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The Global Politicss of African Identity: Pan-Africanism and the Challenge of Afropolitanism

Farai Chipato
University of Glasgow, United Kingdom.

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This paper uses the 20th anniversary of the founding of the African Union (AU) to examine the role of race and identity in Pan-Africanism, from the perspective of International Relations (IR). Pan-Africanism played a crucial role in the decolonization of the African continent and remains the ideological basis for the AU, which leads on issues of continental governance. The paper examines the development of Pan-Africanism, and foundational ideas of race, modernity, and identity that remain as important elements of some strains of the ideology. This is further explored by examining the relationship between these ideas and the rise of nativism, demonstrating the ways that essentialist conceptions of African identity can justify violence and authoritarianism. Finally, the paper stages an engagement between Pan-Africanism and Afropolitanism, examining the ways that Afropolitan approaches provide an important critique of nativist forms of Pan-Africanism, as well as offering more productive ways of engaging with African identity. This is important both for theoretical debates around identity in IR and for the future of the AU, as the institutional home of Pan-Africanism. The argument takes both Pan-Africanism and Afropolitanism seriously as approaches to IR, focusing on the ways that Africa and African ideologies can be viewed as central both to the formation of modern political thought and to conceptualize the future of international politics and global order.

Cet article profite du 20e anniversaire de la création de l'Union africaine pour s'intéresser au rôle de la race et de l'identité dans le panafricanisme, du point de vue des relations internationales. Le panafricanisme a joué un rôle essentiel dans la décolonisation du continent africain et reste le fondement idéologique de l'Union africaine, prédominante sur les problématiques de gouvernance continentale. L'article s'intéresse au développement du panafricanisme et aux idées fondatrices de race, de modernité et d'identité, qui sont aujourd'hui encore des éléments cruciaux de certains pans de l'idéologie. Pour approfondir, une analyse de la relation entre ces idées et l'apparition du nativisme permet de démontrer comment ces conceptions essentialistes de l'identité africaine peuvent justifier la violence et l'autoritarisme. Enfin, l'article met en scène une rencontre entre le panafricanisme et l'afropolitanisme pour montrer que les approches afropolitaines constituent une critique importante des formes nativistes du panafricanisme, mais offrent aussi des façons plus productives d'appréhender l'identité africaine. Cette contribution est donc importante pour les débats théoriques autour de l'identité dans les relations internationales, mais aussi pour l'avenir de l'Union africaine, berceau institutionnel du panafricanisme. Le développement s'intéresse au panafricanisme et à l'afropolitanisme, qu'il considère comme des approches sérieuses des relations internationales. Il se concentre plus particulièrement sur les façons dont l'Afrique et les idéologies africaines peuvent être jugées essentielles à la formation de la pensée politique moderne et à la conceptualisation de l'avenir de la politique internationale et de l'ordre mondial.

Este artículo aprovecha el vigésimo aniversario de la fundación de la Unión Africana para examinar el papel de la raza y de la identidad en el panafricanismo, desde la perspectiva de las relaciones internacionales. El panafricanismo desempeñó un papel crucial en la descolonización del continente africano y continúa siendo la base ideológica de la Unión Africana, que es quien ostenta el liderazgo con relación a las cuestiones de gobernanza continental. El artículo estudia el desarrollo del panafricanismo, así como las ideas fundamentales respecto a raza, modernidad e identidad, las cuales siguen siendo elementos importantes de algunas corrientes ideológicas. Investigamos esto en mayor profundidad a través del estudio de la relación entre estas ideas y el surgimiento del nativismo, demostrando las formas por las cuales las concepciones esencialistas de la identidad africana pueden justificar la violencia y el autoritarismo. Por último, este artículo plantea una interacción entre el panafricanismo y el afropolitanismo, examinando las formas mediante las cuales, los enfoques afropolitanos nos ofrecen una crítica importante de las formas nativistas del panafricanismo y proporcionan formas más productivas para abordar la identidad africana. Esto resulta de importancia tanto en relación con los debates teóricos sobre la identidad en las relaciones internacionales como en lo relativo al futuro de la Unión Africana, en su papel de hogar institucional del panafricanismo. Este hilo argumental se toma en serio tanto el panafricanismo como el afropolitanismo como enfoques de las relaciones internacionales, centrándose en las formas por las cuales África y las ideologías africanas pueden verse como fundamentales tanto para la formación del pensamiento político moderno como para la conceptualización del futuro de la política internacional y el orden global.

Introduction

The year 2022 marked the 20th anniversary since the founding of the African Union (AU), the institutional home of Pan-Africanism, and the main forum for continental governance in Africa. This anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect, both on the achievements and challenges of the institution, and on the longer history and legacy of Pan-Africanism as an ideology. The Pan-Africanist project stretches back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century and has its roots in far earlier movements for the empowerment of the African diaspora in the face of slavery and colonial domination. Over the past hundred years, the ideology has had a pivotal role in the reshaping of the international system, from the transformations of decolonization to the formation of the post-Cold War order in the 1990s. As this special forum suggests, the AU and Pan-Africanism offer

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a key site of study and insight, when considering the possible futures of global politics. This is particularly relevant in our current period of international upheaval, where the global liberal order is in doubt, and international institutions are increasingly open to challenge, .

There is already a significant literature assessing the performance of the AU and other continental bodies in the promotion of democracy, human rights, peace, and economic advancement in Africa. Studies have examined the growth in economic integration and collaboration across the continent, highlighting the increasing linkages between African states, while acknowledging the limitations of contemporary African institutions when compared to other regions (Nagar 2020). Similarly, in the area of conflict prevention, the AU has had a major role in providing peacekeeping forces on the continent and in addressing conflicts to provide "African solutions to African problems" (Abdellaoui 2010; Tieku 2013). Despite these successes, several critics have noted, the institution remains constrained due to the interests of its member states and has yet to fulfil its stated objectives (Darkwa 2017; Glas 2018). Work on the AU as an arena for norm diffusion and contestation has also seen mixed results on issues like democracy and security (Souaré 2014; Williams 2007; Witt 2016, 2019). However, the issue of Pan-Africanism as a political identity has relatively little attention, despite the ideology's position at the core of the AU as an institution (see Abrahamsen 2020).

