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Political Science III

Lecturer : MR Docrat

Topic : African Unity : The Evolution of an idea.

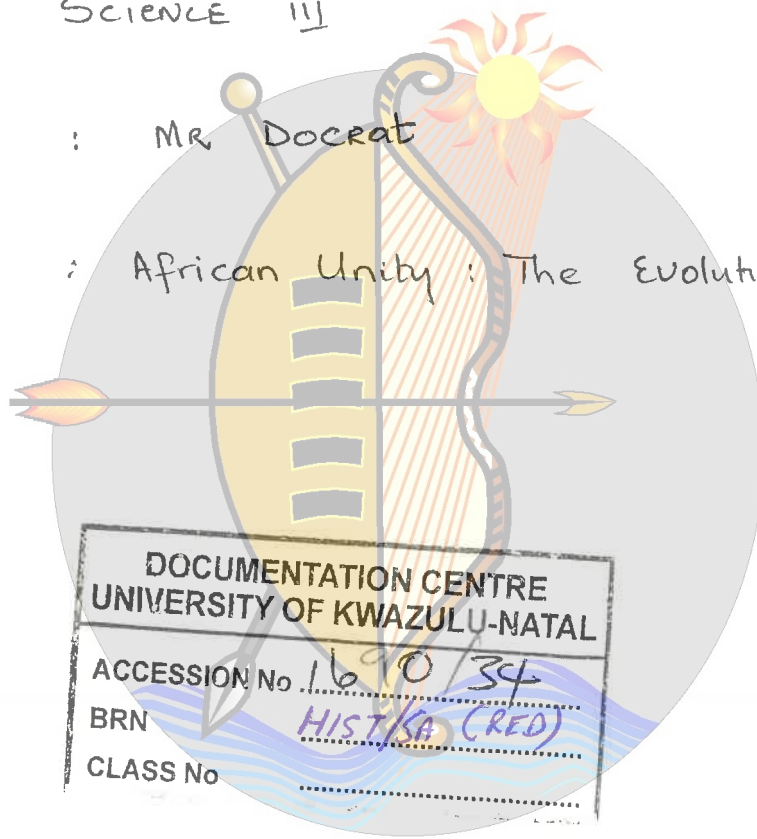


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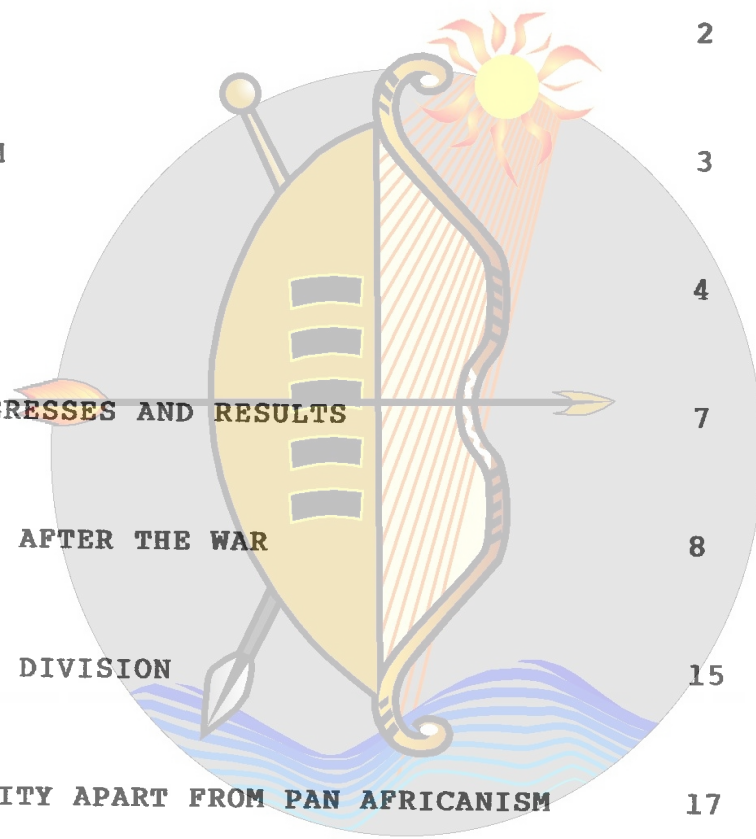
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1. INTRODUCTION

Africans have always been aware of the domination and exploitation by European Colonial powers. From the 19th Century Africans became acutely aware of the need to unite against a common enemy, Colonialism. The attempts at unification has produced various ideas on unity these ideas may be subsumed under the idea of Pan Africanism. Pan Africanism must not be considered as a single homogeneous body of thought and political practise. Many theorists have contributed to the ideology of Pan Africanism eg. DuBois and Garvey, in the early 20th Centruy are but a few amongst the numerous names associated with the theory of Pan Africanism.

