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Publication Date

2024

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Toward a Third Wave: Redefining the People, Liberation,
and Leadership in the Pan-African Movement

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in African Studies

by

Ajah Kymara Whitehead

2024

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Toward a Third Wave: Redefining the People, Liberation,
and Leadership in the Pan-African Movement

by

Ajah Kymara Whitehead

Master of Arts in African Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Hollian E. Frederick, Chair

This thesis presents a new narrative of Pan-Africanism's historical evolution, highlighting the formation and endurance of factionalism within the movement. Through a detailed textual analysis of key figures, it delineates two distinct phases: the "first wave" (1900-1945), characterized by W.E.B. Du Bois's intellectualist faction and Marcus Garvey's activist faction; and the "second wave" (1945-1980), marked by Kwame Nkrumah's idealist faction and Julius Nyerere's gradualist faction. In examining these two waves, I reveal that the factionalism that was once productive has become increasingly restrictive over the movement's history.

I then identify a "third wave" beginning in 1980, coinciding with the decline of independence movements. I argue that this phase amalgamates the preceding dichotomies, ushering in a new era of intellectual activism and idealistic gradualism. Contrary to the notion that Pan-Africanism lost momentum post-Apartheid, I argue for the movement's ongoing transformation into a more populist and people-centric phenomenon. Emphasizing polycentrism, segmentation, and

integrated networks, I assert that these features are crucial for the Pan-African movement's relevance in addressing contemporary African realities.

My analysis incorporates a comprehensive discussion of globalization's effects and the intricacies of post-colonial politics, providing a broader context for understanding Pan-Africanism's resilience and continual adaptation. The thesis illustrates the potential of a participatory and inclusive Pan-African movement that bridges the intellectual-activist divide, urging future research to focus on grassroots participants to fully comprehend its current dynamics and potential trajectory.

The thesis of Ajah Kymara Whitehead is approved.

Stephanie F. Bosch

Sobukwe O. Odinga

Hollian E. Frederick, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, my PaPa, Charles David Smith.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract of Thesis.....	ii
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One.....	7
Chapter Two.....	10
Chapter Three.....	30
Chapter Four.....	58
Conclusion.....	77
Bibliography.....	82

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give thanks to my incredible advisors Stephanie Bosch-Santana, Sobukwe Odinga, and Hollian Wint-Frederick for their guidance and insights. Professor Odinga's seminar on Black Internationalism and the stimulating discussions we had inspired this thesis topic. Professor Bosch-Santana's course on Continental African Authors enriched my research on print media and propaganda. I am incredibly grateful to Professor Wint-Frederick, my chair, for being an amazing instructor and mentor, always offering invaluable feedback. I want to give a special thanks to Dylan Ashton for letting me bounce ideas off you, always pushing me to do more, and being a great friend throughout.

And to Palestine, from the river to the sea.

INTRODUCTION

George Shepperson explains in his famous essay, *Pan-Africanism and "Pan-Africanism" some historical notes*, that the origins of the Pan-African movement can be traced back to the creation of Africa itself. As the concept of the African continent has been constructed from the perspective of an "other," there has been a movement to dispel the various consequences of such an existence formulated out of otherness. Thus, as long as there has been an "Africa" as we contemporarily know it- there has been a movement for all-African emancipation. Shepperson contends that because the Pan-Africanist movement is a part of a long history of struggle and resistance, it is necessary for historians to understand the movement as it relates to All-African¹ movements past. At the time, Shepperson was writing against misunderstandings of the historical trajectory of the movement, tracing its origins to the "so-called Negro question in the United States and West Indies."² Such scholars risk misrepresenting the geographical and temporal fluidity of the movement. Although he does not use this term, he argues for the utility in a *longue durée* approach; as in capturing the true complexity and longevity of the movement, historians may truly investigate how it has evolved, and thus what relevance it bears on modern African realities.

Shepperson's insights sparked a shift in scholarship on Pan-Africanism, where the movement is most often examined comparatively. Rather than asking, 'what is the state of the Pan-African movement today?', Africanists began asking, 'How does Pan-Africanism today compare to Pan-Africanism of yesterday?' While his insights on the utility of a *longue durée* approach were instructive, his distinction between Pan-Africanism (capital P) and pan-

¹ All-African is a catchall for struggles for African liberation and emancipation.

² George Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism and 'Pan-Africanism': Some Historical Notes," *Phylon* (1960-) 23, no. 4 (1962): 348, <https://doi.org/10.2307/274158>.

Africanism (lower case p), produced a problematic hierarchy. That is, whereas Pan-Africanism is a distinctive movement with clear organizational structures, pan-Africanism is often ephemeral and may have no relationship to Pan-Africanism. Not only then is the Pan-African movement to be studied as it differs from and/or relates to its past, but also strictly when it can be neatly categorized as the capital “P” variety. This implies that studies of Pan-Africanism are to be prioritized over pan-Africanism, and further, risks overlooking those expressions of the movement which cannot be categorized into either. This distinction substantially limits the ability for African historians to examine the dynamism and adaptability of the movement. Today, nearly 60 years later, the same question remains across intersecting disciplines of African and Black Studies. Following the 1960s, the term Pan-Africanism has lost currency within political, scholarly, and activist circles, as well as in the minds of every-day African peoples. Thus, scholarship emerging at the end of the 20th century has come to ask a greater extreme: “If *this* was Pan-Africanism yesterday, *is there* a Pan-African movement today at all?” (“Is the Pan-African movement dead?”)

This thesis seeks to address this question of the modern state of the Pan-African movement, arguing that it is not dead and continues today. The thesis employs a critical analytical lens, questioning established narratives and highlighting underexplored aspects of the Pan-African movement. Taking the *longue durée* approach, I offer a thorough and nuanced examination of the movement's complexities, contributions, and ongoing transformation. My analysis is focused primarily on the early to mid-20th century, highlighting the formation and endurance of two fundamental dichotomies within the movement. Through a detailed textual analysis of the seminal works of key Pan-African figures, the first part of this study delineates the emergence of two distinct phases: the "first wave" (1900-1945), characterized by an

intellectualist faction led by W.E.B. Du Bois and an activist faction under Marcus Garvey's leadership; and the "second wave" (1945-1980), marked by an idealist faction headed by Kwame Nkrumah and a gradualist/pragmatist faction orchestrated by Julius Nyerere. In exploring these two eras, I argue that such factionalism which was once productive for the movement, has become less productive with the establishment of an African nationalist bourgeois elite. I further identify a "third wave" commencing in 1980, coinciding with the decline of independence movements. This phase represents a significant amalgamation of the preceding dichotomies, giving rise to a new era of intellectual activism and idealistic gradualism necessary for the movement's enduring presence in post-colonial Africa. Contrary to the notion that Pan-Africanism lost its momentum post the South African Apartheid era, this study argues for the movement's ongoing transformation into a more populist and people-centric phenomenon.

Definitions and Concepts

Pan-Africanism can be succinctly defined as the cooperative movement among peoples of African descent to unite in their struggle against various forms of oppression and exploitation and pursue their collective liberation. While some scholars and activists might vary in their exact verbiage, at its core Pan-Africanism is a movement for all African people's liberation, a liberation movement. In his book titled, *The Third World and Africa*, Africanist, sociologist, and economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein argues that all liberation movements which follow the French revolution, despite their long list of differences, share two distinctive features: 1) a concept of who "the people" are and 2) what "liberation" means for the people. Thus, I draw this connection between liberation and Pan-Africanism, in part, because the prevailing scholarship on Pan-Africanism paints false partitions between the ideological, political, and economic spheres

of the movement.³ Defining it as a liberation movement serves to encapsulate the various dimensions of Pan-Africanism and urges us to investigate how the concept of “liberation” has developed and evolved across temporalities and geographies. Further, Wallerstein’s identification of “the people” offers us a critical lens through which the role of participants in the movement (at all levels of participation and authority) may redefine the movement, being as they are the sole determinants of the meaning of liberation. Thus, understanding where the movement comes from and where it is going, relies upon the identification and deconstruction of “the people” and their “liberation.”

Over the course of the movement’s centuries-long history, these concepts of “liberation” and “the people” have expanded and constricted. Uncoincidentally, these shifts directly coincide with major shifts in the movement’s leadership. As such, Pan-Africanism has historically maintained a strong sense of leadership, a feature that was at once integral to its continued progression. More specifically, Pan-Africanism has been marked by an abundance of what Vusi Gumede calls “Thought leaders”: connoting “a leadership orientation underpinned by unconventional ideology, historically nuanced, culturally sensitive and contextually grounded. Thought leadership [...] is based on progressive ideologies, beliefs, orientations with significant pragmatic and impact appeal.”⁴ As Gumede further explains, thought liberation, or “the rediscovery of self as an able and a capable being that can produce progressive thought, actions and achievements,” is a requirement for thought leadership to be effective.⁵ This, he argues, is

³ P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C: Howard University, 1994); G. Martin, *African Political Thought*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137062055>.

⁴ Vusi Gumede, “Exploring Thought Leadership, Thought Liberation and Critical Consciousness for Africa’s Development,” *Africa Development* 40, no. 4 (2015): 91.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

particularly relevant in the case of African leadership, as African liberation hinges upon collective consciousness.

Thought leaders of the Pan-African movement have both defined and been defined by “the people” and the concept of “liberation.” These three concepts work together to construct the landscape of the Pan-African movement as a liberation movement. As such, in examining the past and present of the movement, I ground my analysis in these three conceptual tools.

Methods

This thesis employs a comprehensive methodology to explore the evolution and contemporary relevance of the Pan-African movement. At the heart of the approach is a *longue durée* approach, emphasizing the importance of understanding the movement's continuity and transformation over an extended period. This perspective allows for a thorough examination of Pan-Africanism's roots, development, and ongoing evolution, highlighting how historical contexts and temporal shifts have shaped its trajectory. Integrating insights from history, political science, sociology, and cultural studies, the thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of Pan-Africanism, considering its political, economic, cultural, and social dimensions. By drawing on multiple disciplines, the analysis captures the multifaceted nature of the movement. The study also considers art as a form of activism, incorporating artistic expressions and cultural artifacts to understand how Pan-Africanism has been represented and communicated through various media. This aspect of the methodology recognizes the role of cultural production in shaping and sustaining the movement.

I rely heavily on textual analysis of primary sources, including speeches, programmatic documents, policy writings and philosophical writings by key Pan-African leaders. These texts are critically and comparatively examined to understand the leaders' ideologies, strategies, and

contributions to the movement. Notable primary sources include Du Bois's writings and speeches from the Pan-African Congresses, Garvey's publications through the Negro World, Nkrumah's programmatic documents like "Africa Must Unite," and Nyerere's speeches and writings on Ujamaa and African socialism. Additionally, secondary sources, such as historical accounts, scholarly articles, books, and interviews provide essential context and support for the primary source analysis, helping to situate the movement within broader historical and theoretical frameworks.

These secondary documents were particularly essential to my research on the political ideology and leadership of Thomas Sankara in chapter four. Speeches and interviews from President Thomas Sankara serve as my primary archive, however; because there have been efforts within Burkina Faso after his assassination to silence and erase his role in the Burkinabè revolution, (primarily through the destroying of physical archives) there is minimal amount of philosophical and policy writings by him. As such, the erasure within the archive on Sankara's contributions to modern African revolutionary thought, underlines the necessity of continuing research which inserts Sankara into the Pan-African framework.

Outline

The following chapters of this thesis explore the tensions and relationship between the "people" of the Pan-African movement and its leadership, as well as how these participants have and continue to shape the definition of "liberation." In the following short Chapter titled "Antecedents of Pan-Africanism" I review the antecedents of modern Pan-Africanism to understand how the phenomenon transformed into a liberation movement. I focus on the strengths of the movement prior to the emergence of a leadership class, and the preceding legacy

of contradictions and hierarchies established by early leadership, as this informs my analysis of the first wave leadership. In Chapter Two, I discuss the “first wave” of the Pan-African movement, and the introduction of factionalism as a means of expanding and enhancing movement participation. Throughout this chapter, I point to substantial shortcomings in the movement’s leadership to challenge Western assumptions about the African condition. Thus, In Chapter Three, I explore how the second wave leadership sought to mend the failures of the first wave with the absorption of the Pan-African movement into the greater African national liberation movements. I further reveal that the second wave established two new factions to increase leadership participation in the movement, and in doing so, further fractured the relationship between the movement’s leaders and its people. Finally, Chapter Four makes the intervention that a third wave of the Pan-African movement commenced in 1980, using Thomas Sankara’s Burkinabe revolution as a case study. Here, I argue that as did the wave before, the third wave seeks to remedy the failures of the second wave. In this case, the third wave repairs the fracturing of the movement by mending the relationship between the “people” and the “leaders” through a transfer of power back to the “people.” As such, I conclude by making suggestions for further research, arguing the importance of shifting the analytical focus from the leadership to the grassroots participants to fully comprehend its current dynamics and potential trajectory.

CHAPTER ONE:

Antecedents of Pan-Africanism

In her chapter titled “End of Pan-Africanism: Reparations and Global Africa,” Hilary Beckles opens with this introduction to the Pan-African movement:

For over 300 years the primary imperative of African liberation drove the political praxis of detachment of the continent and its peoples from the scaffold of the Western colonial project. Wars and rumors of war, from the slavery regimes to national independence movements, resided at the heart of redemption reasoning. The sword and the pen forged a cosmology of freedom organized by Africans at home and abroad into a revolutionary paradigm named Pan-Africanism.⁶

She, like various other scholars of African history, contends that the movement was born out of a politics of “detachment,” that is, the forced journey of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to the New World. The struggle of Africans against various displacement, detachment, and dispossession (namely enslavement and colonization) may be traced back to first acts of resistance on slave ships leaving the continent. As such, early rudimentary manifestations of Pan-Africanism allowed a plurality of voices, forming a leaderful⁷ movement for all Africans.⁸ This was a movement not necessarily conscious of itself in the same way modern social movements typically are, but unified by ideologies of liberation, nonetheless.

The 19th century marked a critical turning point for the Pan-African movement, witnessing the establishment of the first Black state in the Americas with the Haitian Revolution in 1804. When the new Haitian president declared that all Haitian citizens were Black and any Black people who arrive in Haiti would become citizens as well, this centralized a global African vision for belonging and self-governance.⁹ This monumental moment solidified the Pan-African movement as one centered on the re-placement, reattachment, and re-possession of Black

⁶ Hilary McD. Beckles, “End of Pan-Africanism: Reparations and Global Africa,” *The Journal of African American History* 103, no. 1–2 (March 2018): 179, <https://doi.org/10.1086/696336>.

⁷ “Leaderful” refers to leadership practices that are decentralized, encouraging collective action, concurrency, collaboration and compassion. (See Raelin, 2003)

⁸ Ronald W. Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements*, African American Life Series (Detroit: Wayne State, 1993).

⁹ Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*, New World Studies (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

Africans. Moreover, with this establishment of a “homeland” within the New World, the Americas became a geographical center of the modern Pan-African movement.¹⁰

The rallying point for Black liberation would find its second home on the continent with the independence of the Liberian state in 1847, establishing two Atlantic poles for Pan-African interlocutors. This anchoring of the movement to two distinct locales allowed for further stability. It is after the establishment of Liberia that we began to witness a centrality of leadership coming out of the New World, whose writings cemented Pan-African traditions. The two central figures produced in this era were Edward Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell, whose engagement with the Liberian repatriation project offers insight into the early relations between Pan-Africanists in the diaspora, and those on the continent. Both thinkers used their writings to solidify the Pan-African ethos as a liberation ethos, and Africans as the subject of that liberation. They argued for the African right to self-determination and governance, and the dispelling of myths of African inferiority.¹¹

However, the contradictions within their proposed paths to liberation would also convolute and complicate the relationship between the movement and its leadership. Being convinced by the Christian missionary spirit, they trusted in the modernizing role of imperialism and the spread of Christianity and free trade as a means of bringing progress to the African continent.¹² What they argued for, in essence, was a paternal relationship with New World Africans leading those uncivilized on the continent into civilization. The emphasis was placed on

¹⁰ Beckles, “End of Pan-Africanism.” 180.

¹¹ J. Ayodele Langley, *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856-1970: Documents on Modern African Political Thought from Colonial Times to the Present* (London: R. Collings, 1979).

¹² Alexander Crummell, *The Future of Africa: Being Addresses, Sermons, Etc., Etc.: Delivered in the Republic of Liberia*, Second edition., *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive* (New York: C. Scribner, 1862).; Edward Wilmot Blyden, *African Life and Customs: Reprinted from “The Sierra Leone Weekly News.”* (London: C.M. Phillips, 1908), <http://catalog.ocr.edu/record=b2838226>.