This following argument engages in a critical examination of the role of nativism in some strains of Pan-Africanism and an engagement with the emerging theory of Afropolitanism, as an important theoretical approach to African identity and Africa's place in the global order. It thus engages with African thought and political debates as important currents for International Relations (IR) (Odoom and Andrews 2017). While the topic of race and the continent of Africa remain peripheral to much of IR, there has been increasing attention paid to Africa's significance, both as a region and an important element of the international system (Abrahamsen 2017; W. Brown and Harman 2013; Gallagher 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). Pan-Africanism has already had some recognition as an important theoretical current in IR, but it remains marginal, and Afropolitanism remains largely the concern of literary studies. Thus, this paper seeks to further these engagements with IR, while considering the importance of African identity for the future of the AU and governance on the continent. The argument is relevant to the AU through its interrogation of the concept of African identity as an important element of global politics. Theoretical debates on the nature of African identity were crucial to the founding of AU and its predecessor the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which makes it all the more important to re-examine the crucial issue of what it means to be African two decades later.

The paper begins by briefly reviewing the beginnings of Pan-Africanism and its role in the development of anticolonial movements and conceptions of African identity. It then moves on to consider Pan-African ideas of African identity in contemporary politics, both at a continental and a national level, highlighting the potential for nativism in essentialist visions of African character. The final section stages an engagement between Pan-Africanism and Afropolitanism, highlighting areas where Afropolitan theory challenges some nativist Pan-Africanist ideas of African identity, modernity, and the future. The argument concludes by suggesting that reformulating conceptions of African identity will be crucial in the future of African governance and the AU.

Pan-Africanism and African Identity

Contemporary Pan-African thought should always be considered in the context of the historical development of Black and African political thought. The concept of Pan-Africanism first gained prominence in the late nineteenth century, as a rallying cry for the interconnected network of struggles against racial and colonial oppression by people of African origin throughout the "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993). It provided a meeting point for people from the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa to oppose segregation, slavery, and colonialism from a global perspective, often working from inside the colonial metropole to develop new ideological and political resources for resistance.

The founding of the ideology is generally traced to the first Pan-African conference, held in London in 1900, clearly signaling the diasporic nature of the gathering (Akah 1999). The congress took place after the formal end of slavery in the Americas, but at the height of Western colonial expansion in Africa, as well as the post-slavery colonial order in the Caribbean and segregation in the United States. The Pan-African political project aimed to construct a collective identity to galvanize Black people, improve their material conditions and claim political power, drawing inspiration from independent Black nations in Ethiopia, Haiti, and Liberia. By creating a positive African identity, Pan-Africanists sought to overturn Western racial hierarchies by placing Black people on an equal footing with the other "races" of the world, combating the idea that Africa and its inhabitants were people without a history or a valid place in the story of humanity (Jackson 2020, 93–101).

The development of a discourse of collective African identity was further influenced by the leadership of Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey and his United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the early twentieth century, which set out a form of Black consciousness that provided a more radical approach to the issues that faced Black people, through advocating for a return to Africa and a Pan-African polity of "Africa for Africans" (Adi 2018). Garvey's militant demand for Black dignity and power on the world stage spread from the UNIA's beginnings in the United States, across the Caribbean and Africa, providing an important foundation for concurrent and future Pan-Africanist endeavors, but was grounded in a separatist and essentialist understanding of Blackness as singular, separate, and rooted in a primordial relationship between African people and the continent (Malisa and Missedja 2020).

A less radical, but more enduring path was forged by subsequent Pan-African congresses in the early twentieth century, with influential sociologist W.E.B Du Bois taking a key role in organizing the events and drawing together a coherent ideology with the largely diasporic attendees (Adi et al. 1995). These meetings culminated in the fifth congress, held in Manchester, in 1945, which saw an increasing role for attendees from the continent, signaling a shift in focus from the diaspora to the anti-colonial concerns of African attendees (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). The meeting included several future African presidents, including Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, Jomo Kenyatta, and Hastings Banda, demonstrating its importance in shaping the postcolonial order on the continent. The conference also articulated a Pan-African vision when the colonial order was severely weakened, providing an ideological foundation for the liberation movements in the second half of the century. Another notable development was the increase in the links forged between Pan-Africanism and the international com-

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munist movement, as Pan-Africanists became attracted to the idea of a global revolution to overturn an international system based on colonialism and capitalism (Adi 2018).

Du Bois' work as a sociologist also made a significant contribution to Pan-Africanism, providing an analysis of the role of race in global politics, as well as coining the influential term "Afrocentric." He was particularly influential in identifying a global "color line," which separated White from non-White, and allowed for the economic exploitation of people based on race, both in so-called democracies like the United States, and in colonies in the Caribbean and on the African continent. His linking of the colonial exploitation, the struggles of working-class peoples, and the colonial project helped to conceptualize the global nature of the issues Pan-Africanists confronted and deepened their analysis of their international context. He also identified this racial ordering as a key cause for global conflict, particularly the First World War, highlighting the importance of the emancipation of racialized peoples as a key step toward international peace (Anievas et al. 2015).

The anti-colonial movement accelerated after the end of the Second World War, both in the Caribbean and on the African continent, as leaders who had forged their ideas in Pan-African discussions were able to gain positions of authority in liberation movements. This period saw a relatively rapid collapse of colonialism across the world, with the majority of African and Caribbean territories having achieved independence by the 1970s. In Africa, this led to an institutionalization of Pan-Africanism through the formation of the OAU in 1963, the first association of sovereign African nations. The achievement of independence by former colonies like Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, and Congo also revealed tensions within the movement, pitting those in favor of a federal united Africa against supporters of a looser association of sovereign nation-states, a conflict which has continued to play out in Pan-Africanist discussions throughout the history of the ideology (Murithi 2020). Once independence became a reality for these countries, they were forced to grapple with the choice between immediately moving toward a united African state or crafting an individual nation out of their formerly colonial institutions.