The ideas of Pan Africanism went into decline but in 1963 an attempt to unify the Independent states of Africa emerged in the form of the Organization of African Unity. However the Organization of African Unity is not the only organization that attempts to unify African states. Other ideological theories have been formulated to try and attain political and economic unity in Africa. These are African socialism, nationalism and economic co-operation eg. East African Community.

2. PAN AFRICANISM

Pan Africanism is an ideology which arose out of two interrelated factors. Firstly many of the Africans believed that they had a close cultural affinity, secondly they believed they constituted the worlds largest exploited and oppressed group by colonial governments. Through their common problem that they shared that is oppression and their close cultural affinity a common ideology would unite them. Their idea was to unite under all their mutual grievances, so that they could commonly fight for their liberation and illustrate their strength.

As an idea Pan Africanism had its origins in the 19th Century. 1. This idea owed its origins in two different areas of the world, North America and the West Indies, and in Africa itself. Black Nationalists in America especially, began to protest against their own plight in America. Their grievances did not stop in America but was extended to Africa. They realized that Colonialism was exploiting the African peoples therefore making them vulnerable and creating untold suffering. This awareness created a need for them to liberate themselves. The problem was how to do it? They thought that the answer was Pan Africanism.

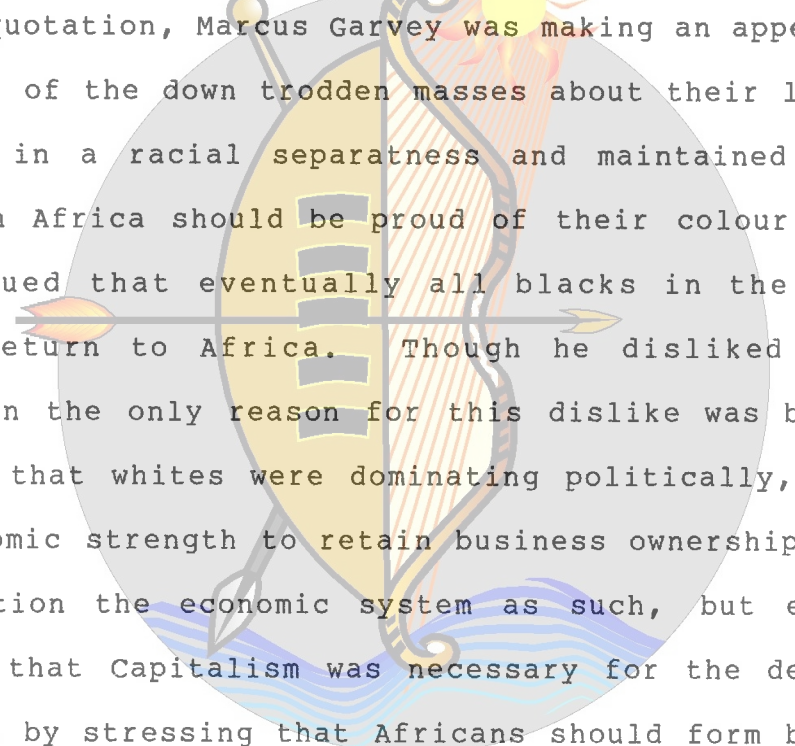
1. Akintoye, S.A. Emergent African States. Page 98.

3. THEORISTS

Several theorists have been associated with Pan Africanism. In Africa Dr Edward Wilmot Blyden (1833 - 1912) born in West Indies, but settled in Liberia in 1850, and Bishop James Johnson (1836-1917) a Nigerian, were formulating their own versions of Pan Africanism. Dr Blyden emphasized the importance of retaining the African culture. He maintained that the Black educated elite should infact adhere to the African culture rather than accept European values. Bishop James Johnson proclaimed the view that the African Churches should be freed of European domination. Furthermore he argued that eventually there should be one unified African Christian Church for African free of European culture. His ideology was using the Church and religion to unify the whole of Africa.

Pan Africanism as envisaged by the West Indian, Marcus Garvey (1887 - 1940) in the 1920's was : as follows "I asked :

Where is the black man's government? Where is his king and his kingdom? Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy his men of big affairs? I could not find them and then I declared : I will help make them" 2.