Christianity as a means of bringing about progress to instill moral values into newly forming states. The implication was that this movement, which was once people-centric and leaderful, was now to be led by a class of leadership deemed capable by metrics of “civility” and “morality.” Such a hierarchy would have dire consequences for the first and second wave leadership of the Pan-African movement. The third wave, as will be discussed later, must then remedy this hierarchy, by making a return to the leaderful, popular tradition of the “proto-Pan-African” era.

CHAPTER TWO:

Intellectualism and Activism: Du Bois, Garvey, and “First Wave” Pan-Africanism

This chapter investigates the period often referred to as the “First Wave” of Pan-Africanism, from 1900-1945, which marked a critical foundational period in the movement’s organization and development. At the forefront of this era were two pivotal thought leaders: William Edward Burghardt Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. Through a discussion of Du Bois’s leadership within the Pan African Congresses and Conferences, I explore the synthesis of an elite intelligentsia and the burgeoning Pan African movement. This faction of the movement was directly opposed by Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa movement, as his leadership represented the activist dimension of the movement, here I explore the necessity of grassroots mobilization. Their infamous rivalry offers a critical point of inquiry, as the complex interplay between their two factions and the foundational ideas they purported made a lasting impact on the Pan-African movement and the African Diaspora. This chapter underscores how a rich repository of leadership and rivalry between such leaders became a cornerstone of the movement’s modern history, cementing the movement as segmentary and often polycentric. Contrary to renderings of such factions as

hierarchical and ineffectual, I argue that rivalries have been productive in allowing diversity within the Pan-African movement, increasing its adaptability, and facilitating experimentation, innovation, and learning. I conclude this chapter by examining both the internal and external factors which signaled the end of this wave, including the merging of the intellectualist and activist factions, a shift in the epicenter of the movement, and emergence of new leadership among other things.

WEB Du Bois and The Pan African Congresses/Conferences

The first Pan African Conference¹³, organized by Henry Sylvester-Williams in 1900 in London, brought together thirty delegates primarily from the West Indies and Great Britain, the majority of them intellectuals and academics. Among them was one of the most towering Black intellectuals of the 20th century who would become a widely acknowledged father of Pan-Africanism, W.E.B. Du Bois. Throughout his career as a Pan-Africanist, Du Bois positioned himself as an intellectual, who addressed himself to other intellectuals. He believed it would be intellectuals like him that would lead the movement to fruition. He believed the “talented tenth” of Afro-American intellectuals would lead Black Africans and Afro-Caribbeans to liberation.¹⁴ This belief in intellectual leadership became central to the movement, with Du Bois’s aspirations shaping its direction. While the disproportionate presence of intellectuals at the first conference was more coincidental than deliberate; Du Bois’s ascension to leadership through his participation in this conference set the tone for leadership to follow. Du Bois’s legacy would link

¹³ Hereafter referred to as “the Conference.”

¹⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Talented Tenth*, [1st electronic ed.], Negro Problem. New York, NY., James Pott and Company, 1903. Pp. N Pag-75 (New York, NY: James Pott and Company, 1903), <http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?BLTC;S9689>.

the rise of Pan-Africanism with the rise of Black intellectualism, producing a movement led primarily by such intellectuals, the downfalls of which will be explored later in this section.

As the committee chair, Du Bois crafted a key legacy piece, the address “To the Nations of the World,” outlining the conference’s purpose and aspirations. According to those in attendance, the central objectives of this meeting were to unify peoples of African descent and place them in conversation, devise a plan to ameliorate racial tensions between white and black races, and finally, begin a movement for securing the full rights of the African races.¹⁵ This is what Du Bois delineates in his address, with a few adjustments and elaborations. Firstly, he places emphasis on “the problem of the color line,” that is, anti-black racism as their most central concern.¹⁶ Furthermore, while many references are made to those of African descent or African races, Du Bois expands upon this notion when he specifically advocates for “the darker races” of the world. He asserts that the “nations of the world” recognize their right to take their place among the most celebrated and advanced peoples of history and the modern world. As such, “the people” in Du Bois’s imagination were not only Africans, but all peoples alienated by European epistemologies.

Toward the end of the address, he proclaimed:

Let the Nations of the World respect the integrity and independence of the free Negro States of Abyssinia [Ethiopia], Liberia, Ha[i]ti, etc. and let the inhabitants of these States, the independent tribes of Africa the Negroes of the West Indies and America, and the black subjects of all Nations take courage, strive ceaselessly, and fight bravely, that they may prove to the World their incontestable right to be counted among the great brotherhood of mankind.¹⁷

¹⁵ Alexander Walters, “My Life and Work,” HathiTrust, accessed December 5, 2023, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.c040153832?urlappend=%3Bseq=13>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, “To the Nations of the World (1900),” in *W. E. B. Du Bois: International Thought*, ed. Adom Getachew and Jennifer Pitts, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 18–21, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108869140.002>.

Du Bois's appeal establishes Pan-Africanism as the belief that African descendants are unified in their struggle against oppression, and thus must seek collective emancipation. Although the ideas and imaginary of Pan-Africanism surely predated its first utterance, the first Pan-African congress served to begin a transition from an idea to a movement. "Liberation" as defined in this first conference, is thus the global recognition of the "integrity" and "independence" of all peoples of African descent. This definition abstracts liberation into an idea, rather than a process or path for achievement.

The First Pan-African Conference with Du Bois's "To the Nations" as an unofficial constitution, set the pace for the 20th century. Du Bois led five more conferences between 1919 and 1945, continuing to build upon Williams's foundation. The sheer longevity of Du Bois's leadership within the movement allows him a particular responsibility of influence during the early 20th century. Shepperson contends that without his persistence as a leader, there is no knowing what may have become of the (capital) Pan-African movement or its persisting relevance.¹⁸ However, it is also due to his visibility as a leader that the same criticisms leveled at Du Bois would become projected onto the movement as a whole; specifically as his faction of Pan-Africanism stood in direct opposition to his greatest rival, Marcus Garvey.

As earlier mentioned, the supposed restriction of the movement's leadership and participants to those "talented," that is, the educated or otherwise deemed intellectually capable of contributing, often lent Du Bois and his Congresses to accusations of elitism. This was due, in part, to the Congress attendees being overwhelmingly comprised of academics, as well as Du Bois's tendency to remain restrictive in his writing and inner circles, rarely addressing the role of

¹⁸ George Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism and 'Pan-Africanism': Some Historical Notes," *Phylon* (1960-) 23, no. 4 (1962): 346-47, <https://doi.org/10.2307/274158>.

“common” Black folk in his many theories for Pan-African progress. His primary literary organ *The Crisis*, in which Du Bois’s Pan-African philosophy was transmitted to the world, was influential among Black intellectuals and middle-class households throughout the United States. In his investigation of Du Bois’s role as sole editor of the *Crisis*, Elliott Rudwick emphasizes that the journal stood as a testament to the “heights the Negro race could reach,”¹⁹ as he regularly documented achievements of Black intellectual leaders and encouraged the readership to seek racial improvement through various forms self-improvement (primarily education). However, the newspaper alienated the vast majority of Black readers, who were largely less educated and found the content less accessible. Du Bois often launched attacks at other major Negro publications, earning the *Crisis* several enemies and frequent criticisms. Moreover, it was most read by mulattoes, often featuring “light-skinned” faces and writers on its cover, alienating the darker-skinned readers who represented the majority of Afro-Americans.²⁰

Du Bois’s writings in the *Crisis* reveal his understanding of “liberation” as achievable primarily through education, urging other peoples of African descent to seek education as to realize their political power.²¹ He contended that the ultimate vision of Pan-African unity could not be realized without such higher education, which at the time, was an opportunity only a select few of Black folks were privileged to acquire. As such, it was the responsibility of the Black bourgeois to assume leadership positions across movements for all African progress. In reference to the role of American Negroes in the emancipation of the Black race he wrote:

¹⁹ Elliott M. Rudwick, “W. E. B. Du Bois in the Role of Crisis Editor,” *The Journal of Negro History* 43, no. 3 (1958): 240, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2715984>.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 215.

²¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Talented Tenth*, [1st electronic ed.], Negro Problem. New York, NY., James Pott and Company, 1903. Pp. N Pag-75 (New York, NY: James Pott and Company, 1903), <http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?BLTC;S9689>.

it is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race, we must strive by race-organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development.²²

In arguing that education is essential to liberation, and those that are educated must lead others into liberation, Du Bois gestures another key feature of his Pan-African philosophy; that within the “people” of the movement, there is a hierarchy in which those who are uneducated are incapable of being liberated. For Du Bois, the ethno-racial solidarity sought by Pan-Africanism is not predicated upon a class solidarity. The paternalism invoked by the proto-Pan African leadership would in many ways be reified by Du Bois’s insistence on an intellectualist leadership.²³

This hierarchy within the movement’s “people” extends into his ideas on economic liberation, as beyond lending their practical and intellectual skill to uplifting other Black peoples, Du Bois insists upon an economic cooperative strategy of Black capitalist philanthropy. Those who had the means financially to invest in Black businesses and otherwise address economic disparities, must offer their support for the betterment of internal Black communities; an economic strategy that would extend into development efforts on the African continent. However, throughout his tenure, the scholar who had at once rejected socialist principles would adjust his argument for an economic path to liberation which blended his “talented tenth” theory

²² W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Conservation of Races.*, *The American Negro, His History and Literature* (American Negro Academy, 1897). 11.

²³ It is notable that Du Bois did later revise his theory on education. Arguing that Blacks should pursue higher education as a means of freeing oneself from “self-centered provincialism” and develop an understanding of the plight of the African through socialist ideas to encourage cross-continental discourse. See Du Bois “Dusk of Dawn” (1940).

with policies of public ownership and land re-distribution. This meant envisioning a form of economic liberation that went beyond individual achievement to embrace collective prosperity and equity. He believed in using the intellectual and financial resources of the most educated and affluent African Americans to foster economic opportunities and support communal growth.²⁴ This approach sought to reconcile his initial emphasis on elite leadership with broader socialist principles, advocating for a balanced path to liberation that involved both uplifting through education and direct investment in the economic well-being of Black communities. Through this nuanced strategy, Du Bois aimed to create a sustainable model of development that could empower African diaspora communities at all levels, marking a significant evolution in his thinking about how to achieve true liberation.

The roots of Du Bois leadership as being connected to the Pan-African Congresses/Conferences set a precedent of a deep connection between Black intellectualism and academia within the Pan-African movement. Du Bois's drew from a longer tradition of Black liberation through education, in which self-education through Afrocentric epistemologies would allow for a greater Black consciousness and deeper communication across African networks. This tradition would continue, laying the groundwork for the establishment of Black and African studies, as well as ethnic studies more broadly, across various educational institutions. Moreover, Du Bois was ahead of his time so to speak, in his inclusion of the "darker races of the world" in his letter written at the first conference. Although he undoubtedly centered his efforts on the liberation of Black peoples, he would go on to write extensively about Dravidians and other

²⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880.*, 1st ed., Black Thought and Culture (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935).

groups which he saw as having a distinct place within the Pan-African struggle.²⁵ This was not an opinion shared widely amongst his peers in the early 20th century, however; as we will see in the following chapters, the idea of a “rainbow coalition” would come to the forefront of the movement particularly in the post-colonial era. Du Bois’s framing of the Pan-African movement as one which included all peoples alienated by European epistemologies would be something of an antecedent of Third-Worldism and Subaltern resistances.

Although Du Bois flirted with Marxist theory and would later come to emphasize the role of union organizing in his Pan-African imagination, his early contention that progress would come about via benevolent contributions of a well-to-do, educated Black bourgeois, problematizes his concept of “liberation” and “the people.” He declared early-on that the Pan-African movement sought the emancipation of all peoples from white-European epistemologies; however, “the people” were to be led by a particular Black elite he deemed intellectually and financially capable. The notable weakness of his Pan-Africanism was the ambiguous and often subordinate role of the Black masses,²⁶ as displayed in Du Bois’s organizing and writings. One of Du Bois’s contemporaries, Eric Walrond, criticized him as an “incurable snob” with a superiority complex, who has “no sympathy for the Black masses.”²⁷ Walrond, like many other burgeoning Pan-Africanists of the 1920s, instead placed higher confidence in the leadership potential of Marcus Garvey. The charismatic and theatrical Jamaican leader was initially hailed

²⁵ Yogita Goyal, “On Transnational Analogy: Thinking Race and Caste with W. E. B. Du Bois and Rabindranath Tagore,” *Atlantic Studies (Abingdon, England)* 16, no. 1 (2019): 54–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2018.1477653>.

²⁶ In this thesis, the “Black masses” refers to the ordinary Black folk who were also the grassroots participants of the Pan-African movement. This excludes movement leadership, celebrities, and elites.

²⁷ Walrond, Eric D. “Imperator Africanus: Marcus Garvey: Menace Or Promise?” *The Independent (1922-1928)*, Jan 03, 1925, 8, <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/imperator-africanus/docview/90643353/se-2>.

as a champion of the common Black man, offering a viable alternative to Du Bois's Pan-African leadership. It is to his leadership and conceptualizations of "the people" and "liberation" this study now turns.

Marcus Garvey and the Back to Africa Movement

Much work has been done in recent scholarship to re-insert Marcus Garvey into the history of Pan-Africanism and recognize his invaluable contributions and legacy across the movement's landscape.²⁸ Shepperson argued that Garvey's movement and Garveyism more broadly, are to be categorized as the (lower case) pan-Africanism, claiming it was an "embarrassment" to the movement throughout the first wave, only moving into Pan-Africanism during the second wave.²⁹ However, this grossly understates the sheer reach and impact of Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement carried out and constituted by his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) during this time. With 966 branches and a membership of 5 million, the latter organization became instrumental in the institutionalization of the Pan-African movement, and thus its longevity across various geographies.³⁰

The Back to Africa movement was a program of repatriation theorized by Marcus Garvey,³¹ in which diasporic Negroes were to resettle in Africa and build a "great nation" predicated on "brotherly co-operation" and the unification of all-African interests for the pursuit

²⁸ See for instance: Moses, "Classical Black Nationalism" (1996), Lumumba, "Is Pan-Africanism Dead?" (2018), and Martin "The Pan-African Connection" (1983)

²⁹ Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism and 'Pan-Africanism.'" 348.

³⁰ Amos N. Wilson, *Afrikan-Centered Consciousness versus The New World Order: Garveyism in the Age of Globalism*, AWIS Lecture Series (New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1999), xi.

³¹ This particular "Back to Africa" movement was theorized by Garvey. However, the repatriation movement more generally traces its origins to the proto-Pan African era; the Liberian state project being one of the earliest successful projects of this kind.

of one collective destiny.³² Garvey's early contention that we must seek out "Africa for Africans, at home and abroad" was an explicit call for African liberation and statehood, which had been largely neglected by other key figures at the time. This slogan served as a firm warning to European colonial powers, that on the continent and across the diaspora, there was a burgeoning collective of Africans prepared to seize liberation by any means necessary. Garvey was convicted by this belief in militant resistance, one which required the total rejection of white power structures, and the pursuit of revolution as opposed to reform. As such, the Black separatist politic, adopted from Delany, Blyden and Crummell's writings, became a cornerstone of Garveyism and Garvey's Pan-African contributions, whereby voluntary self-alienation would create a nurturing environment for self-reliance and Black appreciation/celebration.

Garvey's conceptualization of the Pan-African movement is most identifiable within his primary literary organ, a newspaper titled *Negro World*, in which he "spread the gospel of Pan-Africanism."³³ By 1919 *Negro World* had surpassed Du Bois's *The Crisis* as the leading Black periodical throughout the Americas and Africa, attesting to the sheer reach, influence, and resonance of Garveyism in its first heyday.³⁴

The UNIA was founded in Jamaica in 1914, but quickly grew roots in the United States following Garvey's arrival in 1916. His organization found a particular resonance in Harlem, New York City, amongst a flourishing renaissance of Black cultural celebration and self-

³² Marcus Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans; New Preface by Tony Martin.*, Centennial ed., The New Marcus Garvey Library ; No. 9 (Dover, Mass., U.S.A: Majority Press, 1986), 68-72.

³³ Bakari K. Lumumba, "Is Pan-Africanism Dead?: The Relevancy of Garveyism in the Twenty-First Century: The Politics of Black Self-Determination in the Southeastern United States" (Ohio University, 2018), https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb_etd/etd/r/1501/10?clear=10&p10_accession_num=ohiou1526039138419958.