While the institutional form of the OAU was important, the ideological development of Pan-Africanism during the post-colonial period was equally significant. This is particularly noteworthy for our purposes in the development of a foundational account of African identity which continues to be influential in contemporary Pan-African governance. Anti-colonial leaders during this period developed competing conceptions of Pan-Africanism, but converged around a reliance on what Nkrumah, influenced by Garvey, called an "African personality" (Nkrumah 1963; van den Boogaard 2017). Similarly, Julius Nyerere appealed to unity through a sense of shared African identity, also based on a relational form of political mutuality and community, where a shared African culture could overcome political differences (Bird 2016, 275). Senghor's vision of Negritude depicted an African civilization, understood in opposition to the West, as a vehicle for African liberation, resting on a unified, positive conception of transnational Blackness (Bird 2016, 270). Indeed, Senghor's somewhat simplistic account of African emotionalism, in contrast to Western rationality, and his promotion of a "Negro-African reason," further entrenched an essentialized politics of African identity that embraced ontological difference from the West and lionized African-ness as the basis for a more productive political community (el-Malik 2015). He argued that

> "I would define it as 'the sum total of African civilised values'; African-ness always shows the same characteristics of passion in feelings, and vigour in expression. The consciousness of our community of culture, our African-ness, is a necessary preliminary to any progress along the road to unity."(quoted in B. Moyo and Ramsamy 2014, 663)

Senghor identifies an African civilization, and a set of values, which is ultimately linked to Blackness, with Africa understood as belonging to Black people (Appiah 1993, 10).

However, Pan-Africanists like Nkrumah and Senghor tempered their generalized politics of African identity with broader visions of universal civilization and global citizenship. Nkrumah attempted to widen his conception of Pan-African identity beyond Blackness through his concept of "Consciencism," seeking to reconcile what he saw as "traditional" African cultural forms with the modernity of colonial governance structures and culture (Nkrumah 1964). Indeed, Gemma Bird argues that Nkrumah's sense of African humanism can also be read as a form of cosmopolitanism, creating the potential for a more complex and nuanced global politics than his work on the African personality suggests (G. k. Bird 2018). Similarly, Rita Abrahamsen has recently argued that Du Bois's vision of Pan-Africanism was also expansive, embracing a range of different, yet compatible identities, noting that he "argued for integration and coexistence between races and peoples" (2020, 69).

The OAU, as an association of African states, proved disappointing in promoting further Pan-African cooperation and integration during the Cold War era, as African states remained divided in their differing attitudes to the United States and the Soviet Union during this period (Murithi 2020). The organization was also criticized for its inability to curb the excesses of increasingly authoritarian African leaders and military coups that plagued the continent in the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, as noted in the introduction to this special forum, the OAU kept the Pan-African idea alive and provided a foundational forum for African leaders to debate continental issues and move toward a more integrated Pan-African set of institutions (Agupusi 2021). The move from the OAU to the AU was facilitated by the end of the Cold War and the removal of superpower rivalry but was also driven by a renewed push from Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi and the emergence of post-Apartheid South Africa as a major force on the continent. Gaddafi's push for a United Africa rejuvenated Pan-African conceptions of a federal African state, and although he was unsuccessful in his ambition to create a federated African state, his efforts were instrumental in the formation of the AU.

The establishment of the AU in 2002 saw a marked shift from the OAU, creating a new set of institutions including the AU Commission, the Pan-African Parliament, and the Peace and Security Council. The new organization, which consisted of 55 member states, was intended to move beyond the OAU by creating closer cooperation on the continent to address the challenges it faced at the turn of the twenty-first century, but also to build an organization for the collective of African people, rather than African states, with an ultimate goal of a fully integrated United States of Africa (Murithi 2020). The AU was also inspired by South African President Thabo Mbeki's call for an "African Renaissance" at a speech in 1996, which set out a vision for a newly democratic Africa to build on its heritage to become a global force in the post-Cold War world. Drawing on this drive for a more united and influential Africa, the AU was promoted as an ambitious institution, which not only looked to a sovereign

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continent, rather than a collection of states, but also explicitly claimed to represent the African diaspora as well, resuscitating a wider politics of Pan-African unity.

Contemporary African Identity: Inclusion or Nativism?

The contemporary politics of African identity is still heavily influenced by the legacy of liberation leaders like Nkrumah and Senghor, at the national level, in the AU and in broader debates on continental governance. Indeed, Pan-Africanism has remained a crucial feature in the international politics of Africa since the liberation era (Nagar 2020). Over its first 20 years, the AU has promoted a version of African identity that is liberal, democratic, and inclusive, but still remains tethered to an essentialist conception of "Africanness" grounded in an "African" tradition. At the national level in Southern Africa, politicians in Zimbabwe and South Africa have set out an exclusionary vision of Pan-Africanism, which argues for African liberation and advancement, while relying on narrow, nativist conceptions of belonging. This sets us up for the Afropolitan critiques in the final section of the paper, which delve into the philosophical foundations of Pan-Africanism, that enable chauvinist politics, as well as more open approaches.

The new progressive Pan-Africanism of the AU had a different complexion from the radical, Marxism-inflected, anticolonial variants of the mid-twentieth century. Instead, it emphasized many of the values that rose to prominence in the new post-Cold War era of the global liberal order. This included a commitment to improving socio-economic livelihoods, the promotion of peace, gender equality, youth empowerment, and democracy. Indeed, most of the values contained in the organization's flagship policy documents, (African Union Commission 2015), were fully in line with those espoused by global institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, elements of the older, essential conceptions of African identity remained in policy and ideological discourse both at a continental and a national level. Some of this discourse attempted either to reconcile values understood as "traditional" with those of a global Liberal order, while more chauvinistic arguments made by politicians across the continent seek a rejection of Western modernity when it is seen as intruding on African sovereignty or undermining African leaders (Abrahamsen 2020).