In this quotation, Marcus Garvey was making an appeal to the awareness of the down trodden masses about their lives. He believed in a racial separatness and maintained that the Blacks in Africa should be proud of their colour. Garvey also argued that eventually all blacks in the Americas should return to Africa. Though he disliked Imperial domination the only reason for this dislike was because of the fact that whites were dominating politically, they had the economic strength to retain business ownership. He did not question the economic system as such, but emphasized strongly that Capitalism was necessary for the development of Africa by stressing that Africans should form businesses in order to challenge European domination.

2. Marcus Garvey quited in Elenga M'buyinga. Pan Africanism or Neo-Colonialism. Page 29.

Pan Africanist ideas were also highly influenced by an Afro-American intellectual Dr W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois aimed to unify and liberate Africa through the educated elite. His main idea was to recover for all black people over the world their dignity and self respect. The way to obtain these results was to conduct surveys and studies and to discuss ways of solving the problem with the African educated elite. Notably his main aim was not to create hostility between Blacks and Whites but to create an amicable relationship between the two through peaceful co-operation.

There are fundamental differences between Marcus Garveys and W.E.B. Du Bois approaches Garvey's ideology was, aimed, and appealed to the masses. Whereas Du Bois ideology was directed at the educated African Elite. And although both these men's ideas were contrary to each other, these two opposing theories worked successfully to stimulate an awareness in Pan Africaism until the 1950's. It must also be noted that these two theorists ideas have had a permanent effect on Pan Africanism and influences African Unity to some extent even today. Later in the 20th century leaders such as K Nkrumah and J Nyrere built on these ideas outlined by these two theorists. However, the tension between Garvey's appeal to the masses, would remain in Pan Africanism until the present.

4. 1919-1945 CONGRESSES AND RESULTS

Between 1919 and 1945 there were a series of five Pan African congresses. At first congress held in Paris 1919 the main theme that emerged was that the delegates wanted to own the land that once belonged to them and they were opposed to investment capital.

The second congress was convened by Du Bois in London. The resolutions of the first congress were reiterated and Du Bois emphasized that Pan Africanism at that stage was more an idea than a fact. At the third congress held in London and Lisbon in 1923 the Africans demanded the following :

(i) They be granted a voice in government (ii) Africa must develop with the Africans in mind rather than for the benefit of Europeans , and (iii) The right for blacks to defend themselves through the use of arms against waring/hostile Europeans. Most importantly at this congress they denounced separate development in South Africa and forced labour and slavery in Angola. In 1927 the fourth congress was held in New York this congress confirmed the adoptions at previous congresses.

The fifth Pan - African Congress was held in Manchester during March and October 1945 and put the finishing touches to the theoretical and practical political conceptions of Pan Africanism as a means to unite all in favour of anti colonial struggle. At this congress Marxist socialism was adopted as a philosophy and this congress stressed African unity explicitly.³

5. EFFECTS OF PAN AFRICANISM ON AFRICAN UNITY IN THE POST WAR PERIOD

From 1945 onwards new trends emerged in the Pan Africanist movement. There were distinct splits in ideological aspirations towards obtaining African Unity and sovereignty for African countries. The Francophone countries were more cautious about obtaining independence. This is illustrated by Houphouet Boigny of the Ivory Coast's actions. He alleged to be committed to the cause of African Unity but he was opposed to gain independence from France. Keen to accept France as the governing country this action of his was contrary to those principles discussed at the 5th Pan African congress in Manchester.

3. M'buyinga, Elenga. Pan Africanism or Neo-Colonialism.

Kwame Nkrumah wrote that "African nationalism was not confined to the Gold Coast—the new Ghana. From now on it must be Pan-African nationalism, and the ideology of African political consciousness and African political emancipation must spread through out the whole continent."4. He endeavoured to try and unite all heads of states to fight a common cause irrespective of their past leanings.