³⁴ Tony Martin, *The Pan-African Connection: From Slavery to Garvey and beyond.*, 1st Majority Press ed., The New Marcus Garvey Library; No. 6 (Dover, Mass: Majority Press, 1984), 57.

actualization. Garvey had originally visited the United States to meet with his interlocutor and inspiration, Booker T. Washington, who unfortunately died before such meeting could occur. However, it was upon reading Washington's 1901 publication "Up From Slavery" while traveling through Europe that Garvey first hypothesized the necessity of a Black state, asking himself "Where is the Black man's Government?." ³⁵ Seeking to create one, he established the UNIA in July of 1914 with the assistance of several white clergymen and a catholic priest. ³⁶ This interweaving of Christianity into a Black repatriation movement had been previously established in the "proto" Pan-African era. Whereas Du Bois was situated within a rising Black intellectual tradition, from its inception, Garveyism was deeply tied with the Christian evangelical tradition of 19th century Pan-Africanism. ³⁷ He established the motto "One God, One Aim, One Destiny!" and believed African redemption would come through the fulfillment of Psalm 68:31: "Princes shall come out of Egypt: Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God," ³⁸ a belief once purported by Alex Crummell. ³⁹

Garvey admits that it was not until the culmination of World War I that his vision took true shape, with the aspirations of the UNIA becoming a reasonable path to those who had once denounced it. ⁴⁰ As African Americans returned from a war fought for self-determination and the

³⁵ Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans; New Preface by Tony Martin*, 126.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 128.

³⁷ Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion.*, ATLA Monograph Series; No. 13 (Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1978).

³⁸ Lumumba, "Is Pan-Africanism Dead?", 44.

³⁹ J. Ayodele Langley, *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856-1970: Documents on Modern African Political Thought from Colonial Times to the Present* (London: R. Collings, 1979).

⁴⁰ Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans; New Preface by Tony Martin*, 127-128.

defense of democracy only to face heightened racial violence, segregation, and degradation, they became particularly enamored with Garvey's promise of a Negro-led state—an Africa for Africans—as a means to tangibly improve their lived realities. This envisioned homeland was to be a secure refuge, free from the legal and material constraints of the white-European world. As Garvey's vision for this state ignited hearts eager for a homeland free from oppression, his influence transcended political aspirations, laying foundational stones for the "Black is Beautiful" movement.⁴¹ Advocating for black self-esteem and racial pride, Garvey's role expanded from a political leader to a beacon for cultural and identity affirmation within the African diaspora. This bridging of political mobilization to cultural renaissance underscored Garvey's enduring impact, illustrating the interconnected aspirations of a Negro-led state that aimed not only for physical sovereignty but also for psychological liberation and cultural integrity.

More than political and cultural, Garvey's vision extended into the economic realm as this quest for a sovereign state presented a direct pathway to uplift the material conditions of Black communities through entrepreneurship and ownership. The pre-existing climate allowed Garvey the unique opportunity to mobilize the disillusioned Black working-class and lower middle classes across the Americas. While the UNIA founded itself on politics of separatism and Black nationalism for a Black-led state, economic autonomy for improving the material conditions of Black peoples was one of the organization's most alluring promises. This promise manifested in the Black Star Line (BSL), a solely black owned steamship company established in 1919 aimed at seizing European control of African rubber resources and redistributing the profits to the Black masses. Garvey envisioned the BSL as a means of re-integrating Black peoples into

⁴¹ Thomas H. Henriksen, "Black Is Beautiful: An Old Idea," *Negro History Bulletin* 34, no. 7 (1971): 150–52.

the global economy so as to counter their continued alienation and exploitation. Although the Black Star Line was an economic project at heart, its business dealings melded the political and ideological aspirations of Garvey's Pan-African vision. In 1920, Garvey called a month-long UNIA convention for the Black Star Line to demand that "Africa must be free."⁴² Bringing together 25000 UNIA delegates from the US, Caribbean, Europe, and Africa to establish their statement of principles, an official inscription of their willingness to fight for African liberation, the delegates produced a key constitutional document for both the organization and Pan-African genealogy.

This "Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World," Garvey claimed, coupled with the Bible as the Holy writ for the Negro race. The document was a call to action, showing little restraint in inflammatory language and emotion, inspiring the tens of thousands gathered to hear this declaration read aloud and witness a parade of Garvey's African Legion. Mirroring the form of the American Declaration of Independence, Garvey and the UNIA delegates wrote the following preamble:

Be It Resolved, That the Negro people of the world, through their chosen representatives in convention assembled in Liberty Hall, in the City of New York and United States of America, from August 1 to August 31, in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and twenty, protest against the wrongs and injustices they are suffering at the hands of their white brethren, and state what they deem their fair and just rights, as well as the treatment they propose to demand of all men in the future.

Following this was a list of twelve grievances, their first being that Black men have been denied their human rights, "for no other reason than their race and color." Much like other Pan-African organizations of the era, they established that their primary concern was anti-Black racism experienced by "Negro" peoples across the globe. While Garvey proclaimed their main purpose

⁴² Elliott M. Rudwick, "DuBois versus Garvey: Race Propagandists at War," *The Journal of Negro Education* 28, no. 4 (1959): 421-29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2293598>.

was to call for the liberation of Africa, nine of their twelve opening complaints addressed the particular plights of the African diaspora, with six solely referencing the African American experience. As it pertains to the condition of Africans, they raised complaints of African dispossession through European colonialism and their subsequent enslavement. This establishes that the specifics of African liberation “at home,” were to do with antislavery and anticolonialism. The document continues:

In order to encourage our race all over the world and to stimulate it to overcome the handicaps and difficulties surrounding it, and to push forward to a higher and grander destiny, we demand and insist on the following Declaration of Rights:

The list of fifty-four rights drafted by the UNIA delegates, as to assure the protection of the Negro race, ranges from calls for the abolishment of Jim Crow segregation, the League of Nations and the use of racial slurs, to an insistence upon Afro-centric epistemologies, African nationhood, and the ascension of Marcus Garvey as their sole leader. What is consistent throughout their demands for self-determination are the calls to ameliorate the material realities of the Negro race. While this document is also a declaration of a political objective and orientation, the delegates make explicit calls to transform American and international legislature, judicial systems, and wealth distribution. Prior to the drafting of this document, the UNIA had made clear its objectives to repatriate Negroes to the “motherland of Africa,” and establish a new state led by them to free themselves from the oppressive conditions endured in the New World. This document further insisted that this state would serve to free Africans from the chains of slavery placed upon them by European colonial masters. Moreover, it clearly conceptualizes the “Negro” as the sole “people” in the Pan-African landscape of Garvey and his followers. They demand it be written with a capital N, following Du Bois’s demand in 1898 that doing so was

“an act in recognition of racial self-respect,” a typographic change which affirms the Black cultural identity and establishes a shared history and destiny.⁴³

While Du Bois’s “To the Nations” sought to abstract liberation into an idea, the UNIA’s declaration drafted a path to its speedy achievement. Laser focused on improving the lives of Negro peoples, their Pan-African “liberation” was one focused on economic and practical means of racial uplift. Not totally dissimilar to Du Bois, Garvey’s imagined path to prosperity was predominantly a Black capitalist venture. More explicit in this conviction, Garvey wrote while weighing the benefits of a communist and capitalist state, “capitalism is necessary to the progress of the world, and those who unreasonably and wantonly oppose or fight against it are enemies to human advancement.”⁴⁴ Further, that Negroes should beware the white communist who wishes to use his vote and discard him later, and instead befriend the white capitalist who will at least pay him (albeit meagerly) for his labor.⁴⁵ He maintained that the Negro state he aspires to create must be a capitalist one, however, he conceded that capitalist accumulation of wealth must be mediated by the state as to avoid the exploitation inevitable in capitalist economic models.

His somewhat convoluted defense of capitalism, and championing of Black economic nationalism, would cast a skeptical light on Garvey’s true intentions behind his calls for an “Africa for Africans.” Some would call it poetic justice that the same condemnations of greed and accusations of corruption he launched at his Black intellectual rivals would be the conviction to destabilize his entire organization and authority as a figure of Black liberation. In 1923 Garvey

⁴³ Special to The New York Times. "NEGRO WITH A CAPITAL N.: THE COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN NOW ADVOCATES THAT STYLE." *New York Times* (1923-), 1930 Sep 19, 1930/09/19/. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/negro-with-capital-n/docview/98812663/se-2>.

⁴⁴ Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans/ Compiled by Amy Jacques Garvey; New Preface by Tony Martin*, 72.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 69-71.

was indicted and convicted of fraud for apparent mishandlings of funds for his Black Star Line and later deported to his birthplace of Jamaica in 1927. Imprisonment and deportation for corruption were all but a death sentence for Garvey's movement, tarnishing the promise of economic progress so integral to his vision of liberation.⁴⁶ While Garvey's UNIA branches in the United States continued, without his immediate leadership, his influence declined, and the aspirations of his primary organization lost currency amongst the Black masses. Harold Cruse wrote in his influential 1967 account of Black intellectual histories that, "Garvey's nationalism was more bourgeois than revolutionary; thus, he fell into the error of trying to fight capitalistic imperialism solely with capitalistic methods of economic organization."⁴⁷ Further, the UNIA failed to successfully repatriate and/or establish a Black-African state, revealing its inability to make good on another one of its principal objectives and promises to the Garveyite membership.

While Du Bois was damned by his alienation of Black masses, Garvey's greatest contribution to the first wave of Pan-Africanism was his unique ability to mobilize and unify Black peoples, a quality some scholars argue has yet to be matched by any other Pan-African leader.⁴⁸ While giving a speech in Jamaica, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. succinctly captured the importance of Garvey's leadership:

Garvey was the first man of color to lead and develop a mass movement. He was the first man on a mass scale and level to give millions of Negroes a sense of dignity and destiny, and make the Negro feel he was somebody.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Garvey argued that his charges were fabricated because of a vendetta against him by a Jewish judge and jurors. He had previously agreed to meet with the grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan to discuss separatism and segregation as a shared goal. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to weigh the validity of his defense or the charges brought against him, there is currently a push from his family to have him posthumously pardoned. See Brown "Descendants of Marcus Garvey", 2021.

⁴⁷ Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual.*, 1st Quill ed. (New York: Quill, 1984), 330.

⁴⁸ Tony Martin, *The Pan-African Connection: From Slavery to Garvey and beyond.*, 1st Majority Press ed., The New Marcus Garvey Library; No. 6 (Dover, Mass: Majority Press, 1984).

⁴⁹ Olayiwola Abegunrin and Sabella Ogbobode Abidde, *Pan-Africanism in Modern Times: Challenges, Concerns, and Constraints*, African Governance and Development (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), 277.

Garvey proved that the strength of any Pan-African movement would lie in the unification of Black masses through an insistence upon their intrinsic value and recognition of their shared destiny. Although there was much to be desired in Garvey's ideations which often delved into the dangerous waters of ethno-racial superiority, any accounts of the Pan-African chronology which seek to erase or otherwise minimize his contributions paint a negligibly incomplete historical picture. Moreover, much of the literature impartial to Du Bois's contributions to the movement, seek to completely miss the point at which the "Venn Diagrams" of the two leaders' Pan-African ideology overlaps. Although their proposed roadmaps for how to achieve all-African liberation were markedly different, their difference in reach and audience served to unite a diversified group under one agenda. Both emphasized the role of economic development for Black liberation, planted the seeds of a Black consciousness, and leveraged organizational infrastructure to establish a common interest across the movement's participants. The following section synthesizes the unique contributions of each leader, and further elaborates on how these differences, as well as their rivalry, strengthened the movement into the second wave.

Convergences and Contributions

Both W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey made invaluable contributions to the fabric of the Pan-African movement. They serve as the formidable link between the antecedents of Pan-Africanism, and the first, second, and third waves. As Pan-Africanism shifted from an idea into a movement, both leaders were in a unique position to define who their movement included (the people), and what they would seek out (liberation). Despite their disputes, Du Bois recognized Garvey as "essentially an honest and sincere man with a tremendous vision, great dynamic force,

stubborn determination and unselfish desire to serve.”⁵⁰ Similarly, Garvey admitted that he agreed with Du Bois on the question of education, famously declaring that “intelligence rules the world and ignorance carries burden.”⁵¹ However, as this section will divulge, the pitfalls of their leadership and their tumultuous rivalry left its own imprint on the movement.

While Du Bois and Garvey are unique leaders with equally unique contributions to the Pan-African landscape, there are several overlapping ideas and contributions between them that have not been emphasized in the prevailing scholarship. Within their writings, the two leaders converged on the three central principles of economic development, Black consciousness and aesthetics, and repatriation. Although they considered and flirted with communist ideas, both made early claims that liberation would be pursued through economic development and Black capitalism. Garvey envisioned his resettlement in Africa as a capitalist state and Du Bois argued for a “cooperative” model within the United States which relied on philanthropy. Both called for (and Garvey was far more successful in achieving) an increase in Black ownership and the redistribution of global wealth from white-Europeans into the hands of Black-Africans. Economic policies were surely an integral part of their Pan-African praxis; however, both insisted that any form of racial progress could not come without a movement to rehabilitate Black cultural identity(ies) and self-image. Du Bois believed that such cultural achievements must come before or in tandem with practical progress, through an insistence on Afro-centric epistemologies within the academy and the pursuit of Black educational liberation. Whereas Garvey, heeding Booker T Washington’s philosophy, contended that material gain must come first, as Africans could never be free of mind if they were not free in body. Nonetheless, both

⁵⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Marcus Garvey," *The Crisis*, December 11, 1920, 60.

⁵¹ John Henrik Clarke, “Marcus Garvey: The Harlem Years,” *Transition*, no. 46 (1974): 14–19, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2934951>.

agreed that the struggle for liberation requires the intentional un-doing of self-deprecation and subordination that has psychologically restrained the everyday Black individual from self-realization.

While their newspapers were the vehicles for broadcasting these principles, they were further institutionalized through their creation of organizations like the UNIA and the Pan-African Association. Through these organizations, Du Bois and Garvey led the faction of “New World Blacks” advocating for the political and social development of Africa, but with an insistence on their leadership of this development. Du Bois was more explicit in his theory of a “Talented Tenth” resettling and offering their expertise to African nations as to intellectually enrich the continent. Garvey’s back to Africa movement sought resettlement and the creation of a Pan-African state in Africa, but with the implication that he and his UNIA delegates would be running the show. Either case entailed a form of leadership which seemed detached from realities of the African continent, suggesting an imposition of external, minority leadership on an “native,” majority African population. This stance inevitably clashed with the growing sentiment among African leaders and intellectuals that Africa's future should be determined by Africans themselves. As St. Clair Drake succinctly put it: “As self-confident African leaders emerged, they were not prepared to accept the doctrine that salvation must come from American or West Indian sources.”⁵²

These factors, among others, contributed to the gradual shift of the Pan-African Movement's center away from the New World. The 1945 Manchester Congress marked a pivotal moment in this shift, as it saw a more significant representation and vocal participation from

⁵² Alexandre Mboukou, “The Pan African Movement, 1900-1945: A Study in Leadership Conflicts Among the Disciples of Pan Africanism,” *Journal of Black Studies* 13, no. 3 (1983): 280., <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193478301300302>.

Continental Africans. Whereas the question of race and the pursuit of Negro unity characterized the first wave, the second wave would be largely centered on the question of African independence. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta began to emerge, advocating for immediate self-governance and independence from colonial rule, rooted in the experiences and aspirations of the African populace. This transition reflected a broader movement towards decolonization and an affirmation of the belief that Africa's destiny should be in the hands of at-home Africans, marking a departure from earlier Pan-African ideologies that placed significant emphasis on the leadership role of the diaspora. However, the contributions made by Du Bois and Garvey to the economic, political, and cultural spheres of Pan-Africanism would remain engrained in its fabric well into the contemporary era. Their differing conceptualizations of “the people” ensured that those groups alienated by the movement must be written back in with intentionality. Moreover, where Du Bois abstracted liberation into an idea that could be deployed across temporal and geographic spaces, Garvey enriched the Pan-African theories in praxis—advocating for a type of leadership which prioritizes action.

As we pivot to the subsequent section on the second wave of Pan-Africanism, it's crucial to recognize that the contributions of Du Bois and Garvey persist, influencing the evolution of the movement. Their legacies, embodying both the strengths and limitations of their respective approaches, continue to inform Pan-African thought and action. Their rivalry is a significant point worth inquiry, as this tension between two prominent leaders persisted into the following wave and re-emphasized the importance of segmentation in the movement's longevity. The tension between Garvey and Du Bois manifested in their competing newspapers, with Du Bois's *The Crisis* and Garvey's *The Negro World*. These literary organs were vehicles for the propagation of their politics and ideas, helping them cultivate a following and further spread

Pan-African ideology. Both leaders were propagandists, but their writing style differed drastically, allowing them to reach and appeal to different audiences. Garvey's writings were often more emotionally charged and provocative, which spoke particularly to the disillusioned Black working class transnationally; whereas Du Bois's more analytical and moderate speech lent his writings more celebrated amongst a minority class of educated Black elites. In either case, those digesting their writings were engaged with Pan-African thought, and thus participating in the movement at varying degrees.