An example of the former, where African traditions are mobilized in favor of a form of modernization can be found in debates around African philanthropy in contemporary policy and academic forums (B. Moyo and Alagidede 2020). The debates on African philanthropy have gained increasing prominence in continental policy forums and discussions, and the AU itself has entered this space through the formation of the AU Foundation. This rising perspective has been promoted not just as a solution to African development challenges, but also as a synergistic impulse that aligns with the Pan-Africanism of the AU, drawing on a conception of African culture as innately philanthropic. This is explicitly set out by Moyo and Ramsamy, who put contemporary African philanthropy in the context of the longer tradition of Pan-Africanism, arguing that leaders like Nelson Mandela, Leopold Senghor, and Haile Selassie promoted a Pan-Africanism centered on African self-reliance and self-sufficiency (B. Moyo and Ramsamy 2014). They see this as deriving from a set of interlinked, common philosophical commitments drawn from many African cultures, particularly Ubuntu in Southern Africa and Harambee in East Africa. Ubuntu is interpreted as a communalist belief system, which is based on reciprocity, interdependency, and sharing, where personhood is defined in relation to the Other (Gade 2011).

Harking back to the thinking of Nkrumah and Senghor, this conception of African identity is presented as the foundation for Pan-Africanist development based on community and business-fueled philanthropy, which is viewed as both an antidote to and a supplement to the state (A. L. Brown 2016; Kuljian 2005; B. Moyo and Alagidede 2020; Sy and Hathie 2009). This has been echoed in wider African philanthropy work promoted by Johannesburg-based the Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment, as well as foundations like Trust Africa and the Southern Africa Trust (Mahomed and Coleman 2016). While this perspective is presented in a form that is compatible with broader liberal approaches to development, focusing on sustainable development, democracy, and inclusivity, it also retains its rooting in a unitary African cultural identity, albeit one that is depicted as benign and welcoming.

This conception of Pan-African identity as linked to a core African culture also contributes to the key objectives of the AU in its 2063 program. In the second progress report on the implementation of the plan, the AU highlights the importance of promoting "indigenous African culture" as part of its educational objectives, with the goal of inculcating the "values of Pan-Africanism" among African young people (African Union Development Agency—NEPAD 2022). It is notable that the document lauds Ethiopia's cultural policies, particularly its slogan "Land of Origins," which promotes a shared conception of both the country and the continent as a source of shared African identity, as well as humanity more broadly (African Union 2022, 41). The fact that a politics of origins can sit alongside interventions to promote democratic values, environmental sustainability, peacebuilding, and human rights is illustrative of the tension in the Pan-Africanism of the AU.

At the national level, the creation of the AU and the renaissance of Pan-Africanism has been paralleled by increasing nativism in Southern Africa, particularly in South Africa and Zimbabwe. This is particularly poignant, as the liberation struggles of both countries against settler colonial governments, were important touchstones and rallying points for the Pan-Africanist movement in the late-twentieth century (Adi 2018). As Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues, there is a clear link between the form of African identity which feeds into much contemporary Pan-Africanism and the rise of nativism and xenophobia in places like Zimbabwe and South Africa (2009). He argues that some of the African liberation movements of the mid-twentieth century, committed to empowering African people, focused on a politics of identity that evolved from an anti-colonial ethos into one based around a virulent ethnic nationalism. Thus the search for an authentic African identity as the basis to resist colonial rule, rooted in history and land, provided the basis for a more authoritarian post-colonial politics of xenophobia and nativism (Parry 2004).

The post-Apartheid politics of South Africa had initially focused on promoting the country as a "rainbow nation," seeking a unity beyond racial identification and seeking a peaceful end to the often-violent liberation struggle. However, by the early 2000s, the ruling African National Congress (ANC), the party of liberation, had begun to shift toward a more nativist approach, while other political forces in the country, including the Economic Freedom Fighters party and the Zulu Kingdom, pursued even more radical ends. This was particularly important, as South Africa and the struggle against Apartheid had played a pivotal role in

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mobilizing Pan-Africanist activism and solidarity across the world, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu highlights this connection in the formation of a "Native Club" in the early 2000s to promote indigenous culture and the formation of a new generation of Black intellectuals, drawing inspiration from Pan-Africanism, and other related ideologies like Black Consciousness and Negritude (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009, 74). For Gatsheni-Ndlovu, this move toward indigenization provided the ideological cover and inspiration for some of the more radical, xenophobic politics that followed. Indeed, the early 2000s saw increasing xenophobia against African migrants among the South African populace, leading to persecution, violence, and even killings (Mlambo and Mkhwanazi 2021; Solomon 2019). In 2008, over 60 African migrants were killed in xenophobic attacks, with violence continuing over the next decade. Discourse among ordinary South Africans, often beset by unemployment, poor services, and other economic hardships, emphasized the foreignness of other Africans. It is important to emphasize that this was not the only discourse promoted by South Africans, and there remains much resistance to xenophobia in the country. However, the shift from a politics of Pan-Africanist, anti-colonial liberation to one of chauvinist nativism within a section of the movement, demonstrates the way that reliance on essentialized African identities can mutate into a more virulent form of nationalism.

In Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU–PF party, led by President Robert Mugabe, rehabilitated anti-colonial, liberationist rhetoric in the 2000s, which was deployed internally against political enemies and in the service of regime maintenance. ZANU–PF justified its position explicitly in terms of the wider Pan-Africanist struggle against neo-colonial incursion, with Mugabe promoting himself as a twenty-first-century leader in the next stage of the African liberation struggle. Zimbabwe in the 2000s was struggling both with the economic effects of structural adjustment, through unemployment and low wages, and the legacies of colonial governance, with White Zimbabweans remaining in control of the majority of the country's prime farmland (Alexander 2006; Dorman 2016; S. Moyo 2001). Faced with a growing urban opposition movement for constitutional reform and rising protests from veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation war, demanding land redistribution, Robert Mugabe sought to co-opt the land reform movement through a resort to a politics of nativism. Drawing on a new form of "patriotic history," the ruling party in the early 2000s, which portrayed a crude narrative of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, focusing on the organic connection between Black Zimbabweans and the country's land (Ranger 2004). As Miles Tendi argues, these narratives promote "race essentialism, meaning Zimbabwe is for black Zimbabweans and Africa for black Africans" (Tendi 2008, 380). The politics of land reform drew on legitimate calls for the end of White domination of the rural economy, and the legacy of unfulfilled promises from the liberation movement. However, these concerns were channeled into an essentialized form of identity politics, which coalesced around "patriotic history." This form of nativism did not just exclude White Zimbabweans, but also Black farm workers who were descended from migrants who had moved to Zimbabwe during the colonial period (Rutherford 2008). The nativist ideology developed by ZANU–PF became a justification for persecution against "sell-outs" identified in the opposition, leading to significant violence in the 2008 presidential elections, and in subsequent electoral clashes. It is also worth noting that the AU was unable, or unwilling, to check the excesses of Zimbabwe's government during this period, despite its commitment to democracy and human rights. The persistence of Mugabe as a political force in the AU and an advocate of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonial struggle, undermined the more inclusive Pan-Africanism that the organization sought to promote.

The rise of nativist violence in both South Africa and Zimbabwe has often been portrayed as betrayal of the principles of Pan-Africanism and of African culture in the literature. Mlambo and Mkhwanazi argue that xenophobic violence runs counter to the "diplomacy of Ubuntu" (Mlambo and Mkhwanazi 2021, 131), and the spirit of Pan-Africanist solidarity which was cultivated in the anti-Apartheid movement. Similarly, Gordon Moyo is adamant that Robert Mugabe "deployed Afro-radical rhetoric guised as Pan-Africanism purely for the purposes of regime continuity and juridical sovereignty rather than as a profound decolonial epistemic device" (G. Moyo 2015, 62). The argument here is that any entanglement of Pan-Africanism with nativism and xenophobia is a perversion, not merely of the ideology itself, but of the liberation movement and of core African philosophical commitments.

The Zimbabwean and South African cases are just two examples of the ways in which ethnic identity and a politics of belonging have been used to justify exclusionary or violent politics, leading to a debate among Africanists on the dangers of nativism in post-colonial societies. For Mahmoud Mamdani, the question of belonging is central to the constitution of post-colonial African polities, and he argues for an approach that focuses on "reimagining political identities as historical rather than natural" (Mamdani 2020, 34). He insists that post-colonial societies need to decolonize by moving from a narrative of victim and perpetrator to one of the survivors, which denaturalizes political identities, rendering them historical artefacts rather than essentialized and static. In a society of survivors, "all must be born again, politically," negating the explosive potential of ethnic, racial, or other identity signifiers (Mamdani 2020, 195).

On a related note, Kwame Appiah argues nativism does not appeal to genuine, organic cultural roots, but to the legacy of a particular form of European thought, which produced both nationalism and imperialism (Appiah 1993). He suggests that nativism in Africa operates through the construction of political identities in a process that draws on colonial legacies, by appealing to the continent, the nation and the tribe. Indeed, Appiah argues that

> Operating with this topology of inside and outside—indigene and alien, Western and traditional—the apostles of nativism are able in contemporary Africa to mobilize the undoubted power of a nationalist rhetoric, one in which the literature of one's own is that of one's own nation. (Appiah 1993, 56)

This form of critique suggests that cultural identification is not just a cosmopolitan force for inclusion and liberation, bringing together disparate peoples of African origin under the Pan-Africanist umbrella, but also holds the potential for narrower forms of chauvinistic ethnic and racial consciousness. (Abrahamsen 2020; Mazrui 1982). We can recognize that Pan-Africanism and nativism are not necessarily two rival inclinations but draw from the same political well of primordial identity politics, an issue that will be explored further in the following section.

Afropolitanism, Race and Modernity

We now turn to Afropolitanism, to draw out both its points of engagement with Pan-Africanism, and the challenges that Afropolitan approaches pose to some streams of Pan-Africanist thought. While the term remains contested, at its core Afropolitanism refers to a hybrid, transnational con-

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ception of African identity, which is untethered to static ideas of race or culture. Due to its resonance with the experience of multi-ethnic, mobile African and diaspora youth, the concept has been taken up in popular fiction, blogs, magazines, and art as well as in academia (Eze 2016). This has resulted in two broad schools of Afropolitan thought, the first emerging from the literary debates among the diaspora (Selasi 2005, 2016), and the second from academia. In the literary discourse, there have been fierce arguments over the merits of the Afropolitanism and the danger of commodifying fashionable conceptions of Africa for Western audiences (Dabiri 2016; Eze 2016; Pahl 2016). Indeed, work on Afropolitanism in IR has focused on the first debate among the diaspora, examining the role of the Afropolitan as a literary, fashion, or cultural figure in Western conceptions of White identity (Gabay 2018) or the role importance of Afropolitanism in Western celebrity interventions in international development (Richey and Christiansen 2018). These works provide important critiques of the cultural narratives around Afropolitanism, and questions remain about the concept's elite connotations and focus on a mobile class of affluent, educated Africans to the exclusion of the majority of African people. However, this paper draws on the second strand of thinking, which engages more deeply with the questions of identity and political theory that our discussion of Pan-Africanism has raised.

This second strand of Afropolitan thinking is more rooted in philosophical and political debates on the nature of identity and race, led by political theorist Achille Mbembe and his interlocutors. This debate has interrogated the meaning of Blackness, African identity and culture in the twenty-first century, but from the perspective of a contemporary urban experience, which provides a particular vantage point on the shifting identities of contemporary Africans (Mbembe and Nuttall 2005; Nuttall 2004). For Mbembe, Afropolitanism provides an opportunity to resituate Africa, both in terms of its identity and its place in the world. He sets Afropolitanism within the longer tradition of African political thought, from colonial constructions of race to the anti-colonial thought forged in the Negritude movements, Afrocentrism, and Pan-Africanism (Balakrishnan 2017; Mbembe 2017; Mbembe and Balakrishnan 2016). Below, I examine three thematic areas where Afropolitanism comes into tension with Pan-Africanism, around race and identity, modernity, and the future.