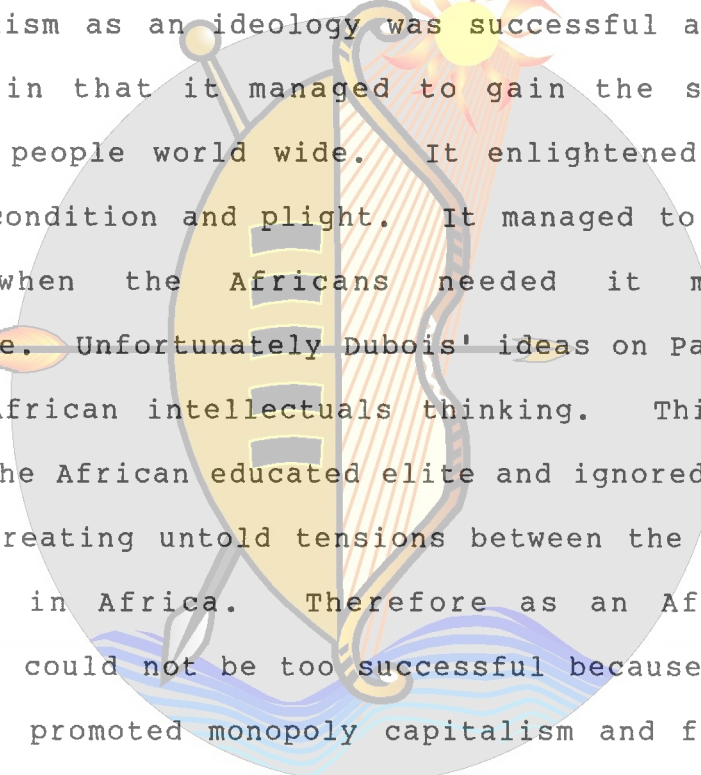
Included in this effort was Senghor of Senegal and Houphouet of the Ivory Coast who were pro imperialist. Unfortunately for Nkrumah he did not succeed in achieving what he wanted except to make them realize that what they were doing was for their own class interest, and pandering to rival imperial / ex-colonial power's interests.

It is here that there is evidence of the failure of Pan Africanism as a unifying ideology. Especially when different heads of states were reacting to imperial domination differently. From 1957 Pan Africanism took on a new characteristic.

4. Nkrumah, Kwane. The autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah.

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The movement, became limited to the African continent, adopted a more practical stance in relation to colonialism. It became a reinforced movement that was strong enough to challenge colonialism. A permanent organization emerged from it, the Organization of African Unity.



Pan Africanism as an ideology was successful and useful to an extent in that it managed to gain the sympathy and support of people world wide. It enlightened the African about his condition and plight. It managed to serve as an ideology when the Africans needed it most during independence. Unfortunately Dubois' ideas on Pan Africanism dominated African intellectuals thinking. This worked in favour of the African educated elite and ignored the masses. Therefore creating untold tensions between the ruling elite and masses in Africa. Therefore as an African unity ideology it could not be too successful because it excluded the masses, promoted monopoly capitalism and forwarded the cause of the African bourgeoisies.

According to Elerga M'buyinga in his book, "Pan Africanism or Neo-Colonialism," he maintains that Pan Africanism is still existent today but it is known by its new name Revolutionary Pan-Africanism (pages 167-180).

This new ideology excludes the ideologies of the African Educated Elite from the Colonial era. Because he maintains that their aspirations were no different to that of the imperialist country. Workers and peasants are given a say in the decision making and many ideas are not necessarily imported from Europe. Rather they are developing and forming new theories that are conducive to the African situation. In his chapter "Revolutionary Pan-Africanism Today" he concludes by saying "Revolutionary Pan Africanism and genuine proletarian internationalism are convergent and in no way contradictory." 5.

The Africans became excited about the concept of African Unity again in the 1960's when the Organization of African Unity was established. It is the league for all independent African states. The supreme ruling body of the Organization of African Unity (from now on the OAU), is the Assembly of Heads of State which meet annually. There is a Council of Ministers and a General Secretariat. The OAU charter recognizes the following principles :

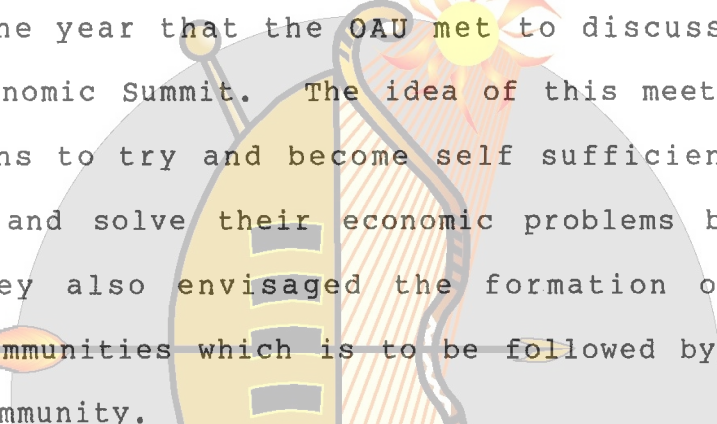
5. M'buyinga, Elenga. Pan Africanism or Neo-Colonialism.