The ensuing chapters will delve into how the leaders of the second wave of Pan-Africanism (1945-1980), Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, navigated the complexities introduced by these pioneering leaders, seeking to build upon their foundational work while addressing the challenges and criticisms they faced. This exploration will underscore the enduring relevance of their contributions to the Pan-African movement's ongoing quest for unity, liberation, and self-determination among peoples of African descent worldwide.

CHAPTER THREE:

Idealism and Gradualism: Nkrumah, Nyerere, and "Second Wave" Pan-Africanism

In the late 1950s, Africa was a continent in flux, teetering on the brink of a profound transformation. This period, extending into the early 1970s, witnessed an unprecedented surge in the Pan-African movement, a crescendo of voices clamoring not just for independence, but for a collective renaissance that transcended national borders. This era, often heralded as the "golden age" of Pan-Africanism, was marked by a unique confluence of visionary leadership,

revolutionary thought, and collective action toward a common goal. This chapter examines the “second wave” (also seen as “golden age”) of the Pan-African movement, interrogating the consequences of a liberation movement transformed into a *national* liberation movement. This name stems from the burgeoning class of revolutionary and visionary African leadership which took the helm of the movement in the mid 20th century. The two leaders at the forefront of this era and the primary subjects of this historical analysis are Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah and Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere. While the first wave was marked by its competing intellectual and activist factions, the second wave witnessed the creation of an idealist bloc led by Nkrumah and gradualist bloc led by Nyerere. Such factionalism was partially productive in that it united a politically diverse African leadership under the umbrella Pan-Africanism. However, in examining both of their leadership and their impact onto the broader movement, I reveal that while this era served to ameliorate the failures of the first wave by insisting upon the African right to self-governance, their rivalry further fractured the relationship between the people and the leadership. Thus, while the second wave addressed one failure, it reified another.

Kwame Nkrumah and the United African States

Although there were several ideologically diverse leaders who each brought their perspectives and strategies to the Pan-African discourse, Kwame Nkrumah’s name became synonymous with Pan-Africanism in the mid 20th century. Through an engagement with the works of key Pan-African leaders, he developed a “Pan-Africanist orientation” during his studies in the U.S. between 1935 and 1945.⁵³ Nkrumah’s Pan-African involvement deepened through his

⁵³ Mari Afari-Gyan Kwadwo, “Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore and W.E. B Du Bois,” *Institute of African Studies Research Review* 7, no. 1 (January 1991): 1, https://doi.org/10.10520/AJA19852007_93.

friendship with CLR James, who invited him to participate in the 1945 Manchester PAC. It was at this conference that Nkrumah first met George Padmore after having long known him through his writing and found himself particularly drawn to Du Bois despite having frequented the same circles for years. James recounts this encounter between the three men as a pivotal moment in the Pan-African trajectory. As he writes, “The merging of the two currents represented by Padmore and Du Bois and the entry of Nkrumah signaled the ending of one period and the beginning of another.”⁵⁴ This new period was characterized by the shift of the center of the Pan-African movement, its leadership, membership, and objectives.

Scholars who have written on Nkrumah’s Pan-African ideology (or Nkrumahism) have often elucidated three key features of his vision for African unity: continental independence, socialist egalitarianism, and the African embrace of their true nature and destiny he coins “African Personality.”⁵⁵ These succinctly represent the political, economic, and cultural spheres of his Pan-Africanism—three spheres which Du Bois and Garvey ingrained as necessary prongs of the movement’s ideological landscape. Many comparisons have been made between Garvey’s “Africa for Africans” and Nkrumah’s “African unity,” as both mottos insist upon decolonization as a necessary first step in achieving African liberation, and Nkrumah names Garvey as one of his greatest inspirations.⁵⁶ As such, the first feature of Nkrumah’s Pan-African frame is most pressingly concerned with the liberation of the African continent from colonial rule; a venture which began with his mother country of Ghana (then the Gold Coast). The motto of his Conventional People’s Party (CPP) reflected this view that, “no race, no people, no nation can

⁵⁴ C. L. R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, Motive (Westport, Conn: L. Hill, 1977), 77.

⁵⁵ Jesse Benjamin, “Decolonizing Nationalism: Reading Nkrumah and Nyerere’s Pan-African Epistemology,” *Journal of Emerging Knowledge on Emerging Markets* 3, no. 1 (October 11, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.7885/1946-651X.1046>.

⁵⁶ Kwame Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*. (Edinburgh; Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), 45.

exist freely and be respected at home and abroad without political freedom.”⁵⁷ So that, in the post-war era, the formerly abstract concept of “liberation” was to now evoke the creation and defense of African sovereignty. In other words, the Pan-African liberation movement had shifted toward a *national* liberation movement for individual African states. While decolonization and anti-imperialism had been made explicit facets of the Pan-African movement during the first wave, the second wave witnessed action toward tangible political and economic freedom.

Vincent Bakpetu Thompson argues that the entire second wave of the movement was set in motion by Nkrumah’s return to Ghana in 1947, in which the fight for national independence gained traction.⁵⁸ It is then that “Pan-Africanism moved from the realm of idealism and romanticism to that of practical politics.”⁵⁹ Nkrumah spent the next decade making a name for himself as a staunch Pan-Africanist and champion of the working class, gaining him a popularity and authority across the continent. Being one of the earliest African nations to become fully independent from colonial rule in 1957, Ghana became a beacon to other African states seeking national sovereignty. Just five months before Ghana won independence Nkrumah wrote, “Our example must inspire and strengthen those who are still under foreign domination.”⁶⁰ Thus, his ascension into a position of political power as Ghana’s first President, during such a vital time for the African continent, positioned him well to promote the Pan-African movement as he saw it. In his Independence Day speech, he clarified Ghana’s role in the aspiration of Pan-African

⁵⁷ Ibid., x.

⁵⁸ Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism*. (Harlow: Longmans, 1969).

⁵⁹ Ibid., 126-127.

⁶⁰ Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*. xi.

unity, famously stating “Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent.”⁶¹

Soon after, this idea of Ghanaian independence as inherently linked with the entire continent’s transformed from a Pan-African idea into a political project. First passionately pitched at the All-African People’s Conference in 1958, one of Nkrumah’s pivotal contributions to the Pan-African movement was his vision for a federated African continent. While he was not alone in his vision for a federation— in fact there were several regionalisms forming at the time that sought similar aspirations (e.g. the Mali Federation, Ghana-Guinea Federation etc.), Nkrumah’s calls for the creation of a “United African States” became the primary political manifesto in the pursuit of Pan-African unity. This was to be upheld by the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963: an organizational body meant to mimic the structure of the newly established European Union, in which African nations could negotiate trade, build political partnerships, and maintain a united front against the continued threat of colonialism. In *Africa Must Unite* (1963), his most celebrated work and the primary programmatic document coinciding with the OAU’s founding conference, he explicates this call to action:

If we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefits of Africa’s rich resources, we must unite to plan for our total defence [sic] and the full exploitation of our material and human means, in the full interests of all our peoples. ‘To go it alone’ will limit our horizons, curtail our expectations, and threaten our liberty.⁶²

⁶¹ Kwame Nkrumah, “Ghana’s Independence 6th March 1957,” BBC FOUR, March 6, 1957, Video of Speech, 5:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOEdJDdz690&t=173s>.

⁶² Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*. (London: Heinemann, 1963), xvii.

He urges that Africans must form a united front against external forces who threaten the “very existence of the independent African states.”⁶³ In doing so he makes a key distinction, that the expulsion of colonial powers and the subsequent establishment of African states was the first, but not the final necessary step towards decolonization. Rather, as his call to action suggests, decolonization requires total African unity; although the OAU sought to foster political and economic unity primarily, these could not be realized without cultural unity, as insisted within Nkrumah’s concept of “African Personality.”

While it is important to note that the concept of African personality often differs in definition, Nkrumah’s deployed the term as, “the rallying point of all African peoples and countries under one banner and forum, and their speaking together in one concerted voice for the realization of Africa's political freedom and economic development.”⁶⁴ Nkrumah’s definition drew upon Edward Wilmot Blyden’s insistence that the African must, “advance by methods of his own...to find out his own place and his work, develop his peculiar gifts and powers; and for training of the Negro youth upon the basis of their own idiosyncrasies, with a sense of race individuality, self-respect and liberty...”⁶⁵

Whereas, prior to Nkrumah’s use of the term, African personality was the African right to self-definition and identification, it took a new political and economic shape in the era of African independence movements. This serves, in-part, as a direct response to the violent assimilation imposed upon all facets of African life to the ‘European Personality’. Although some scholars

⁶³ Ibid, xvii.

⁶⁴ F. I. Ogunmodede, “African Personality in African Perspectives,” *BODIJA JOURNAL | A Philosophico-Theological Journal* 5 (June 8, 1993), 24., <https://acjoi.org/index.php/bodija/article/view/1149>.

⁶⁵ Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide / Colin Legum*, Books That Matter (New York: Praeger, 1962), 21-22.

have watered African personality down to the “anglicized version of Négritude,”⁶⁶ it rather utilizes the rhetoric of cultural pride and communalism purported in the Négritude movement for the pursuit of an explicit agenda of political and economic development. As F. Ogunmodede elucidates: “Negritude is related to African personality by emphasizing the attainment of political unity in Africa through the cultural awareness and the spiritual and moral content of our cultural heritage.”⁶⁷ Therefore, an affirmation of a shared personality would serve as the foundation for a shared future; one which allows African nations to develop outside of the constraints of the European models which have served to reconstitute their subordination. African personality thus establishes cultural unity through humanist principles as a pre-existing condition for the political and economic unity mandated by Nkrumah’s vision of a united Africa. Nkrumah further elucidates that in economic terms, this implies the creation of a system that reflects communal ownership, collective responsibility, and social welfare, gesturing to an African orientation toward socialism.

Nkrumah was explicit in his conviction that Pan-African liberation could only be pursued if the newly independent African states rejected faithful adherence to the political, cultural, and economic tools used for their domination—capitalism being one of the primary tools under colonialism and modern international systems which disadvantage African economies.⁶⁸ As African nations won their independence, very few leaders understood capitalism and/or liberalism as appropriate economic development models for African realities.⁶⁹ Such realities

⁶⁶ Elspeth Huxley, “Some Observations on the African Personality,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 38, no. 1 (1962): 80.

⁶⁷ Ogunmodede, “African Personality in African Perspectives.” 25.

⁶⁸ Deji Adesoye, “African Socialism in Nkrumah and Nyerere,” no. 216 (2017), 5.

⁶⁹ Alex Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics.*, 2nd ed. (London ; Routledge, 2004), 37.

include the conflicts which arise within the African conscience due to the outside influence on African traditional society and value systems. As such, Nkrumah like many other leaders during the golden age, looked toward various models of socialism as the future of African development. However, he was careful not to blindly adhere to the Marxist model but to establish an economic model that combines the best elements of various systems, while being rooted in African values and addressing African challenges— what he called, Consciencism.⁷⁰

Ghana became the site of this Pan-African mixed-economy experiment, and the economic policies and directives of Nkrumah's CPP reflect such. In an attempt to decrease Ghanaian economic reliance on cocoa exports, they launched several projects to diversify and centralize their economy. His government pursued rapid industrialization through state ownership and control of key industries, establishing state-owned enterprises in sectors like manufacturing, energy and mining.⁷¹ One of their most ambitious projects, the volta river hydroelectric scheme, led to the creation of the Volta River Authority (VRA) and Akosombo Dam to provide hydroelectric power for Ghana's various industrialization projects.⁷² They even created a national shipping company called "The Black Star Line," paying homage to Garvey's influence on Nkrumah's political philosophy and the new nation's Pan-African aspirations. Further, the CPP under Nkrumah promoted and incentivized agricultural cooperatives among farmers as to pool resources and share profits. One state-run agricultural cooperative, the Workers' Brigade, aimed

⁷⁰ Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism; Philosophy and Ideology for de-Colonization.*, [Rev. ed.]. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970).

⁷¹ Ghana. Office of the Planning Commission. *Seven-Year Plan for National Reconstruction and Development*. Accra, Ghana: Office of the Planning Commission, 1964.
https://ndpc.gov.gh/media/Ghana_7_Year_Development_Plan_1963-4_1969-70_1964.pdf

⁷² *Ibid.*, 203-215.

to increase food production and provide employment in the agricultural sector.⁷³ Generally, social welfare programs were established and/or expanded during this period as well. Programs like the Accelerated Development plan for Education expanded access to free education, and others expanded free access to healthcare across the region. In regard to trade, Ghana adopted Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) to reduce dependence on imports and build local industries. The CPP provided incentives and protections for domestic industries by creating state-owned industries for their most foreign-reliant materials, such as the Tema Steel Works to reduce reliance on imported steel.⁷⁴ These are just a few of the many projects implemented during Nkrumah's presidency which expanded access to vital resources and rapidly increased industrialization. Through a unique approach which synthesizes capitalist and socialist economic models, his economic policy emphasizes state-led initiatives and social welfare to address economic disparities and align with traditional communal values. This aimed to create a distinct African development path that balanced progress and self-reliance, resonating with his vision of Pan-African liberation and economic sovereignty.

The insertion of Nkrumah's African personality into the Pan-African landscape signals a critical shift in the orientation of its leadership. This merging of the political, cultural, and economic spheres of the movement raises questions about the validity of the partitions built between them. As we have explored, both Garvey and Du Bois understood these spheres as being separate and disagreed on which form of progress and/or unity took primacy. However, Nkrumah's use of African Personality insists that cultural unity already exists within Africans,

⁷³ Ibid., 53-88.

⁷⁴ Ibid., xxi.

and it is the lens through which political and economic progress must be sought.⁷⁵ With Ghana serving as an example to the rest of the continent, Nkrumah's leadership demonstrated the interconnectedness of cultural, political, and economic unity and progress within the Pan-African vision. By implementing policies that blended socialist and capitalist elements, he sought to align economic development with African values, while also advocating for political independence and cultural unity. This synthesis became a guiding principle for African nations seeking to chart their own course, free from the constraints of colonialism and aligned with a shared African destiny.

While Nkrumah's vision for African unity and development was ambitious and groundbreaking, he faced significant challenges balancing visionary leadership with pragmatic governance which eventually served to undermine his authority as Ghana's president and further as a leader of the Pan-African movement. His insistence that Ghana would remain an example to other African nations seeking to implement Pan-African economic and political policies, opened the movement under his leadership to significant criticisms and resistance on the ground.⁷⁶ The theories in Nkrumah's writing often differed from their implementation in Ghana, particularly in the economic sphere. Nkrumah's extensive state-led industrialization projects, while visionary, were often criticized for their inefficiencies and over-ambitious scale, leading to economic strain and unsustainable debt. Though he preached self-reliance and the creation of African-serving economies, many projects were heavily funded by foreign aid, including from previous colonial powers, undermining this proposed stance. Du Bois specifically took concern with his economic

⁷⁵ Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*. (London: Heinemann, 1963), 132-133.

⁷⁶ Matteo Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization*, 1st ed. 2018., African Histories and Modernities (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91325-4>.

policy, as he wrote to Nkrumah's mentor George Padmore that Nkrumah's acceptance of foreign aid and adherence to a mixed economy reflected that he may not "sufficiently appreciate the power and danger of Western capital" and that any form of capitalism, even reformed, would be dangerous for Ghana's development long term.⁷⁷ Although Nkrumah moved closer towards scientific socialism after 1960, he did not fully appreciate the validity of Du Bois warnings' until after he was overthrown in 1966. As such, the Ghanaian economy under Nkrumah was full of contradictions and perceived barriers to the African progress and unity he preached.

From within Ghana, there were concerns that Nkrumah's focus on rapid modernization often overlooked the importance of grassroots involvement and traditional economic practices, leading to disconnects between government policies and local needs. In fact, although Nkrumah came into prominence as a champion of trade unionism, these same workers unions were substantially stifled under his presidency. B. A. Bentum, the Secretary-General of the Trades Union Congress of Ghana wrote that "Kwame Nkrumah destroyed the free trade union movement in Ghana and attempted to extend this on the African continent" further urging the workers of Africa to "put aside the sterile, and futile arguments of the past, which have only divided us and left us vulnerable to our enemies, (...) and rather fight together for the well-being of all African workers."⁷⁸ Such accusations of union-busting only further fueled concerns over his authoritarian tendencies, as he increasingly centralized power and stifled political opposition. The Convention People's Party (CPP) became the sole legal party in Ghana, and Nkrumah developed a personality cult, which contradicted the democratic principles he initially

⁷⁷ Mari Afari-Gyan Kwadwo, "Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore and W.E. B Du Bois," *Institute of African Studies Research Review* 7, no. 1 (January 1991): 5, https://doi.org/10.10520/AJA19852007_93.