Blackness, Coloniality, and Africa

One of the core challenges that Afropolitanism sets for Pan-Africanism is in its call to break the linkage between race and African identity in the struggle to overcome colonial legacies. As we have seen, many Pan-Africanist thinkers look to racial difference and its linked ontological difference as a method to challenge colonial exploitation and concepts of racial hierarchy. Indeed, as noted above, even the contemporary AU seeks to ground itself in a politics of origins, along with its commitment to more progressive social values. In his work on Afropolitanism, Mbembe recognizes the denigration of Black people in colonialism and modernity but reacts against the arguments of anti-colonial theorists and movements that foregrounded race as the basis for identity. He argues that their continuing reliance on essentialized identities perpetuates the very colonial thinking that they are trying to escape from.

This approach recognizes that Africa has been presented as a primitive, inferior, Other for modernity, with depictions of the "primitive" African used as a point of boundary against the "civilized" European (Mbembe 2020). Across Western literature and culture, the continent has been represented as a place of violence and darkness that existed outside of the progress of history, primordial in its climate and its people (Dunn 2003). Mbembe argues that for the modern consciousness, "Africa is the simulacrum of an obscure, blind power, walled in time that seems pre-ethical, and in a sense prepolitical" (Mbembe 2017, 49). Early anti-colonial thought refuted this idea of Africa by affirming the humanity of Black people, thus justifying their inclusion among the civilized (Cesaire & Kelley 2000; Fanon 2001). In the mid-twentieth century, the Negritude movement, founded by disaffected intellectuals in the diaspora, conceived of itself as a mirror to Eurocentrism, overturning the primacy of Whiteness to valorize Blackness and Africa at the expense of the West. Negritude influenced the formation of other liberation movements, from Pan-Africanism to Afrocentrism, all of which sought what Balakrishnan calls a "politics of reclamation," springing from a tradition that "has always considered the racial fission of the Black from the African as the central problem for emancipatory thought" (Balakrishnan 2018, 579). Thus, in order to overcome the epistemic as well as the material violence of colonialism, African political and philosophical thought in the post-colonial period embraced the Western conception of a single Africa, united by common characteristics, but venerated this constructed identity as the basis for an emancipatory vision.

However, drawing on Afropolitanism, we can see this approach as at best a short-term tactical move, that has ultimately created new problems for the continent. Mbembe argues that the embrace of European ideas of Africa by anti-colonial movements, and their inversion of strict racial categories to valourise Blackness, is problematic, as it retains the basic structure of the Eurocentric, colonial racial ontology. Proponents of anti-colonial ideologies looked to differences, to the traditions of their ancestors as a foundation to oppose colonialism and modernity from the outside. For Mbembe,

> "Pan-Africanism effectively defined the native and the citizen by identifying them as Black. Blacks became citizens because they were human beings, endowed like all others, with reason. However, added to this was the double fact of their colour and the privilege of their indigeneity. Racial authenticity and territoriality were combined, and in such conditions Africa became the land of the Blacks." (Mbembe 2017, 91)

This logic requires that only those who are Black can be African, it affirms the association of Black people with the invented ideas of Blackness and Africa. Moreover, it leaves the fundamental intellectual structure of colonialism intact, one based on difference and essentialised racial identity (Mbembe 2017, 94). Thus, Mbembe argues that racial and cultural identity are brought together with geography, where the African citizen must be native to the land, making citizenship a matter of autochthony (Bøås and Dunn 2013; Geschiere and Jackson 2006; Mbembe 2002). However, from the perspective of Afropolitanism, it is impossible to extricate the authentic African tradition from the colonial invention (Balakrishnan 2017). Knowledge of African traditions has frequently been shaped by partial accounts in colonial archives, the accounts of imperial anthropologists, and the manipulation or even creation of customary authorities in the service of colonial endeavors (Mudimbe 1988).

The aversion of Afropolitans to a politics based on customary law and traditional identities is based on the particular experience of African politics in both the colonial and the post-colonial period. While African tradition was a resource for resistance against colonialism, it was equally

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used as a means of maintaining difference, and through customary authorities, as an instrument of colonial control (Balakrishnan 2018; Mamdani 1996). Despite isolated cases of resistance by traditional authorities, the majority of customary officials, chiefs and headmen under colonial governance were mobilized as a form of indirect rule and were often the perpetrators of the violent suppression of anti-colonial unrest (Chigwata 2016; Mamdani 1996; Nyambara 2001). In the post-colonial period, these authorities, while initially distrusted, were ultimately rehabilitated in many instances as a means of legitimating undemocratic, coercive governance by the state. Moreover, this was allied to the increasing use of nativist and nationalist rhetoric to subdue political opponents, in some cases leading to the nativist and xenophobic currents examined above.

These political developments have led critics like Mbembe to conclude that anti-colonial projects to reconstitute African identity have produced a new myth of Blackness and Africa to replace the old colonial construction, but one which is equally fictitious and dangerous, due to its use as justification for nativism, authoritarianism, and xenophobia (Mbembe 2001; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). The basic racial schema of colonialism, predicated on ontological difference, remains intact, preventing anti-colonial thinking from fully escaping colonial thought. Indeed, from this perspective, the focus on race and colonialism may obscure the new forms of social organization and politics that are evolving, as Mbembe argues that "racial struggles are giving way to entirely different forms of struggle" (Mbembe and Balakrishnan 2016, 33). These struggles are still emergent, and the analytical categories have yet to be fully formed. As the condition of global capitalism transforms, so the nature of race and its role in the subjugation and emancipation of peoples will also change. Ultimately, a focus on African identity from the perspective of Afropolitanism suggests that race offers us no outside to modernity, no distinctive cultural essence that is separate from Western civilization. Instead, a more positive conception of Blackness is "an identity in the process of becoming," where a multitude of global influences create Africa, fed by a "vast reservoir of affinities" (Mbembe 2017, 94–95). African-ness becomes inseparable from its constitution in conversation with the world.

