

In Africa, an elitist minority controls a disproportionate share of the country's wealth, political power, and ability due to an excess of wealth, political power, or ability. Such a state of affairs becomes the new normal, and most of the population remains undeveloped economically, politically, and socioculturally. While substantial work remains to be done, there is a vital need to ensure that everyone has a better life and bring about greater security and serenity and a change from an elitist to an egalitarian society. The culprit, according to Kebede, is the rise of African elitism, a phenomenon that combines colonialism's unique effect with indigenous African contributions; elitism as a characteristic effect of colonial rule is not difficult to establish (Kebede 2003: 2). His additional statement was that modern, secular societies would replace the indigenous societies of Africa with various social classes of indigenous elites, including business elites, which will help carry on the necessary universal values of global modernity.

The promise of an education revolution in Africa has been contaminated by both colonialists and native elites, who have influenced the system. Incapable of bringing technological and industrial advancements and competitiveness for young Africans on the domestic market are all part of the job description of so-called educated citizens. While it significantly influenced the development of an elitist modern education system that controls production by substituting local citizens for colonial masters, it also contributed substantially to the development of this system (Seife 2020: 24). These issues are inextricably linked to each superpower's strategic, historical, and comparative advantages in the region. Apart from the elitist hurdles, I also conceive of Africa and African identities as states of being and as dynamic identities in progress (Zeleza 2006: 18). There are complex, ever-changing historical processes at work and tangled colonial

borders that lack structure and agency, making it difficult to detect or forecast the improvement of Africa's sociocultural system.

Accepting the elitist attitude is the same as adopting a colonialist mindset; in other words, the elite's moral bankruptcy directly results in the belief that Africa is primordial. Instead, we make no assumptions or assertions about the legitimacy of an elitist commitment to the status quo. By definition, counterrevolutions are elitist, but they are not always the result of elite leadership and may never be the exclusive domain of the elite (Slater and Smith 2016: 1476). Because any revolutionary notion of political change necessitates the overthrow of elites, revolutions are ideologically egalitarian, whereas ultraconservatives are ideologically elitist. It is critical to thoroughly examine political economics and sociocultural space to comprehend the underlying causes of the rise of 'elitism' in Africa. Postcolonial leadership has been unable to fulfil various responsibilities, demanding a paradigm shift in rewriting historical myths. There is, however, a chance to resolve this issue through broader Pan Africanism to assure the restoration of African Identity through decolonisation of colonial discourse.

10. Conclusion

When Identity is dissected into various categories, and its multiple layers of deference are assessed, anyone can see the mystification. When we observe the convergence of human aspiration as a collective, which limits the scope of Identity, we also observe the presence of a larger concept of being in humanity. In other words, all humans on mother earth share a common desire to live in good health, have access to food, shelter, and clothing, be educated, be wealthy, and have a happy family. Furthermore, all humans have biological similarities in that they all consume the same type of oxygen and exchange carbon monoxide with plants. All humans consume food for survival and defecate similarly, although food consumption and varieties may vary. Changing human behaviour in a short period is a difficult task, even more so on a continent like Africa with limited media, education, and basic infrastructure. However, human consciousness has evolved to embrace otherness without preconditions.

A higher moral or religious principle can only assist us in instilling righteousness if we put it into practice. To consider gradual action in conjunction with the Pan Africanist vision is imperative because it is necessary to accept

and reclaim the right to act incrementally. Otherwise, 'Territorialization' and 'Nativisation' or disassimilation both have a detrimental influence on economic development and aggravate interethnic disputes of 'us versus them.' Several essential issues must be addressed when it comes to reunifying African states. Ethnic chauvinism, or supremacy, may operate as a time bomb for the demise of civilisations. Political enmity will naturally transform over time when full enlightenment arises. Natives and newcomers will coexist peacefully as economic and social development progresses. 'identity' as a human being and 'belonging' and 'becoming' as a political force for African populations seeking to advance social welfare.

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