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the sovereign equality of all states; non interference in the internal affairs of states; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state; peaceful settlement of disputes; condemnation of political assassination and subversive activities in other states; dedication of the independence of all African territories and nonalignment with any blocs. A resolution was passed to set up a co-ordinating committee to support liberation movements on the continent, and supporting nonalignment. Other resolutions condemned apartheid, called for independence for existing colonies on the continent, supported general disarmament and agreed to set up a committee to deal with economic barriers.

Since its founding the OAU has created numerous commissions, committees and organizations. The following are but a few examples of the organizations set up by the OAU, the Organization of African Trade Union Unity, the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa, the Economic, Social, Transport and Communications Commission, the Commission on Refugees, etc. It has supported liberation struggles which include guerrilla activities which helped towards independence in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The OAU members have managed to consolidate their roles in such a way that they vote as a bloc in the United Nations especially when faced with matters relating to South Africa.

In this way there is still evidence that there is a kind of Unity amongst them and that they are concerned about issues in South Africa and Namibia. They have successfully spearheaded a vote at the United Nations placed on arms embargo on South Africa.



1980 was the year that the OAU met to discuss the first African Economic Summit. The idea of this meeting was for the Africans to try and become self sufficient, in food production and solve their economic problems by the year 2000. They also envisaged the formation of regional economic communities which is to be followed by an African Economic Community.

In spite of all the achievements the OAU has managed to successfully attain, it has been faced with a number of failures when trying to obtain African Unity. In 1967 only ten OAU member countries broke relations with Great Britain. When Britain refused to take action on Independence by Rhodesia. Sharply divided in 1975 over whether to support the MPLA in Angola. The MPLA only won their support when South Africa intervened. The OAU has been rather helpless in violence between states this is so because it does not have any enforcement machinery eg. soldiers, weapons etc. Conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia, the Libyan occupation of Chad have been some of the occasions when the OAU is

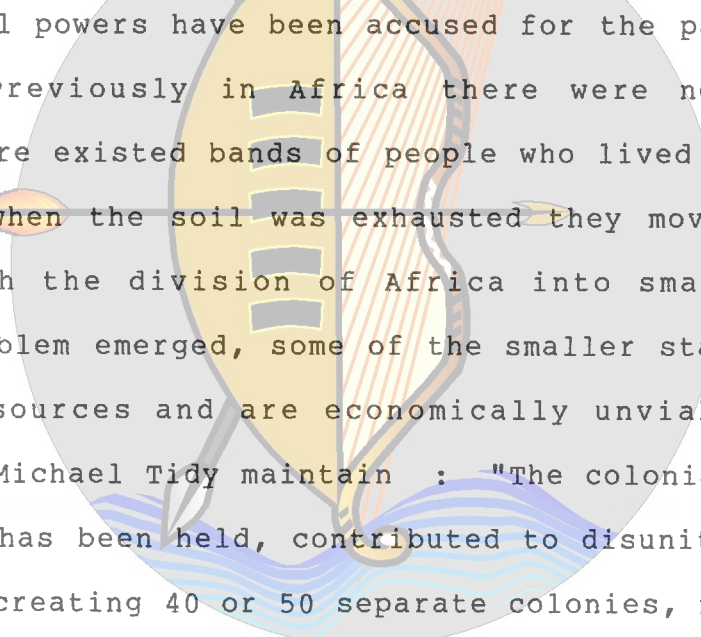
riddled with a few problems. Apart from ideological problems there is the linguistic problem it has never declared any language as its common dominant language. Also associated with this linguistic problem it appears that the Arab countries almost always vote together whereas the English speaking states (ex-Britain colonies) vote together and the French speaking states vote together. Although this linguistic problem is not clearly evident there appears to be this kind of leaning in the OAU.

The OAU has another problem in that it is an organization that emerged from neo-colonialism. It represents the aspirations of an African Elite that has few differences between itself and the old colonial regime.

On the one hand the OAU is trying desperately to unify Africans it is faced with a contradiction within itself in that it is a weak body and hardly has power to try and solve all the Africanist problems because of the great ideological differences that members have. This has been well illustrated in 1982 when 26 of 50 members reorganized the Polisario front and the OAU has been weak and ineffective especially in helping the Africans in Southern Africa.