Colonial and African Modernities

Afropolitanism also leads us to re-evaluate the relationship between modernity, colonialism, and the victims of colonial oppression. One of the key elements of Pan-Africanist thought, both among the great anti-colonial leaders and contemporary Pan-Africanism promoted by the AU, is the appeal to African traditions, viewed as separate from Western modernity. While many of these thinkers embraced modernization as a goal, this was viewed as a merging of an exogenous, Western modernity with organic African tradition, a hybrid meeting that affirmed the foreignness of modernity to the African continent. However, from Mbembe's perspective, key social transformations attributed to modernity, like migration, urbanization, multicultural communities, and the detachment of rural people from their traditional lands, were already a part of many African societies. Thus, the temporal schema that portrays traditional, rural, Africans being thrown into mobility, urbanization, and cultural hybridity by modernity is upset. Secondly, while we can accept that the colonial project was closely linked to modernity, a reading of Afropolitanism suggests a rejection of a unitary conception modernity, leading instead to an account of multiple modernities. Moreover, similar to Mamdani's work discussed earlier, this perspective disputes the separation between modern/colonial oppression and the oppressed, arguing instead that modernity was a dual project, resulting from the work of many both in the West and the non-West.

On the first point, theorists drawing on Afropolitanism have been keen to highlight that cosmopolitanism and pluralism were already indigenous to Africa before colonialism (Gourgem 2017, 6). The wide-ranging influence of Islam over the past 1,000 years is often offered as an example, both in the Sahel and along the African coast of the Indian Ocean. Balakrishnan notes the indigeneity of the cosmopolitan culture that unites coastal East Africa, where Arab traders have helped to create a mobile, multicultural set of traditions, anchored in a long history of pre-colonial international trade and urbanism (Balakrishnan 2017, 4). She highlights that the hybrid cultures and circulation of global goods, people and ideas present in the coastal cities on the Indian Ocean long preceded colonial incursion. Indeed, the Swahili language itself is a testament to the Bantu and Arabic influences that came together to create a regional lingua franca (Balakrishnan 2017). Moreover, the long history of Christian and Jewish influences on Ethiopian religion offers an even more venerable example of the circulation of beliefs and the production of hybrid cultural and social practices (Pawlikowski 1971) that demonstrate the lack of a static, indigenous culture prior to the colonial era. If cultural hybridity and global sensibilities were not imposed by colonialism, but were already present in Africa, this helps us to understand that these elements of modernity developed through the conversation between the West and the non-West, albeit one that was often one sided and coercive. The cosmopolitan elements of modernity did not merely originate in Europe but were also nourished by these traditions among the colonized.

Secondly, the co-production of modernity by the colonizer and the colonized in Africa has been demonstrated by numerous ethnographic studies over the post-colonial period, illustrating the ways that urban Africans have adopted cosmopolitan sensibilities that are unique to their particular urban settings. In one seminal example, James Ferguson explored the adoption of new cosmopolitan identities in the towns of Zambia's copperbelt in the 1980s (Ferguson 1994). Understanding identity through theories of performativity, he argued that urban people adopted cosmopolitan styles that were both alien to their rural origins but refused to fit into the categories of the Western or liberal subject (Ferguson 1994, 98–99). These identities were not necessarily associated with education or affluence, but rather the adoption of modern styles of clothing and a lack of respect for tradition. Thus, the vagrant, sex worker, or other illicit urban dweller could take on their own particular cosmopolitan style as much as the respectable urban African. Crucially, he argues that this form of cosmopolitanism was not necessarily open and outward looking, it was often rooted in a particular urban setting. (Ferguson 1994). Similarly, Ndjio analyses the actions of young confidence tricksters or feymen in the 2010s, in Nigeria and Cameroon, suggesting that their flamboyant styles and illicit forms of income represent resistance to the incursion of global capitalism that left them with few legitimate opportunities (Ndjio 2014). Like Ferguson, Ndjio demonstrates the ways that feymen are both uniquely African in their cultures, identities, and practices, but only exist through and because of modernity and global capitalism. He views these young people as part of a broader swathe of young "criminal entrepreneurs" in Africa, intent on transforming global markets. This empirical evidence of African modernities and

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cosmopolitanism has been highly influential on the thinking of Afropolitan theorists (Balakrishnan 2017; Richey and Christiansen 2018).

The final, and most controversial, aspect of this argument involves a rethinking the memory of the violence perpetrated through colonialism, slavery, and other oppressions. Mbembe argues that in order to forge a way forward for Black people and Africans, it is necessary to address issues of memory, forgetting, and reparation (Mbembe 2017). He suggests that,

> "between African Americans' memory of slavery and that of continental Africans, there is a shadowy zone that conceals a deep silence—the silence of guilt and the refusal of Africans to face up to the troubling aspect of the crime that directly engages their own responsibility. For the fate of black slaves in modernity is not solely the result of the tyrannical will and cruelty of the Other, however well established the latter's culpability may be." (Mbembe 2002, 260)

For Mbembe, in order to rehabilitate a conception of African agency in the creation of modernity, it is necessary to take responsibility for an element of the violence, as well as the positive results. If it is impossible to extricate the African from the Western, the pre-modern from the modern, then moral liability must be shared. Additionally, we might consider the customary authorities, soldiers, servants, and many others who supported the colonial government and contributed to the subjugation of other Africans, while themselves also being victims of colonial oppression (Mbembe 2017). Mbembe is anxious to move African identity away from a politics of victimhood toward a more complex, multifaceted understanding of how Africans can act and have acted in the world. His arguments have some similarities to Olufemi Taiwo's recent critique decolonization as an approach by academics working in Africa (Taiwo 2022). Taiwo argues against the drive to decolonize through the embrace of African languages, as well as suggesting that Africans should embrace, rather than reject modernity. However, Mbembe's approach is more nuanced and more attuned to the important role of race in colonial and post-colonial politics and society. While Taiwo urges us to stop talking about colonialism, Mbembe urges us to grapple with its uncomfortable legacies. Indeed, Mbembe's Afropolitan argument that we must accept the bad with the good, could be viewed as uncomfortably close to some of the more cynical apologists for empire (Rodriguez 2018), creating a significant tension with many proponents of Pan-Africanism. The tension between demanding restitution and accepting responsibility, between taking on a mantel of power versus resisting from a place of oppression is a key fault line between these approaches to the legacies of colonialism.

