



Politics Across Boundaries

Pan-Africanism

Seeds for African unity

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Speaking at a farewell party organized by Chama cha Mapinduzi¹ in Tanzania on his behalf, Mwalimu Nyerere challenged African leaders on the question of African unity and the existing colonial boundaries that divide African communities and which have arrested their growth and development in the 21st century. Mwalimu stated that the boundaries that were imposed by colonial forces during the partitioning/portioning of the African continent divided mother against child, as well as brother against brother, and hindered the social development of Africa. He gave the example of the Maasai community in Kenya and Tanzania who were divided between two colonial forces, the British and the Germans. This is why today you will find communities in Africa such as the Maasai who are divided by colonial boundaries although they belong to the same family: they carry different pass-

1 Chama cha Mapinduzi means Party of the Revolution in Swahili.

ports and identification cards, but ultimately are tied together by a cultural and historical connection. This example manifests itself from the immigration centres of Kaduna, which connects Rwanda and Uganda, or Namanga, which connects Tanzania and Kenya. It is here that you will find women carrying babies and bananas on their backs as they try to cross borders that are usually fortified by the police. Their crossing is made more difficult as they made more difficult as they attempt to balance immigration paperwork with these babies and bananas, and attempt to navigate the innumerable forms asking for occupation, identity and reason for travelling.

On the 12th and 13th of April 2009, I had the opportunity to attend the Mwalimu Nyerere Intellectual festival as a community organizer with the Bunge La Mwananchi social movement. At this forum, Pan-Africanism was debated. We discussed how Africa can stand on this unified political movement of Pan-Africanism, and organize on the unity of Africa towards political, economic and cultural liberation in 21st century. This intellectual festival injected fresh breath into African politics, which have been dominated by neoliberal policies for two decades since the fall of the Berlin wall and since Francis Fukuyama declared 'the end of history' and the triumph of free markets. Since this period, the political space in Africa has been dominated by neoliberal policies that came with neoliberal model packages of privatization, 'good governance,' multi-party-ism, 'human rights,' all in the name of saving Africa from the political despotism that existed in the era of the Cold War and after.

These neoliberal policies demobilized the African masses and the progressive middle class that was organizing resistance under a Pan-African movement. Furthermore, the progressive ideological politics were attacked and Africa was lectured on how to implement World Bank and IMF policies. In contrast, during the leaderships of Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Amil-

car Cabral and Agostino Neto, this African leadership harnessed and forged the Pan-African political instrument that gave birth to new leadership in Africa, which spearheaded the struggle for independence.

The Annual Mwalimu Nyerere Intellectual festival, which is organized by the Mwalimu Nyerere Chair of Pan-African studies at Dar es Salaam University,² creates a space for reflection and seeks to draw lessons from the past, from the social struggles that were anchored in a Pan African movement. The last Pan African congress—which was the 7th—was held in Uganda in 1994. Unfortunately, we, the younger generation, have not been able to read and improve on the Pan African resolutions that were agreed upon at this congress, which had been organizational instruments for the independence era liberation movements.

As Africa develops a means of transport that will be linking many of its capital cities, the young generation will interact, political relationships will be forged, and new fruitful contradictions will continue to shape daily lives. This will be a great and much needed opportunity for a new generation in Africa to forge a united front in creating an alternative, borderless, Pan-Africanist political leadership.



2 The first and current chair is Dr Issa Shivji.