⁷⁸ B. A. Bentum, *Trade Unions in Chains. Ghana: Trades Union Congress (Ghana), 1967.*, vi.

championed.⁷⁹ This raised concerns that his vision for a “United African States” was primarily motivated by a desire to expand his political power, substantially undermining this vision.

At the root of these hesitations toward Nkrumah’s leadership, is that Nkrumah’s broader continental ambitions often led him to cut corners for the sake of rapid development and continental integration. In the transition towards national liberation, Nkrumah’s shortcomings speak to a greater dilemma for Pan-African statesmen, in which they must reconcile their national and Pan-African priorities. His drive for immediate and sweeping changes sometimes compromised the careful planning and implementation needed for sustainable progress, leading to inefficiencies and contradictions in his policies as he sought to achieve a united Africa. His approach was marked by a sense of urgency and idealism, which resonated in many ways with the aspirations of various African leaders during the “golden age” of Pan-Africanism. Nkrumah’s vision for African unity was closely aligned with his belief in continental independence, socialist egalitarianism, and the concept of “African Personality,” reflecting his deep commitment to Pan-African ideals. However, in practice, his shortcomings in governing Ghana led many to consider a different, more gradual and pragmatic approach to achieving similar goals. Nkrumah’s contemporary, Julius Nyerere, offered a stark alternative to this vision. While there were several convergences in their ideologies, Nyerere believed in building unity through a more cautious and step-by-step process: advocating for regional unity between individual states as a precursor to continental unity. This study now turns to his Pan-African imagination, as his approach highlights the tension between those seeking a future for African nationhood and the vision of African unity.

⁷⁹ Yakubu Saaka, “Recurrent Themes in Ghanaian Politics: Kwame Nkrumah’s Legacy,” *Journal of Black Studies* 24, no. 3 (1994): 263–80.

Julius Nyerere and Gradual Unity

On the surface, it would appear that there are overwhelming similarities between Julius Nyerere's Pan-African philosophy and Kwame Nkrumah's. As the first president of independent Tanganyika and then, Tanzania (uniting Tanganyika and Zanzibar), Nyerere stood to be a leader of East Africa, in the same way that Nkrumah was to West Africa. Like Nkrumah, Nyerere advocated for a unique form of African socialism he called Ujamaa to be the future of African economic development. He too called for the unification of African states politically, economically, and culturally, as to pursue their liberated future, and when Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup, Nyerere took over as head of the OAU. It is surprising, then, that in their early days of political leadership, the two vehemently disagreed on how their shared vision of African unity would be realized. It is through their tensions, the crux of which Nyerere labeled the "Dilemma of the Pan-Africanist," that we examine the unraveling of the golden age of the Pan-African movement.⁸⁰ As Pan-Africanism's center shifted to the continent, and became usurped into the national liberation movements, the conflicts between a territorial nationalism and Pan-African nationalism slowly revealed.

Although Nyerere's biography read very similarly to that of his contemporary African leaders, his entrance into the Pan-African network was not as straightforward as giants such as Nkrumah. His affinity for Pan-Africanism or African unity more generally did not happen in the university library during his studies in Britain whilst reading the philosophies of Marcus Garvey or CLR James as it did for Nkrumah in the United States. Instead, it was Nkrumah himself who sparked his commitment to the greater African liberation struggle.

⁸⁰ Julius Nyerere, "The Dilemma of the Pan-Africanist," July 13, 1966, reprinted in *Blackpast*, August 7, 2009.

When he arrived in the UK, just four years after the pivotal Manchester Congress, the tenants of Pan Africanism and the spirit of its leadership had imprinted there. Nyerere remembers this time fondly, as he saw the firsthand effects of self-determination movements across the continent and greater Third World:

The significance of India's independence movement was that it shook the British Empire. When Gandhi succeeded, I think it made the British lose the will to cling to empire. But it was events in Ghana in 1949 that fundamentally changed my attitude. When Kwame Nkrumah was released from prison this produced a transformation. I was in Britain and oh you could see it in the Ghanaians! They became different human beings, different from all the rest of us! The thing of freedom began growing inside all of us. Under the influence of these events, while at university in Britain, I made up my mind to be a full-time political activist when I went back home.⁸¹

Despite being inspired by his Ghanaian peers in Britain, and the independence movement led by Nkrumah, he did not fully commit to politics until 1954. He had finished his studies and returned to Tanganyika in 1953, but it was his being elected as president of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), a new political organization, that led to this commitment. However, although he had been inspired by Nkrumah, at the time, he did not see Pan-African unity as the paramount goal as Nkrumah did. He saw Ghanaian independence as confirmation that sovereignty was possible and foreseeable for Tanganyika, and he spent his early political career advocating for this territorial nationalism.

TANU under Nyerere's leadership developed a strategy for independence that was non-violent, non-militant, and focused its efforts on mass mobilization, political education, and gradual constitutional reform. As such, Nyerere's politics stood as a moderate contrast to the revolutionary thought of Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, making him more palatable to some international actors. By the time it was announced in 1960 that Tanganyika would become an independent state, Nyerere, who had taken several diplomacy tours to the United States to

⁸¹ Julius Nyerere, interview by Ikaweba Buntin, *New Internationalist Magazine*, no.309, January-February 1999.

gain international support for TANU's movement, had become known as "Africa's most promising statesmen" in western media. But while the western media had written him off as "boyish and quiet," harmless in comparison to the threat imposed by other African leaders, Nyerere's political orientation had begun evolving away from Tanganyikan nationalism and towards a Pan-African one.⁸²

When Tanganyika was on the brink of independence, Nyerere had come to realize that state sovereignty could be a potential barrier to continental integration. Like Nkrumah, he believed that the future of African politics lies in the possibility of United African States, however, he was sure that regional unity would be a precursor to this ideal Africa. He knew that individual state sovereignty was inevitable, and with that came the same nationalisms that he had once championed in Tanganyika. In his view, the continued balkanization of African states as caused by arbitrary colonial border drawing would ensure their vulnerability to further colonial and neo-colonial interference. Without total unity, these states would never be adequate instruments of development or strong enough to withstand the continued threat of imperialism. Although continental unity was the eventual goal, he did not see that this would be practically achieved within the urgency it required in the face of this threat. Moreover, he feared that once states began to develop their own territorial nationalism, they would no longer be interested in the sacrifices required to achieve continental unification—a change in enthusiasm he had witnessed firsthand within his own region.⁸³ As such, he believed that forming regional federations would allow for easier collaboration toward total unification later; arguing that fewer

⁸² Seth M. Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run: Tanzania, Black Power, and the Uncertain Future of Pan-Africanism, 1964–1974*, 1st ed., Ruth Simms Hamilton African Diaspora (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017), 9., <https://doi.org/10.14321/j.ctt1qd8zk3>.

⁸³ Julius Nyerere, "Freedom and Unity," *Transition*, no. 14 (1964): 44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2934587>.

states would mean fewer political disagreements. By 1963, Nyerere placed his complete faith in the formation of the East African federation: a project which sought to unite Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and later Zanzibar. He wrote to several African statesmen to spread the good news, that they had begun making progress to achieving a unified Africa. In a letter to Jomo Kenyatta expressing the necessity of this unification project, Nyerere divulged:

As I understand it – and certainly from Tanganyika’s point of view – we want it because we have been forced to recognise how weak our individual States as instruments are for the social revolution that must complete the work begun by the Freedom struggle. This is true of the whole continent. (Nyerere to Kenyatta, 1963)⁸⁴

The announcement of the project came shortly after Nkrumah’s publication of *Africa Must Unite*, which had insurmountably failed to gain traction amongst African statesmen. Unlike the proposal of a United African States, the East African Federation received a mix of positive and negative responses. Nkrumah was particularly antagonistic to this project, as Nyerere would later accuse him of deliberately sabotaging its success.⁸⁵ Whereas Nyerere saw the creation of tens of individual sovereign states as obstacles to continental unity, Nkrumah saw the same in the establishment of federations. In a heated written exchange, the two expressed their lack of faith in one another’s perceived path toward unity. Although Nkrumah had once attempted and failed at a regional federation himself in the Ghana-Guinea bloc, he insisted that “federation qua federation creates nothing,” suggesting that the gradual approach to unity Nyerere proposed was the work of the imperialists.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Julius Nyerere, to J. Kenyatta, July 6, 1963, in “Julius Nyerere: From a Territorial Nationalist to a Pan-African Nationalist,” by Ng’wanza Kamata, *The African Review* Vol. 46, no. 2 (2019): 318.

⁸⁵ Basil Davidson, *Black Star: A View Of The Life And Times Of Kwame Nkrumah*, 1st edition. (Routledge, 2019)., 188.

⁸⁶ Kwame Nkrumah, to J. Nyerere, July 4, 1963, in “Julius Nyerere: From a Territorial Nationalist to a Pan-African Nationalist,” by Ng’wanza Kamata, *The African Review* Vol. 46, no. 2 (2019): 321.

The East African Federation failed soon after this exchange, however, Nyerere's plan for gradual integration saw victory in Tanganyika's union with neighboring Zanzibar just a few months later. In April of 1964, the two states merged to form Tanzania, with Nyerere as head of the new state. This re-invigorated Nyerere's stance on regionalist integration and bolstered his reputation as a committed Pan-Africanist, having proven his willingness to surrender "sovereignty in the name of greater unity."⁸⁷ Even more helpful for his credibility was that the revolution in Zanzibar had been far more radical than Tanganyika's, and thus onlookers saw this as a sign that the once moderate politics of Nyerere had begun to shift further left.⁸⁸ Even if, however, he was still to the right of Nkrumah and the other 'idealists' within the African Union. Emboldened by his ascending reputation, Nyerere took his grievances with Nkrumah's accusations to the second ever OAU meeting, held in Cairo in July of that year. Nyerere responded in defense of his original proposal in saying:

...whether short or long [achieving African unity] is a process and a process by definition is progress step by step. (...) To say that the step-by-step method was invented by the imperialists is to reach the limits of absurdity. I have heard the imperialists blamed for many things, but not for the limitations of mankind. They are not God!⁸⁹

During this speech Nyerere launched several criticisms at Nkrumah and his call for immediate unity, whilst defending his own state's personal commitment to African unity. This public dispute between them exposed the disunity between African statesmen in the OAU, and the tensions that had festered in the path toward unity. This was especially alarming to civil rights

⁸⁷ Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity= Uhuru Na Umoja; a Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65* (London: Oxford U.P., 1967), 302.

⁸⁸ While some saw this as a sign of Nyerere's shift, others (including Babu the prime minister of Zanzibar with whom he negotiated the union) suspected that this merge was the work of western powers who sought to tame the revolutionary fervor of the Zanzibari people and government.

⁸⁹ Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity= Uhuru Na Umoja; a Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65*. 302.

activist Malcolm X, who was in attendance of this meeting upon Nyerere's invitation and noted his concerns about the disagreements between the statesmen in his diary.⁹⁰

Malcolm X's attendance was not an anomaly, but in fact was just the beginning of Nyerere's long strive towards re-bridging the divide between Africans at home and those in the diaspora. As I have discussed so far, the second wave was marked by a return toward the continent, in which the movement's primary leadership was the new generation of African political elite. However, some Pan-African leaders were determined to build stronger ties with leading thinkers and activists from the new world. Nyerere was particularly successful in this endeavor. As a result of their disagreement during the second OAU meeting, Nyerere had become increasingly influential as an opposing voice to Nkrumah's idealist vision. In the following year, Nyerere and Tanzania became further involved in the resistance movements across southern Africa (Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Northern and southern Rhodesia), offering not only public political and economic support, but arms and weaponry.⁹¹ By the time that Nkrumah was exiled from Ghana by the 1966 coup, doubts about Nyerere's commitment to the Pan-African agenda had been quelled by his leadership efforts and frequent diplomacy tours overseas. With Nkrumah in exile, the Pan-African movement on the continent and internationally looked to Tanzania as its head, as Nyerere's government was the only state with the capacity and influence to ascend to such leadership.⁹²

In early 1967, the TANU national executive committee drafted the Arusha Declaration, "a document detailing the socialist principles and values that were to guide the country towards

⁹⁰ Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run*. 27.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 10.

postcolonial liberation.”⁹³ This document, titled “Ujamaa na Kujitegemea” (Kiswahili for “Socialism and Self-Reliance”), with Nyerere as its primary architect served to reinforce Tanzania’s role as a non-aligned nation, forging a new socialist-oriented economic initiative “in Tanzanian terms.”⁹⁴ Prior to this, Nyerere had written extensively about a need for a new African Socialism as a vehicle for their return to the communalism indigenous to African societies—a sentiment strikingly similar to Nkrumah’s. However, Tanzania was the first state to truly transform this rhetoric into political practice. The five-part document detailed both economic policy and requirements for the ethics of both TANU politicians and all Tanzanian citizens in order to adopt a “socialist attitude of mind” and prevent abuses of power within the government.⁹⁵ Despite it being a policy primarily concerned with domestic policy, it also had explicit directives for Tanzania’s role in the Pan-African movement, making written commitments to defending the independence of all African states, and implicitly inserting itself in the fight against South African apartheid. In one swift move, the Arusha Declaration solidified Tanzania’s role as a leading state for African economic development, deepened its ties with the international non-alignment movement, and reasserted its commitment to pursuing African liberation.

In order to achieve the economic development goals laid out in the Arusha Declaration, Nyerere launched the Afro-American Skills Bank program — a policy manifestation of the “Talented Tenth” ideal once proposed by Du Bois. This transnational initiative was established to address Tanzania’s skilled labor shortage by recruiting African American skilled technicians to

⁹³ Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run*. 48-49.

⁹⁴ Tanzania. The Publicity Section, TANU. *The Arusha Declaration and TANU’s Policy on Socialism and Self-Reliance*. Dar Es Salaam: The Publicity Section, TANU, 1967. <https://library.fes.de/fulltext/bibliothek/2-tanzania-s0019634.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity= Uhuru Na Umoja; a Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65*. 162.

live and work in Tanzania on temporary government contracts. These invitations to come work in Tanzania ranged from mechanical engineers to historians to architects and beyond. Where the program saw most of its success, however, was in the university, where scholars were invited to the university of Dar Es Salaam to further the mission of self-reliance through education. That is, to:

encourage the development of a proud, independent, and free citizenry which relies upon itself for its own development, and which knows the advantages and the problems of co-operation. It must ensure that the educated know themselves to be an integral part of the nation and recognize the responsibility to give greater service the greater the opportunities they have had.⁹⁶

This attracted the Pan-African intellectuals who sought to teach a new generation of Pan-African thinkers and participate in the future-building of African unity. One of the most notable leaders to relocate during this time was Jamaican scholar and activist Walter Rodney. Seth Markle succinctly describes the impact and significance of Rodney's place at the Dar Es Salaam school in writing:

[Rodney's] experience in Tanzania was a part of a broader migratory trend, revealing how the diasporic relationship to Tanzanian nation-building was moving from theory to practice, from diplomatic visits and tours to long-term relocation. This transition from a rhetoric of political friendship to active participation within clearly defined labor roles was primarily due to the consistent demonstrations of committed leadership on the part of President Nyerere (i.e., the Arusha Declaration, "Education for Self-Reliance," and the TANU leadership code). The president had recognized that intellectuals had a role to play in the production of socialist, skilled technicians, and diaspora activists seized upon this developmental need.⁹⁷

This program offered a framework in which diasporic Africans could tangibly contribute to the nation-building process on the African continent. Not only were Nyerere's initiatives beneficial for the Tanzanian nation building project, but they served to re-bridge the gap between the

⁹⁶ Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism. Uhuru Na Ujamaa; a Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1965-1967* [by] Julius K. Nyerere (New York, Dar Es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968). 290.

⁹⁷ Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run*. 103.

African continent and the New World in making strides toward African unity. These efforts culminated in hosting of the sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar Es Salaam, held in 1974. It brought together activists, politicians, scholars, and leaders from all corners of the world to discuss the state of African Unity. Soon after, however, Tanzania would fall out of prominence within the Pan-African movement, as failures of Nyerere's state building and his leadership transnationally began to raise questions about the true intentions behind his Pan-African strategies.