In all their attempts the OAU have failed in attaining African Unity, because of the leanings of different heads of states and the fact that the OAU has not carefully discussed African Unity since its inception.

6. DIFFICULTY IN ATTAINING AFRICAN UNITY : FRENCH BRITISH DIVISIONS



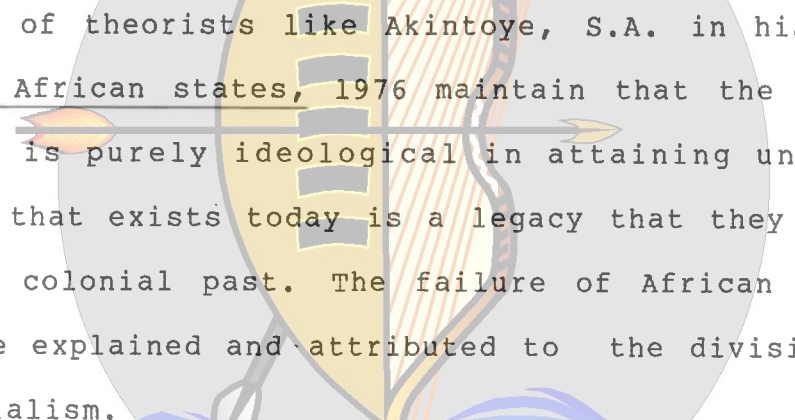
The colonial powers have been accused for the partitioning of Africa. Previously in Africa there were no countries instead there existed bands of people who lived of areas of the land, when the soil was exhausted they moved to a new area. With the division of Africa into smaller states another problem emerged, some of the smaller states have no mineral resources and are economically unviable. Ali A Mazuin and Michael Tidy maintain : "The colonial powers in Africa, it has been held, contributed to disunity in Africa : first by creating 40 or 50 separate colonies, many of them smaller than some pre-colonial African states; secondly by ruling the colonies on the bas of divide and rule, and by encouraging ethnic rivalried within African states during the decolonization process." 6.

6. Mazun, Ali A & Tidy, Michael. Nationalis, and the new states in Africa. Page 66

The French government in its policy towards Africa tried to retain total control over each of its colonies. Therefore they treated each colony as separate and did not encourage any association between colonies. They successfully managed to entrench and use ethnic nationalism as a means to control the local population an example of their methods are clear when they encouraged the Massi people of Upper Volta to be lead by their hereditary ruler, the Mora Naba. Most of the French colonies before independence were sceptical about accepting independence because of the aid that they were going to lose eg Ivory Coast. Today the French colonies are still reliant on France, especially for economic aid. Unfortunately this group (ie French speaking ex-colonies) tends to stick together and often their votes are cast similarly.

The English colonies were given a much freer hand by the British. There were a number of Federations that the British introduced so that resources could be shared. In this respect there was greater unity created between British colonies because of the contact. Apart from the fact that Britian created these Federations for economic reasons, eg Central African Federation and East African Community, it promoted some degree of unity.

The tradition of unity or attempted unity amongst English colonies has always been evident. They have always tried to combine resources and managed to do so quite successfully. This legacy has been carried into the Neo Colonial phase and evidence shows that most ex-British colonies tend to have similar traditions and they vote together when taking decisions.



A number of theorists like Akintoye, S.A. in his book : Emergent African states, 1976 maintain that the plight of Africans is purely ideological in attaining unity. The division that exists today is a legacy that they inherited from the colonial past. The failure of African unity can partly be explained and attributed to the divisive nature of colonialism.

7. ATTEMPTS AT UNITY APART FROM PAN-AFRICANISM AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Union of Socialist Republics of Africa.

Many African states today are economically too weak to be independent and there is talk to bring about a Union of Socialist Republics of Africa. Such a Socialist Republic will have shared resources for most of the countries and together they envisage a better United Africa. Unfortunately in this idea the OAU has no place because some people believe like Elenka M'buyinga that the OAU is a total failure. This move towards socialism can only be successfully organized in a large African state on a continental or semi-continental scale this will ensure economic unity. Ideological unification will ensure that racism against blacks is minimal.

EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC)

The now defunct organization created by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. When the East African Community was created in 1967 these countries were excited about its inception. Its aim was to co-ordinate finance, commerce, industry, communication and social and research activities. Failure to maintain this community was due to the fact that there existed a few ideological animosities between the heads of these three states. Therefore this attempt to create a form of unity proved futile.