African Modernities and African Futures

The final aspect where Afropolitanism differs from the more nativist forms of Pan-Africanism is in its conception of the future. There are two key aspects to an approach to the future which draws from Afropolitanism. The first, as articulated by Jean and John Comaroff, is that many aspects of contemporary global capitalism are now pioneered in the Global South rather than in the West, meaning that we should see the Global South as the West's future, rather than it's past (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). However, beyond this negative leadership role, they argue that "in the face of structural violence perpetrated in the name of neoliberalism…the global south is producing some ingenious, highly imaginative modes of survival—and more." (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012, 18) This can be seen in the use of mobile money, which saw significant uptake in Africa far earlier than in the West. In one prominent example, the Kenyan mobile financial system M-PESA had achieved over seven million users by 2009, years before current market leaders like Apple Pay and Google Pay had even launched (Morawczynski 2009). The influence of African modernities can also be seen in the growing literature on the crisis of the future, where theorists are searching for new ways to address current issues like climate change and democratic dysfunction. Indeed, the work of science fiction authors like Nnedi Okorafor have increasingly been drawn on in broader debates on the Anthropocene and the future of humanity (Death 2022a).

According to Mbembe, the contrasting visions of the future provided by the nativist strains of the nativist strains of Pan-Africanism and Afropolitanism can be traced back to their diverging ideas of spatiality. For both anti-colonial movements and Pan-Africanism, the geography is one of territoriality, of static relationships between land and people. These may be indigenous people and their ancestral territories, or post-colonial African states and their relationship to land ownership and citizenship rights. However, for the Afropolitan, the central geography is one of circulation and mobility (Mbembe and Balakrishnan 2016). In this sense, we might think of Afropolitanism as more post-modern than modern, as it emphasizes a lack of stability and fluidity of identity, meaning, and belonging. Moreover, it seeks to move beyond the idea of a global colonial center and periphery, where the West is contrasted with the non-West, to consider multiple or mobile centers. This is key to the uniqueness of the Afropolitan proposition, as rather than in globalization narratives, where the global intervenes in the local, here multiple locals mutually constitute the global. African modernity creates global modernity, both from a negative and a positive perspective. While the everyday practices of African people can give rise to new, more egalitarian, democratic cultures, African oligarchs, and authoritarian rulers are increasingly important players in the global political economy. Thus, it matters less whether actors are African or Western, colonial or anti-colonial than how they relate to the interests of the oppressed, the dispossessed, and the marginalized. This requires new ways of being African and being modern, which are articulated in uniquely African ways, but do not necessarily spring from some authentic, indigenous source. As Gadeke argues, Afropolitanism

> "defies any binary conception of us and them, including any identity built on exclusion or on victimhood. Instead, it emphasizes the capacity to inhabit the opening that emerges from the experience of mergence and movement. It conceives of Africa as an inter-space—a space of circulating and interlocking worlds that provides a particularly stimulating context for cultivating a cultural, historical and aesthetic sensibility, which allows for recognizing oneself in the Other." (Gädeke 2018, 499)

Here, an Afropolitan future has some affinity with the one suggested by Pan-Africanism, but one where identity has more fluidity, marked by the absence of an ontology of racial difference. An Afropolitan space attempts to position itself between "presumptuous universalism and essentialising parochialism" producing creative, and collaborative responses to the future (Gädeke 2018). This conception of African identity has more of an affinity with Nkrumah and Senghor's more cosmopolitan impulses, suggesting a Pan-African vision that rejects essentialism. In this sense, an Afropolitan future is neither modern nor indigenous,

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colonial or anti-colonial, it strives for a new framing beyond these oppositions. Africa becomes a new lens through which to rethink the global, the planetary, a way to think multiplicity and simultaneity from a different center.

Conclusion

Returning to the 20th anniversary of the AU, we can see that the organization also must grapple with significant challenges to its ideological foundation, as well as the many material issues that the continent is faced with. The arguments above have highlighted the role of a particular version of African identity, which has remained at the heart of Pan-Africanism, both at a continental and a national level. This identity, based on a narrow conception of African-ness is at work in the AU's work to promote democracy and open societies, but also in nationalist and nativist projects pursed by African politicians. The final part of the paper staged an engagement with Afropolitanism, which highlighted some of the theoretical foundations that feed into this conception of African identity, and the problems with Pan-Africanist conceptions of modernity and the future.

Throughout the argument, I am not suggesting a wholesale rejection of Pan-Africanism, but rather that it is possible to build on the engagement between Afropolitanism and the more cosmopolitan impulses of theorists like Nkrumah and Senghor, to open up approaches that recognize African modernity, reject colonial hierarchies, and embrace possible African futures. This does not mean that there should be a new "correct" idea of what it means to be African, as identities are always plural and in flux. Instead, this conversation will help to move beyond essentialized, chauvinistic forms of politics, which remained trapped in racial oppositions that originated in the colonial era.

Finally, this paper has insisted that this debate should be understood as one of IR, despite the discipline's historical indifference to Africa. Viewing Pan-Africanism and Afropolitanism as international theories is crucial in helping us understand the contributions that these modes of thought make to both the practice and the theoretical framing of the global politics of Africa, and thus to international politics more broadly.

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