Despite the ambitious ideals of Ujamaa, and the Arusha Declaration, Julius Nyerere's implementation of African socialism in Tanzania faced significant criticism and numerous challenges. These criticisms largely focus on the economic inefficacies, forced nature of villagization, and the socio-political ramifications of his policies. Ujamaa, based on the principle of collective farming and self-reliance, aimed to return to pre-colonial African communal living. However, this vision did not translate effectively into practical economic development. While the policy was ideologically appealing, it lacked practical mechanisms for sustainable development and economic growth.⁹⁸ The collectivization process often led to decreased agricultural productivity due to poor planning, inadequate resources, and lack of motivation among the farmers. Many villagers were resistant to abandoning their traditional ways of farming and lifestyle, leading to widespread discontent and inefficiency. Moreover, the global economic environment of the 1970s, characterized by rising oil prices and declining commodity prices, exacerbated the challenges Tanzania faced. The country's reliance on agricultural exports for foreign exchange earnings proved to be a significant vulnerability, and consequently, the

⁹⁸ Joel Samoff, "Crises and Socialism in Tanzania," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 19, no. 2 (June 1981): 279–306, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00016943>.

Tanzanian economy struggled to achieve the levels of growth anticipated under Ujamaa, leading to increased poverty and economic stagnation.⁹⁹

The villagization campaigns, a key component of Ujamaa, aimed to create centralized villages to facilitate easier access to social services and promote collective farming. However, these campaigns often involved the forced relocation of rural populations, which led to significant upheaval and resistance.¹⁰⁰ Critics argue that this forced nature undermined the voluntary, communal spirit that Ujamaa purported to uphold. Scholars such as Priya Lal have documented numerous cases of coercion and resistance, noting that the abrupt displacement of communities disrupted traditional social structures and farming practices.¹⁰¹ The new villages were often poorly planned and lacked essential infrastructure, further contributing to the failure of agricultural production. The forced villagization alienated many Tanzanians from Nyerere's vision, leading to social unrest and a loss of faith in the government's policies.

The socio-political impacts of Nyerere's policies were also profound. While Nyerere's commitment to egalitarian principles and anti-corruption was commendable, the authoritarian implementation of Ujamaa policies drew criticism. The top-down approach often disregarded local knowledge and preferences, leading to policies that were poorly suited to the diverse needs of Tanzanian communities.¹⁰² Strikingly similar to Nkrumah's CPP, Nyerere's government was accused of suppressing dissent and maintaining a single-party state to ensure the implementation

⁹⁹ Ibid., 301.

¹⁰⁰ Christy Cannon Lorgen, "The Experience of Villagisation : Lessons from Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania," 2012, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Experience-of-Villagisation-%3A-Lessons-from-%2C-%2C-Lorgen/fbcae2ef1f80e7511699d06acc3e7e450d1dfe7d>.

¹⁰¹ Priya Lal, "Militants, Mothers, and the National Family: 'Ujamaa', Gender, and Rural Development in Postcolonial Tanzania," *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 1 (2010): 1–20.

¹⁰² Zaki Ergas, "Why Did the Ujamaa Village Policy Fail? -- Towards a Global Analysis," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 18, no. 3 (1980): 387–410.

of its policies. This political centralization and lack of democratic freedoms were seen as contradictory to the ideals of liberation and self-determination that had initially inspired the Tanzanian independence movement. As a result, while Nyerere remained a respected figure internationally, domestically, his policies were met with increasing opposition.¹⁰³

Julius Nyerere's vision for African socialism and Pan-African unity, despite its shortcomings, was innovative and inspiring to other Pan-Africanist statemen. However, the practical implementation of Ujamaa and the villagization campaigns highlighted significant challenges and criticisms. The economic inefficiencies, forced relocations, and socio-political ramifications revealed the complexities of translating ideological principles into effective governance and sustainable development. These issues mirror the criticisms faced by Nkrumah, who also struggled with the practical application of his Pan-African ideals in the face of economic and political realities. Both leaders, despite their different approaches to achieving African unity, encountered the inherent difficulties of balancing visionary goals with the practicalities of nation-building. Nyerere's legacy, therefore, is a blend of commendable aspirations and practical shortcomings, offering valuable lessons for future efforts towards African unity and development, just as Nkrumah's experiences continue to inform contemporary discussions on the path to a unified and prosperous Africa. Although Tanzania slowly fell out of prominence in the Pan-African movement in the late 1970's, Nyerere's leadership left an indelible mark on the landscape of the Pan-African movement as it moved from the realm of ideas into political practice.

Despite their differing approaches, Nkrumah and Nyerere shared several key principles. Both leaders sought the creation and implementation of a new African Socialism, which adjusted

¹⁰³ Ibid., 390.

existing socialist ideals within the context of African realities. Nkrumah's Consciencism and Nyerere's Ujamaa both emphasized the importance of aligning economic development with African values and traditions. They placed great faith in the political leadership of the continent to guide the masses toward a future of African unity, recognizing that sacrifices in individual state sovereignty were necessary to achieve this goal. This had also become the growing consensus in the African diaspora, as WEB Du Bois wrote in an address titled "The Future of Africa" read by his wife on his behalf:

If Africa unites, it will be because each part, each nation, each tribe gives up part of its heritage for the good of the whole. That is what union means; that is what Pan-Africa means: When the child is born into the tribe the price of his growing up is giving a part of his freedom to the tribe, this he soon learns or dies. When the tribe becomes a union of tribes, the individual tribe surrenders some part of its freedom to the paramount tribe. (1965)

They shared a belief in the need for a collective African identity as a means of rejecting the colonial frameworks underscored their commitment to Pan-African ideals. However, toward the end of the second wave, many Africans began to question the authority of those deciding what sacrifices were to be made. Their diminishing authority as leading voices of African liberation, the shortcomings of their leadership and the consequences of their rivalry on the greater movement will be explored in the following section.

Divergences and Dissent

The narrative between Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah, though converging in the ideals of Pan-Africanism and African socialism, diverges profoundly in their methods and political strategies. This divergence offers a complex layer to the understanding of Pan-Africanism's evolution and the challenges it faced during a critical period in which the vision of

a united Africa contended with the practicalities of national sovereignty and varied political landscapes. As Pan-Africanism shifted from a liberation movement into a *national* liberation movement, each leaders' nation-building experiment significantly reconstituted the relationship between "the people" and their "liberation." This section will discuss how the Pan-African tradition of rivalry became less productive during the second wave, in that it served to alienate, rather than incorporate, "the people" from the movement.

As explored in chapters one and two, segmentation and polycentricism created by rivalries within the movement were particularly productive during the first wave of the Pan-African movement, in that it served to expand the notion of the "people." During the second wave, the tensions between Nkrumah's idealist faction and Nyerere's gradualist faction were partially productive, albeit in a different manner. In the realm of leaders, this rivalry was productive in that it allowed for the continual participation of African statesman who were both revolutionary and conservative in orientation. All Pan-African statesmen were united in Nkrumah's proposed vision for African unity: the establishment of a United African States as the primary vehicle for achieving Pan-African "liberation." However, differences between African statesmen in their political orientation necessitated leadership that spoke to both the revolutionary and conservative Pan-African elite. In the establishment of the idealist and gradualist factions, Nkrumah and Nyerere offered two distinct examples of how these statesmen could construct their own nation-building experiments, whilst making progress toward this Pan-African nationalism. Moreover, their efforts to build transnational solidarities with prominent Black leaders in the diaspora allowed leaders of varying political orientations to find their place within the movement's second wave. This connection was deepened, with the creation of the

OAU (since renamed the African Union), as there was now an institutional body to ensure all-African leaders would make continued progress toward their shared goal of African unity.

The most significant innovation of the second wave was that it centered on achieving national sovereignty. This offered a partial remedy to the greatest failure of the first wave, in that it reified the Pan-Africanist's commitment to restoring the African right to self-determination and governance. Such an innovation substantially revived the dignity of the African. However, this shift also proposed challenges within the movement, as it served to restrict the "people" and their involvement in pursuing "liberation." Whereas those Africans "at-home" were able to directly fight for sovereignty in their respective states, they became the central "people" of the second wave. The "people" would then be further restricted by the differing Pan-African visions of their respective state leaders. In Chapter three of Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, he warns against placing all hope for revolutionary change in the hands of the state, as the state, and its new political elite will often prioritize its own stability and interest over those of the people it is meant to serve. Instead of fostering true national consciousness and advancing the interests of the broader population, this new bourgeois nationalist elite often seek to replace the colonial rulers and merely take over their privileges and power. Fanon argues that this behavior leads to a continuation of exploitation and underdevelopment, albeit under new, indigenous leaders, rather than achieving the liberation and social justice that independence was supposed to bring.¹⁰⁴ As Fanon warned, the new Pan-African leadership, while visionary, often struggled to connect with or address the grassroots and practical realities of the average African.

This gap between the "people" and the leadership was not entirely new to the Pan-African movement. As we saw during the first wave, Du Bois's legacy intertwined

¹⁰⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth; Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre ; Translated by Constance Farrington.*, First Evergreen Black Cat Edition., An Evergreen Black Cat Book ; B-149 (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1968).

intellectualism with the Pan-African leadership and distinguished the intellectual (highly educated) as having greater liberatory capacity. This was reified during the second wave by Nyerere and Nkrumah, other Pan-African leaders of the time like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Leopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau. Most, if not all, were educated in Europe, and while some scholars like Ali Mazrui (2003) applaud the persisting leadership of intellectuals, many Africans on the ground began to question and challenge it. This gap between the intellectual bourgeois nationalist elite and the every-day African significantly fractured an already strained relationship between the “leaders” and the “people” of the Pan-African movement—not only within the continent, but across the diaspora.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, during the first wave, movement participants (both the people and the leadership) were not inherently restricted to follow the ideologies of Garvey, Du Bois, or any other Pan-African leader of the era. Although they spoke to distinct audiences, such audiences were free to choose which Pan-African faction they believed in or whether they did at all. During the second wave, however, the repressive actions of the state in either nation-building experiment created consequences for choosing a different Pan-African ideology. As such, citizens of Pan-African states were required to participate in the movement as their respective leaders saw fit, regardless of if they believed in it. In the cases of both Tanzania and Ghana (as well as various other Pan-African states), dissent from the Pan-African vision enforced by the state was met with violent repression. Moreover, as Nkrumah and Nyerere became the most central architects of the second wave, the failures of their leadership in their respective states could easily be transcribed as failures of the movement in its entirety. Thus, while the “people” of the movement and the definition of “liberation” was already restricted by it becoming centered

¹⁰⁵ Opoku Agyeman, *The Failure of Grassroots Pan-Africanism: The Case of the All-African Trade Union Federation*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003).

on African state sovereignty, the rivalry between Nyerere and Nkrumah further restricted the ways the people could participate in their own liberation movement.

Fanon's central warning is at the crux of the greatest failures of the second wave. The explored narrative underscores a crucial phase in Pan-Africanism where the movement's ideals were tested against the practical realities of post-colonial state-building. The failures and successes of both leaders provide insightful reflections on the challenges of translating ideological visions into practical outcomes. As the 1970s came to an end, the momentum of the Pan-African movement began to shift. The euphoria of independence gave way to the harsh realities of governance and development, causing fragmentation that would serve to weaken the movement. Countless of the movement's prominent leaders (oftentimes those from the most radical factions) would face assassination, an otherwise early death, or be forced into obscurity. Moreover, the movement that had been largely defined by national liberation had seen this come to fruition. The resulting weakness of the movement would be the biggest problem facing the Pan-Africanist movement during the 1980's. Amongst a diminishing sense of purpose and an even more depleted reservoir of leading voices, the major geopolitical shifts of the 1980s only exacerbated a relatively hostile climate for the aspirations of Pan-Africanism. With the intensification of Cold War tensions, the ever-looming nuclear arms race, and the increasing reach of US imperialism, the Pan-Africanist movement found itself in new territory, and thus in need of a new imaginary.

Lessons from the first and second waves displayed a need for a new generation of Pan-Africanists which sought to merge the intellectual and activist factions established in the early 1900s and negotiate radical change with the practical necessities of post-colonial reality. The tradition of rivalry and factionalism between two prominent leaders was proven less useful in the

new global context, as these leaders assumed significant political power. However, as this thesis contends that Thought Leaders have the potential to redefine the movements they lead, I still find exploration into these leaders as necessary for understanding the current state of the movement and its trajectory. Moreover, the increased fracturing of the relationship between the “people” and the “leaders” in the second wave requires the examination of a new leadership which sought to mend this relationship. Thus, I now turn to one leader whose national revolution implemented revolutionary innovations for the future of the Pan-African movement: Thomas Sankara and the Burkinabè Revolution.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Thomas Sankara, the Burkinabè Revolution and the Third Wave

The Revolutionary Moment

Burkina Faso is a small, landlocked country in West Africa that gained its independence from France in 1960 as the Upper Volta (Haute Volta in French). This independence, however, brought about few structural changes. The Upper Volta was not, from the perspective of the French metropole, a reservoir of resources or a truly profitable colony. Outside of the labor of its people and land for cotton plantations, the French colonial administration saw little economic yields from the region, and thus invested little back into it. Of the eight Francophone countries in West Africa, Upper Volta was one of the most underdeveloped; it suffered the lowest literacy rates, highest infant mortality rates, little public infrastructure and generally stunted economic development.¹⁰⁶ This was a continued condition of the state post-independence, and the late 1960s-70s only brought more problems of political instability and corruption. Until the 1980s,

¹⁰⁶ Ernest Harsch, “Thomas Sankara: How the Leader of a Small African Country Left Such a Large Footprint,” *E-International Relations* (blog), November 12, 2023, <https://www.e-ir.info/2023/11/12/thomas-sankara-how-the-leader-of-a-small-african-country-left-such-a-large-footprint/>.

the state played little to no role in either regional or international politics. While the first presidents of neighboring nations produced some of the most prominent figures within and against Pan-Africanist factions (i.e. Leopold Sédar Senghor, Modibo Keita, Felix Houphouët-Boigny, and others), the Upper Volta perpetually took on a stance of non-alignment and neutrality.¹⁰⁷ This legacy of destitution and marginalization was the one inherited by Captain Thomas Sankara when he became the nation's leader.

President Thomas Sankara catapulted Burkina Faso from obscurity into prominence, within the Pan-African movement, the third world, and global stage. In August of 1983, Sankara sat on house arrest, following imprisonment for his insolence against the then-president, Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, for whom he served as Prime Minister. On the fourth, a group of discontented military officers and revolutionaries led by Blaise Compaoré attacked the capital, demanding Sankara's release and the deposition of Ouédraogo. In a later retelling of this night, Ouédraogo accredited his survival to Sankara's mercy for him and his family; as before his release and arrival, his comrades had open fired on several high-ranking officials and aids.¹⁰⁸ After his release, Sankara addressed the country with a radio broadcast, declaring his ascension to presidency, the formation of his Conseil National de la Revolution (CNR), and the ousting of Ouédraogo's CSN. In concluding, he uttered what would become the nation's motto; a slogan he adopted directly from Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution. "La patrie ou la mort, nous vaincrons!" [Homeland or death, we will prevail!].¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Their first president post-independence, Maurice Yameogo, was particularly conservative and empathetic to French involvement in state affairs. This was one of his greatest criticisms and he was later overthrown in the country's first coup.

¹⁰⁸ Brian Peterson. Interview of Boubacar Diawara. March 10, 2013. In *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa* by Brian Peterson. Indiana University Press, 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Adopted from the Spanish: "Patria o Muerte, Venceremos!"

The Burkinabè who lived through these events recall it with varying emotions. It was the fifth military coup since independence, and each came with new fears and uncertainties—this one was no different. Burkinabè youth particularly recall taking to the streets to express their joy and excitement for the future. Some immediately went out in the field to begin their “patriotic duty.”¹¹⁰ It was Sankara’s evocation of the Cuban revolution that sprung them into action. Not just the country’s slogan, but his immediate call for the formation of Revolutionary Defense Committees (CDRs), which were initially formulated for the armed defense of the revolution. This set the tone for the four years to follow. Whereas the previous generation of Pan-African leadership centered their nation-building within a Pan-African framework, from its first public appearance, the CNR aligned their revolution with one of the most prolific communist, anti-imperialist, militaristic, third world revolutions in modern history. This revolutionary fervor inspired the youth, but undoubtedly alienated and confused the nation’s elders, producing a clear generational divide.¹¹¹ This mirrored divisions of similar character brewing across the entire continent, particularly within the Pan-African movement, where the generation of the second wave Pan-Africanist leaders had begun to lose their influence on the new generation of Africans at home and abroad. Thomas Sankara’s militarism signaled a shift toward action-oriented leadership, which had largely subsided in the era following African independence.

The following three sections explore the landscape of Burkina Faso under the leadership of Thomas Sankara and the CNR. Returning to the concepts of the “people,” “liberation,” and leadership, I show that the Burkinabè revolution both represented and influenced major

¹¹⁰ Brian Peterson. Interview of Boubacar Diawara. March 10, 2013. In *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa* by Brian Peterson. Indiana University Press, 2021.

¹¹¹ Brian J. Peterson, *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2021), 2. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1d5nmbk>.

transformations within the Pan-African imaginary, marking a progression toward a third wave. Unlike the leaders explored in the previous two waves, Sankara was not a trained academic with substantial writing on his political philosophy or ideology. Further, due to attempts to silence his existence within the archive, many of his personal writings have been destroyed or are otherwise unavailable. Therefore, my main archival documents for this section are speeches, interviews and newspaper articles published during and after his presidency. These reveal that although the philosophical traditions of the previous two waves directly informed Sankara's directives, he sought to substantially build upon the failures of the second-wave leadership by arguing for a transfer of power back to the "people" of the Pan-African movement. Thus, I argue that the 1980s marks a shift toward a third wave which seeks to heed Sankara's directive, and return to the leaderful, popular movement, characteristic of the proto-Pan Africanist era.

The Leader

Having come of age during the "golden age" of Pan-African leadership, Thomas Sankara held a unique perspective on the failures and successes of the previous generation of African leadership that would later influence his own. Born into a peasant family in Yako, Upper Volta, he excelled in school and throughout his youth was poised to become a priest. However, having been shaped by his own scuffles with settler children as a child and witnessing the revolutionary transformation of his country through independence, he insisted on joining the military. During his time there, he studied under Adama Touré, who exposed him and other politically inclined military trainees to discussions on the Chinese revolution, imperialism, socialism, neocolonialism, Pan-Africanism and other revolutionary perspectives. He would later credit professor Touré's instruction as influential in piquing his intellectual interest in revolutionary thought. Beyond these discussions, his political education was largely shaped by his own reading

and civil service work. He never received a formal education at a western institution; the greatest formative lessons were in his life experiences.

Notably, while stationed in Madagascar, his last year coincided with the famous farmer and student-led revolt, often referred to as the “Rotaka.” There he found himself swept up in the revolutionary spirit of the student protestors, incredibly inspired by the prospect of such radical changes. This was the first time that the young military officer had witnessed true political and social change brought about by popular revolution, a stark contrast to the uneventful independence movement that unfolded in the Upper Volta. These formative moments in his political orientation sat at an intersection of continental and global uprising. His travels and studies allowed him to see revolution in action firsthand and inspired him to continue reading, particularly Marx, Lenin, Fanon, Cabral, and others.¹¹² As a self-taught intellectual, he was careful to learn from what he, and other African youth, perceived as the greatest failures of the “golden age” leadership: an inability to use their intellect to invent new paths forward. He would thus build a political ideology that was markedly eclectic, borrowing what he found useful, leaving what he did not. Rather than merely copy the models created by other ideologues inside and out of Africa, Sankara sought to use the ideas of past and present revolutionaries for his own new experiment.

His youth was a premonition of the type of African leader he would come to embody. He was a formally trained military officer, but, unlike other soldiers-turned-politicians of the era, he had no ties to the French colonial army. He was not a formally trained academic, in that he did not have various degrees from accredited European institutions or published writings. Yet, he was well-read, naturally inquisitive and well versed in political theory and history- designating

¹¹² Guy Martin, “Ideology and Praxis in Thomas Sankara’s Populist Revolution of 4 August 1983 in Burkina Faso,” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 15 (1987): 77–90, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1166927>.

him an intellectual in many regards. As a person, and therefore a leader, Sankara bridged the gap between the African intellectual and the African revolutionary. As Guy Martin (1987) reminds us, this is reminiscent of Marx's celebrated dictum: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point, however, is to change it."¹¹³ Through a Marxist principle, his life experiences and intellect allowed him the creativity to blend ideology with praxis, sparking a new form of leadership I call intellectual activism. The Pan-African movement has always evolved over time and required adaptation, it is just that, as Sankara put it, many of the existing leaders in Africa (and the Third World) were simply too "comfortable" in their leadership to make the adaptations necessary.¹¹⁴ Moreover, such innovations must be guided almost exclusively by the desires and best interest of the "people" in Sankara's Pan-African imaginary. It is now to said "people" that we now direct our analysis of the Burkinabè revolution.

The people

The "people" of the Burkinabè revolution are outlined in the "Political Orientation Speech" delivered by Sankara on October 2, 1983, just shy of his second month as president. The rapid changes in power produced an air of growing uncertainty, and the CNR had to make their intentions known in concrete terms. Sankara's revolutionary ideology drew heavily from various influential thinkers, but he also made significant departures that showcased his inventiveness. His broadcasted words would go on to become the most fundamental programmatic document for the Burkinabè Revolution, and a key facet of Sankara's legacy on the Pan-African movement.

Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci theorized that true revolutionary movements split the world into two camps—those who aim to reproduce systems of inequality by upholding

¹¹³ Ibid., 79.

¹¹⁴ Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. 373-381.

oppressive systems, and those who wish to completely overhaul and dismantle them.¹¹⁵ Sankara, constructing his own revolution, adopted this exact method in his definition of the “people.” He opens the speech with an address to the “voltaic people,” in which he explains their shared past and carves out a path for their future. The speech takes on a didactic tone, where Sankara tells the people of Upper Volta who they are and where they come from; simultaneously producing a narrative about who they are **not**. Because, as he goes on to divulge, if the voltaic people are united in their fight for revolution, who are they fighting against? Or, in his words, “who are the enemies of the people?”¹¹⁶

Much like Kwame Nkrumah, and other Pan-African leaders of the second wave, he understood the primary enemy of the people to be colonialism and its many evolving forms across their “twenty-three years of neo-colonialism.” However, he specifies that the Voltaic bourgeoisie and the reactionary forces in places of power work closely to uphold these imperialist forces, and thus are inextricably linked with the enemy. Therefore, in his references to ‘the [voltaic] people’, he does not mean *all* voltaic people. Because, if the struggle against imperialism has characterized their history, those who have not endured the colonial violence, but rather, benefitted from it, do not share their history. Instead, the voltaic people are the working class (the truest revolutionary force), the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry, and the lumpenproletariat.¹¹⁷ Unlike many of his contemporaries, Sankara specifically called upon women to participate in “all levels” of the revolution, highlighting his progressive stance on

¹¹⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci / Edited and Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith.*, 1e uitgawe (New York: International Publishers, 1983).

¹¹⁶ Conseil National de la Révolution, *Discours d’Orientation Politique prononcé à la Radio-télévision nationale par le Capitaine Thomas Sankara le 2 octobre 1983* (Ouagadougou: Ministère de l’Information, 1983), 87; reproduced in *Thomas Sankara Speaks*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

gender equality within the revolutionary framework.¹¹⁸ For him, those who have a shared history will build a shared future, and this is the people's revolution his regime represents.

However, the “people” are not limited to those within the borders of their small state. He makes many specific references to draw a link between their struggle and other struggles throughout the Third World. While Sankara is cautious not to lump their revolution with *all* revolutions by emphasizing the particular struggles of their state, he does link the voltaic people as he defines them, with the other “wretched of the Earth.”¹¹⁹ Such a reference to Fanon, for those who understood it, would remind them that they are a part of a larger group of colonized peoples. Moreover, this serves as an exclamation point on his intentions to reclaim their history, as Frantz Fanon outlines shared struggle as a foundation of reclaiming African identity and culture.¹²⁰ He referenced Frantz Fanon's notion of the “wretched of the Earth” to emphasize that the Voltaic struggle was part of a larger global struggle of colonized peoples. Fanon's work on shared struggle as a foundation for reclaiming African identity and culture resonated deeply with Sankara, who saw the need to reclaim their history to build a shared future. At the end of the speech when stating the agendas of his new government, he states:

We will give active solidarity in support to national liberation movements fighting for the independence of their countries and the liberation of their peoples. This support is directed in particular: to the Namibian people under the leadership of SWAPO. To the Saharawi people, in their struggle to recover their national territory. To the Palestinian people for their national rights.¹²¹

In doing so, he indicates that the history they share with the global “wretched of the Earth,” will continue in a shared future; exemplified in their continued solidarity and collaboration. This

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 83.

¹²⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth; Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre; Translated by Constance Farrington*.

¹²¹ *Discours d'Orientation Politique*. 109.

would later be reasserted in his address to the UN General Assembly, where he won over the hearts of people across the globe in a passionate expression of solidarity with the “disinherited” people of the Third World:

We would like our words to embrace all who suffer in the flesh and all whose dignity is flouted by a handful of men or by a system that is crushing them. To all of you listening to me, allow me to say: I speak not only on behalf of my beloved Burkina Faso, but also on behalf of all those who are in pain somewhere.¹²²

The “people” for Sankara was reminiscent of Du Bois’s original specification; the “darker races” of the world who have been alienated by western hegemony through various oppressive means. However, Sankara’s earlier evocation of Fanon reminds us of where he and Du Bois differ in their conception of the people. Whereas Du Bois believed the bourgeois had a distinct role in Pan-African liberation, Sankara contends that the bourgeois can never be a true revolutionary force. This exclusion is perhaps necessitated by the lessons of the second-wave leadership, in which the nationalist bourgeois often reified colonial institutions, and hindered progress toward revolutionary emancipation. Thus, Sankara prioritizes and includes the global “disinherited” over the African elite; asserting that class solidarity must take precedence over ethno-racial solidarity.¹²³

It was Sankara’s belief that African unity sought out by the Pan-African movement, and so desperately needed in their continent, would be an achievement led by the African people, not governments or states. Such a unification would come about through their alignment with the other oppressed peoples of the world and third world more generally. He saw himself and other

¹²² Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. 161.

¹²³ Yet still, he encouraged Black Africans to remain proud of their blackness, as he recognized the necessity of reclaiming Blackness as a celebrated identity. This sentiment was famously captured when he declared that the “white house” of African revolutionaries was in “Black Harlem,” underscoring the shared heritage and continued allegiance between Black Africans and Afro-Americans (see “Thomas Sankara Speaks” p. 120)

African leaders as mere agents of the people, borrowing from Fanon in his belief that “the people” were the only legal and legitimate repository of political power.¹²⁴ Explicitly stating in an interview, “I consider myself as someone who has a duty to respect the wishes and demands of the people. I will do as I am told by the people.”¹²⁵ The ultimate goal, for him, was to eventually move beyond the government and the nation-state; shifting the power from a few leaders unified at the top to the masses.

While Thomas Sankara borrowed extensively from Pan-African revolutionary leaders and thinkers like Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, and W.E.B. Du Bois, in his construction of the “people” he was also inventive in his unique emphasis on gender inclusivity, Third World solidarity, and the centrality of the masses in the revolutionary process. These aspects differentiated his ideology and approach from other Pan-African thinkers, showcasing both his connection to Pan-African philosophical traditions, and the urgency to transform them. This extended into his imagined path toward “liberation.” Rather than merely copy the models created by other ideologues inside and out of Africa, Sankara sought to use the ideas of past and present revolutionaries for his own new experiment. This was said best put succinctly by Murrey (2018):

The political and economic context in which the Burkinabè revolution emerged required that Sankara develop a nuanced political praxis capable of implementing practical actions to address the combined forces of neo-colonialism, patriarchy, environmental degradation, food justice and more. While Sankara was inspired by strands of Marxist thought, the challenge of reconfiguring the relationship between the people and the Burkinabè state required a nuanced political praxis that necessarily departed from key aspects of Marxism, including, for example, the belief that socialism would arise from

¹²⁴ G. Martin, *African Political Thought*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 113. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137062055>.

¹²⁵ Thomas Sankara, “Sankara: cet Homme qui Dérange” interview by Siradiou Diallo, trans. Guy Martin, *Jeune Afrique*, October 12, 1983, 43.

worker coalitions in societies characterized by advanced capitalism or that social revolution necessitated the elimination of private property.¹²⁶

As such, he fashioned pragmatic policies using applicable ideas from socialisms, anti-(neo)colonialism, Pan-Africanism and nationalism. Such ideas combined with his own life experiences, and the realities of the Burkinabè to produce a revolution which was both pragmatic and idealistic. However, the greatest change invoked by his revolution required African leaders to relinquish their power to the hands of the people the movement is seeking to liberate. This study now turns to an exploration of “liberation” as imagined by Sankara and showcased in the policy and economic directives of the CNR.

Liberation

The concept of liberation in the Burkinabè revolution is heavily defined by Sankara’s policy of self-reliance and non-alignment. Both of these policies were introduced in the second wave of the Pan-African movement, however, Sankara redefined these policies and adapted them to the changing global order. For his regime, self-reliance ranged from symbolic changes and politics of aesthetics to complete overhaul of development programs and land redistribution. Levi Kabwato and Sarah Chiumbu (2018) argue that Sankara invoked an ethos of decoloniality, shifting away from the politics of decolonization established in the first and second waves. This ethos contends that since coloniality “exists in the realms of power, knowledge and being,” and that that colonialism is a violent process which committed crimes of linguicide, epistemicide,

¹²⁶ Murrey, Amber, Horace G. Campbell, and Aziz Fall. *A Certain Amount of Madness: The Life, Politics and Legacies of Thomas Sankara*. 1st ed. Black Critique. London: Pluto Press, 2018. 4.

and culturecide.¹²⁷ Thus, decoloniality must be the expulsion of such continuing forms of imperial design at every level, and thus there must be intentional work to remedy the violence committed. Sankara was compelled by this radical decolonial ethos, and that Africans were not yet free from the grips of imperialism so deeply ingrained in their psyches and institutions:

The transformation of our mentality is far from complete. There are still many among us who take foreign norms as their point of reference in judging the quality of their social, economic and cultural lives. They live in Burkina Faso yet refuse to accept the concrete reality of our country.¹²⁸

His goal to decolonize Africa through a “cultural” and “social” revolution emerges across various speeches, interviews, international meetings, and local policy changes. One of the earlier decisions made by Sankara’s CNR was to remove the colonial name of “the Upper Volta” and rename the country Burkina Faso, blending two of the regions indigenous languages to mean “the land of the upright.” Thus the “Burkinabè” people, renamed, meant the “honest” people. Then and still today Burkinabè take this name with considerable pride, an ode to their African identity.¹²⁹ Appointed Secretary General of the Ministry of External Relations under Sankara, Louis-Dominique Ouédraogo wrote just in 2018, that their choice to change the name of the country and its people to assert their Africanité and reject colonial labels, has continuously been undermined by the international community, with purposeful misspellings and mispronunciations. He argues that something as simple as changing their name, was received as an audacious display of imperialist defiance.¹³⁰ In 1984, While giving a speech at the grand

¹²⁷ Levi Kabwato and Sarah Chiumbu. “Daring to Invent the Future: Sankara’s Legacy and Contemporary Activism in South Africa.” In *A Certain Amount of Madness*. Pluto Press, 2018. 289.

¹²⁸ Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. 392.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³⁰ Ouédraogo, Louis-Dominique. “Du Burkina Faso et des Burkinabè : Nous sommes burkinaBÈ, pas burkinaBÉ ni burkinais, ni burkinabaises, ni burkina-fassiens - leFaso.net,” August 4, 2018. <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article84432>.

opening of the Burkinabè art exhibit in Harlem, Sankara noted this renaming as a “rebirth for the nation,” representing a clean break from its colonial past.¹³¹

During the same trip to Harlem, he admitted, “There are many of us Africans...who have to understand that our existence must be devoted to the struggle to rehabilitate the name of the African.”¹³² When asked about his use of political aesthetics, he asserted that his regime would be one which honors African traditions, history and culture.¹³³ As such, during its first year, the CSN established a week-long national holiday called “Semaine Nationale de la Culture.” This holiday, which continues today, was established by Sankara to celebrate and recognize the diverse cultures and ethnic groups within Burkina Faso through the expression of music, art, dance, etc.¹³⁴ Thus, adhering to the tenants of Nkrumah’s African personality, self-reliance first meant a reliance on their own personality, requiring a complete overhaul of their cultural and social institutions.

Such reconstructions, naturally, extended to the structural— particularly economic, levels. Although, as mentioned before, Sankara was heavily inspired by Marxist thought and political ideology, he refused to label himself or his revolution as “communist,” “socialist” or otherwise. For him, such labels reified African leaders as incapable of innovation, pawns of western ideologues: “It’s a continual practice of Eurocentrism to always uncover spiritual fathers for Third World leaders.”¹³⁵ This idea of non-alignment and mixed economies is not entirely new

¹³¹ Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. 143.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 149.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 143-53.

¹³⁴ Karantao. “La SNC de 1983 à nos jours : Une manifestation qui grandit au fil du temps - leFaso.net,” November 23, 2010. <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article39547>.

¹³⁵ "Burkina Faso: A Case of Revolutionary Leadership," *Banned Thought*, October 1988, 23. <http://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/1988-10/AWTW-10-BurkinaFaso.pdf>.

to the African continent, as the second wave leadership attempted to reconcile existing political economic theories with African realities (see Chapter Three). In fact, just before being overthrown, Nkrumah contended that there were different paths dictated by the specific conditions of a particular country at a definite historical period.¹³⁶ However, Sankara revises that simply placing “African” before existing terms, does not challenge existing formulas prescribed by western economic institutions. Heeding Fanon’s advice, Sankara insisted that the “fundamental changes” invoked by Pan-Africanism and other revolutionary thought, require that leaders “dare to invent the future” rather than rely on “old formulas.”¹³⁷ Therefore, it is necessary to invent new terms for the kinds of economies that will benefit African development.

This assertion is, in-part, coming out of the increasing cold war tensions and east-west divisions. Africa and the Third World had become the (un)official battle grounds for the fight against capitalism and communism, and while some leaders of the 1960s who vocally aligned themselves faced political consequences, the new generation of leaders sought to learn from them. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union was withdrawing support from Third world nations, and the United States began using Bretton Woods institutions to impose a new global economic order. US foreign aid came with a slew of political conditions, that aimed to increase their political influence. One such program was “Food for Progress” which offered African countries non-emergency food aid, in exchange for an embrace and implementation of free market policies.¹³⁸ It was this exact new brand of foreign aid that Sankara so vehemently denied and urged other leaders, with the capacity to do so, follow his lead.

¹³⁶ Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa* (Panaf, 1970). 165.

¹³⁷ Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. 232.

¹³⁸ Brian J. Peterson, *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1d5nmbk>.

As such, Burkina Faso under Sankara saw a significant decline in the amount of foreign aid accepted. While being a realist, Sankara knew that his country would likely starve without *any* foreign aid, he exercised his right to choose, refusing to compromise the integrity of his revolution. Since Burkina often experienced intense droughts and famine (one of the worst in its history happening in the first few months of Sankara's presidency), they most commonly accepted food aid. Nevertheless, in seeking self-sufficiency the CNR prioritized the water crisis as their first key development. The CDRs became instrumental, in their first year they built 250 new water retention structures, 1,980 wells, and 3,350 boreholes rapidly expanding peasant water access.¹³⁹

To offset the decrease in monetary aid, Sankara also enforced his own sort of 'structural adjustment'. Government officials saw their salaries cut in half, and the profits of these austerity measures were redistributed to the people, particularly the rural poor. Further, he expected government officials and bureaucrats to offer their labor, enlisting them in several infrastructure projects within the housing, environmental, and agricultural sectors most prominently. One report from the Ministère de la planification (1985) revealed:

The government provided poor farmers and livestock herders with more extensive public services, productive inputs, price incentives, marketing assistance, irrigation, environmental protection and other support. In the five-year plan, 71% of investments in the productive sectors was allocated to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, wildlife and forests.¹⁴⁰

By 1986, the food insecurity that so plagued the nation had been significantly ameliorated, and the regime had thus achieved one of its highest priorities. During Sankara's famous address to the UN General Assembly, he prophetically stated "We must succeed in producing more,

¹³⁹ Ibid., 157.

¹⁴⁰ Moorosi Leshoele, "Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in Contemporary Africa: Lessons from Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara" (PhD Thesis, 2019), 199. <https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/26595>.

because it is natural that he who feeds you also imposes his will. He who does not feed you can demand nothing of you.”¹⁴¹ Both literally and figuratively, he asserted that Africans must feed themselves in order to free themselves.

In one of his final international meetings before his untimely death, Sankara’s war on imperialism-via-aid had turned its sights toward the looming African debt crisis. In July of 1987, he addressed the heads of government at the OAU summit urging they band together in a refusal to pay back their debts to western governments, or risk being “killed off one at a time.”¹⁴² He foresaw what would later become the greatest crises of African governments in the 1990s, and the economic turmoil that would plunge much of the continent into a dependency trap for the foreseeable future. Observers and participants of this meeting offer conflicting accounts, some report that his non-repayment plan was met with polite applause and secret disdain, others felt there was a genuine spirit of agreement and support. Nonetheless, the result was the same. Sankara left the conference declaring he would not return if Burkina were to refuse debt repayment all alone, and unfortunately, he would fulfill this promise. For their own respective reasons, African heads of state had already begun to accept the structural adjustment programs and the neoliberal markets proposed by the World Bank and IMF.

With Thomas Sankara’s transformative leadership, the Burkinabè revolution served to radically redefine the landscape of the Pan-African movement. The 1980s, marked by intense shifts in the global economy, political ideology, and hegemony, required a leader who could think creatively, act fast, and produce results. During the final year of his presidency, Sankara substantially deepened his ties with revolutionary leaders in Latin America, particularly Cuban

¹⁴¹ Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. 290.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 373.

revolutionary Fidel Castro, remaining consistent with his initial promises of Third World solidarity to the very end. However, this came in tandem with increasing ostracization by other African leaders. While they aligned in their stance against South African Apartheid,¹⁴³ many feared the populist revolution invoked by Sankara's oratory would spread to their own countries. Sankara declared that the future of African unity rested in the people, that is, the Pan-African movement was to be a popular movement. At the belly of the beast was a refusal to break with the intelligentsia which so intently defined the movement's recent past, their fear of relinquishing power to those they (allegedly) saw as beneath them. Moreover, the fight against imperialism so central to Pan-Africanism had not yet been won. Although decolonization, the physical exit of colonial powers from the continent, had occurred, the process of decoloniality was only just beginning. Sankara knew this to be true, and yet his African counterparts either could not or would not be convinced of this.

It is easy to take the example of Burkina Faso and draw the conclusion that Pan-Africanism had completely collapsed—that refusal of some African leaders to adapt their thinking represents a radical break from Pan-African ideology and its subsequent decline. However, I argue that Thomas Sankara's Burkinabè revolution dares us to imagine a new Pan-African possibility: to project the innovations of this revolution onto the reality of the movement itself. The Burkinabè Revolution serves as a testament to ways in which “old” and “new” Pan-Africanisms must call on each other to find new directives within rapidly changing global contexts. Sankara's visionary leadership underscores a dialectic within the Pan African movement, in which leaders have the ability to redefine the movement, just as the movement defines their political orientation. As such, the revisions that were made and/or attempted by

¹⁴³ There were some exceptions to this during his presidency. Mozambique and Angola in particular would align themselves with the apartheid regime in a puzzling agreement.

Sankara reveal the evolution of the Pan-African movement away from the second wave, and toward a third. Using the Burkinabè revolution as a case study, I draw several conclusions about the third wave of the Pan-African movement, using the frameworks of the “people,” “liberation” and the “leader.” The third wave would be an era of the movement in which leadership would be diffused across the “people,” sparking a popular movement with various segments. Further, in order to undo the fracturing caused by the equation of national liberation movements and the Pan-African movement, the imagined path toward “liberation” moves away from decolonization and toward radical decoloniality.

Toward a Third Wave

Chapters Two and Three highlight the historical rivalries within the Pan-African movement, such as those between W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, whose differing approaches—intellectualist and activist—collectively strengthened the movement by appealing to diverse groups. In the second wave, leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere sought to challenge notions of African inferiority and push for a self-governing united Africa, but their failure to effectively mobilize the masses led to a disconnect between leadership and the people, ultimately weakening movement participation. From these two instances, there are several directives necessary for a third wave to be in motion. The third wave requires leadership which seeks to address the weaknesses of the previous leadership as did the second. In this case that is, to reinsert “the people” into the Pan-African movement through mass mobilization and participation. Further, the third wave leadership must continue to draw upon the philosophical traditions of the previous waves. These two imperative features can be found in the leadership of Thomas Sankara and the Burkinabè Revolution, as his insertion into the Pan-African chronology signals the shift toward a third wave. Sankara’s approach demonstrated a commitment to

grassroots involvement, emphasizing the empowerment of the masses through education, health, and agrarian reforms. His policies were rooted in the belief that true liberation could only be achieved by actively involving the people in the governance and development process, ensuring that the benefits of independence were felt at all levels of society.

Sankara's leadership exemplified the fusion of intellectual and activist traditions, seeking to educate and mobilize the masses simultaneously. By advocating for self-reliance and eschewing foreign aid, Sankara directly challenged the dependency and neo-colonial relationships that had undermined previous efforts at African unity and development. His administration's focus on women's rights, environmental sustainability, and economic self-sufficiency reflected a holistic approach to liberation that encompassed all aspects of society, representing a central shift in the Pan-African movement toward decoloniality.

Further, Sankara recognized that the African continent and peoples of African descent united under the Pan-African ideal are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and otherwise diverse. Leaders who seek to realize Pan-African unity must recognize this diversity and reflect it in their practices and policies. From the origins of the movement, its architects brought a level of abstraction to their concept of "liberation," allowing them to expand its scope and render it more malleable. This is reflected in Sankara's approach to revolution, in which he adapted Pan-African ideologies to Burkinabè realities. Sankara insisted that the fundamental changes invoked by Pan-Africanism require leaders to "dare to invent the future" rather than rely on old formulas. His policy of self-sufficiency, observed locally through agriculture and internationally through non-alignment and debt non-repayment, demonstrates the movement's ability to address specific local needs while advocating for global change. This adaptability and responsiveness underscore the importance of maintaining a dynamic and flexible approach within Pan-Africanism.

The third wave of Pan-Africanism, therefore, must build on Sankara's legacy by fostering a participatory and inclusive movement. This involves not only addressing the immediate political and economic challenges but also nurturing a Pan-African consciousness that unites people across the continent and the diaspora. The third wave must strive to overcome the intellectual-activist divide, creating a cohesive and resilient movement that draws strength from its diversity. By learning from the successes and shortcomings of the past, the Pan-African movement can continue to evolve, adapt, and ultimately achieve its vision of a united, self-reliant, and liberated Africa. In concluding, I make suggestions for further research which examines the state of the Pan-African movement today, by shifting the analytical focus away from political elite and towards grassroots participants.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the multifaceted nature of the Pan-African movement, emphasizing its resilience, adaptability, and enduring relevance in contemporary African and global contexts. By employing a *longue durée* approach and critically examining the contributions and divergences of key leaders and factions, I have demonstrated the long history of factionalism, and the strengths and weaknesses these competing factions have embedded in the movement. Although George Shepperson distinguished these factions as a stratified Pan-Africanism and pan-Africanism, I have insisted that there is no inherent hierarchy between them. Rather, the many contributing leaders and their divergent philosophies have been significant opportunities for growth. The greatest strength of the movement lies in its ability to build upon previous failures and tensions, embrace segmentation and polycentrism, and integrate networks. This thesis contributes to the discourse on Pan-Africanism by highlighting the significance of

grassroots participation and decoloniality in the contemporary Pan-African landscape. As decoloniality contends colonialism must be expelled at all levels to achieve “liberation,” the future of the movement requires deeper engagement of the “people” in shaping its cultural, economic, and political spheres.

Chapter one traced the early manifestations of Pan-Africanism, focusing on the dynamism of leadership prior to the 20th century and contributions of leaders like Edward Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell. Their engagement with the Liberian repatriation project and their influence on the Pan-African ethos demonstrated the movement's early attempts to address displacement, detachment, and dispossession. However, their adherence to a civilizing mission introduced a hierarchy within the movement, which subsequent leaders would either serve to reify or challenge. The tensions between the movement’s earliest leadership and the “people” they sought to lead, illuminated that those alienated from the movement must be written back in with intentionality in the following waves.

Chapter two examined the intellectualist and activist factions represented by W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. Despite their rivalry, the two leaders had a substantial amount of overlap in how they understood Pan-Africanism conceptually- however it was how progress toward liberation would come about that they distinctly disagreed. The benefit to this rivalry was the unification of two distinct factions under one designation, “Pan-Africanist.” Whereas their appeal to two distinctly different groups allowed the seed of the movement to be planted across diverse groups of peoples, and therefore strengthen participation. The ultimate weakness of both of their leadership was their adherence to the civilizing mission inherent in their writing and organizing practices; both advocated for a class of New World Blacks to lead those on the continent. They failed, in many respects, to truly challenge Western assumptions about the African condition, serving to reify the hierarchy established by earlier leadership.

Chapter three focused on the second wave of Pan-Africanism, led by Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere. What distinguished the second wave from the first, was a commitment from the movement's new leadership to challenge and dispel notions of African inferiority and inability to self-govern. While experimenting with the movement's transformation from the realm of ideas into practical politics, Nkrumah's push for swift, radical change produced an idealist sect and Nyerere's insistence of step-by-step progress established a gradualist, more conservative, sect of the movement. However, this contention, and the different groups they respectively appealed to, were largely found amongst the political elite and those otherwise in positions of authority within the movement. Despite successfully dispelling the narratives inherent in the ideologies of the first wave, both leaders failed to mobilize the masses once they obtained power, stifling the same revolutionary practices they preached to be necessary for African unity. Their upholding of the intellectualist tradition and subsequent undermining of the activist tradition substantially weakened movement participation, disconnecting "the people" from "the leader" and their own "liberation."

Chapter four interrogated Thomas Sankara's Burkinabè revolution to identify the emergence of a third wave of Pan-Africanism, characterized by intellectual activism and idealistic gradualism. As Sankara's impact on revolutionary African thought has been understated by prevailing scholarship, this chapter also insists he be inserted in the Pan-African framework. In advocating for an end to the top-down leadership structure, which had served to fracture the movement from its earliest manifestations, Sankara's leadership transformed the Pan-African landscape. This shift into a people-centric phenomenon, directly calls back to the leaderful structure of the proto-Pan African period, in which the strength of the movement lies in its diverse voices and cultural impacts. Moreover, the shift away from an ethos of decolonization

and toward decoloniality, seeking to expel all forms of colonialism and its remnants, revolutionized a key pillar of the Pan-African tradition.

Sankara's assassination and the subsequent political developments in Burkina Faso also serve as a somber reminder of the vulnerabilities of the Pan-African movement to both internal and external adversities. The precarious balance between revolutionary zeal and pragmatic governance, the threats of neocolonial interference, and the challenges of achieving unity amid diversity remain as relevant today as they were during every era of the movement. However, just as Sankara believed that you cannot kill ideas, his directives continue to ring in the ears of inspired youth and revolutionaries everywhere. Brian Peterson's observations are particularly inspiring:

As the new technologies of mass communication and social media platforms came to Africa, the youth watched online videos about Sankara and listened to his speeches. A whole new transnational generation was turned on to his ideas. In time, acts of resistance and protest movements picked up in Burkina Faso, with the image of Sankara illicitly carried on posters and T-shirts, his words remembered in songs. Across Ouagadougou, walls bore the ubiquitous *Justice pour Sankara* (Justice for Sankara) red graffiti, with Sankara's silk-screened face. Sankara's life was now a usable past, a rallying point.¹⁴⁴

By keeping the spirit of unity, liberation, and self-determination at its core, Pan-Africanism will continue to inspire and guide the collective efforts of African peoples towards a brighter and more equitable future. The rise of social media and the democratization of information have enabled broader engagement, allowing diverse voices to contribute to the Pan-African discourse. As such, further studies should explore the impact of digital platforms on the movement, as to provide deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of Pan-Africanism and its potential to effect meaningful change in the 21st century. Moreover, in acknowledging the centrality of political elite and its limitations on this thesis, further research must continue to

¹⁴⁴ Peterson, *Thomas Sankara*. 7.

reveal the role of grassroots participants across the movement's history. If we are to understand the dynamics and trajectory of the Pan-African movement today, the analytical focus should continue to shift from the leadership to the grassroots participants.

In the spirit of Sankara's legacy, the future of Pan-Africanism lies in its ability to continually adapt, innovate, and embody the aspirations of its people. The ethos of decoloniality must continue to be central in all-African liberation efforts, as well as African scholarship more broadly. Scholars must continue prioritize knowledge production from the Global South, in order to challenge Eurocentric paradigms that have long dominated the field. Epistemic freedom and cognitive justice require the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems and the dismantling of colonial power structures within academia as well as African societies. As long as the vestiges of colonialism and its violent forms of detachment, displacement, and dispossession, endure, there is a continued need for genuine transformative efforts within all-African societies and scholarships. As such, Pan-Africanism, far from being a relic of the past, remains and must continue to be a vital ideology and movement in the ongoing quest for African reattachment, replacement, and re-possession.

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