

Executive Comment - 2010

Africa 21st Century Information Armament: The Core to Peace, Development and Transformation in Africa

The debate over Africa regional integration to accelerate development from within the continent rather than exceeding reliance on external market and other forces has been dangling as political game for politicians and technocrats. The cost is delay in coming to tentative decision is not only a worry for the ordinary citizens in the street but impact their welfare. For too long the poverty associated with Africa has been political making and it will take strong political will to undo the situation of pauperisation. This is not a difficult issue as it requires such amalgamation of political forces on the continent just as is happening in the Latin American world. This cannot be achieved on silver platter but requires accurate and relevant information as basic and core towards aggressive change in Africa.

African leaders have for far too long become excessively rhetorical and power mongering ignoring the key issues that grant them the honour they hunger for automatically. The fulfilment of political obligation as government to citizens is one part and the second part is enabling conducive environment to make it easy for citizens to achieve their little livelihood activities. This has evaded many African states and where things are a little better the credit can be linked to some external entities than as typical African initiative. Now, continuous pauperisation has raises serious eyebrow over the black Africans political and economic competency to resolve African development challenges is embarrassing and negative. This has not only serve to marginalise the continent internationally on equal partnership terms, it has diminish the hope of the younger generation and the distorted perceptions being inculcated that it is external aid that help the development of Africa is having tremendous insidious economic harm. The consequence has been higher level criminal activities due to social and political despondency. The level of public service corruption and drug trafficking cannot be tackled where there is lack of hope for positive change in socio-economic environment of

the continent due to apparent political weakness. The sense of incapability and development frustration are psychologically ingrained over years of systematic self-disempowering process. The years of Africans waiting at the shore for already made goods and food cannot continue in an age where self-sustenance is equated to economic power and sovereignty. If wealth continue to abound in Africa and we're made poor by knowledge ignorance and clumsiness then the reverse will undo those malignant attitude prevalent on the continent.

Those who have become so bankrupt of essential knowledge about Africa as a continent and have imbibed ideologies and doctrines inimical to harnessing resource and wealth abundance on the continent have continue to hold key authority in policy making that is required to push African people forward. The emaciated African who felt civilisation in Europeanised sense is what the African need have wrought serious damage to opportunities which today have created a scenario of beggary societies who cannot exercised their mental power creatively to change mud houses 500 years ago into stone ones. The overt intellectual castration that make learning simply erudition exercise in Africa but not applicable or applied one to turn into our lingua the various knowledge essential for development, and accessible to all and sundry in our societies is a bit, if not more of helpless situation that require radical measures to deal with. Yes, we admit some level of victimisation to African people but there is the Akan adage that the person pushed down doesn't need to lie there for excessive period. The indication has been that there is too much ideological and political disunity and dissention on the continent. The issue of unity has been personalised to the detriment of the majority of inhabitants on the continent. It is the wish that 2010 and beyond open a better sense of direction, cooperation and political astuteness that can harness and galvanise the vision of integration to reality for our common good.

The important issue left now is to impugn the African political conscience on the best African leaders can do with vast array of opportunities on the continent to change the old perception of cultivated incapability, victims' attitude and beggary syndrome. This is where many Africans need healing and not the jokes and magic by which only a few

enrich their pockets out of wickedness and selfishness in the name of religion that is entrenching the attitude of laziness and apathy to deal with African problems realistically. No wonder the African mind is all about import and not export, vain miracles and not common sense oracles. The excessive indoctrination that knowledge has to be sourced from elsewhere when the continent is custodian of essential knowledge to turn the African world around and impact the world is overdue but not too late to do what is right for the continent regain her significance on the global scene.

The use of violence and proliferation of wars is counter productive to development in Africa in 21st Century. Places like Somalia, Sudan, Guinea, DRC, Uganda and some other states embroiled in excessive political fracas have quarrelling parties refusing to be typical African who fight in order to make lasting peace. In this sense, we cannot deny conflict in human society but its perpetuation as an instrument of exploitation and power mongering is sheer ignorance of neo-Africanism. Neo-Africanism should be the pursuit of African political and socio-economic issues on scholarly paradigm that makes Africa the datum, a local frame of reference. African political antagonists should discard the old liberation fighters approach, who had no choice to violence in the decolonisation of Africa. There should rather be a shift to approaches that is dialogue, consensus-building, preservation of life and values and not destructive.

If there is any warfare for Africans today, it should not be that of using lethal sophisticated weaponry that destroys the human and other properties and wealth resources. War lords (civilians or military) should think about maximising knowledge about Africa and rebels should think about going to school and becoming computer wizards for the new age that transcends this globe. There is serious job market out there than killing oneself to make a war lord feel supreme and more dangerous. The state importation of caches of dangerous weapons should be diverted into the age old call for more schools with redesigned curriculum that informs the educated much about Africa, then globally and beyond. We should move from the orthodox approach of exotic to indigenous systems that are environmentally friendly and consistent with basic logic of

caring for the Planet Earth. This, I describe as information armament and it is the crucial need for Africa now.

Information armament can be described as reinventing knowledge and recompiling information to serve, reawaken, and spearhead development, and transformation and knowledge dissemination. Information armament takes the form of acquiring essential knowledge. Essential knowledge draws the battle line of non-lethal weaponry front. Historically, the world has gone through stages that can be described as cage-of-conscience where even in Europe wielding essential knowledge has been known to be the most authoritative and exclusive. This brought about a competitive control over who has right to essential knowledge and not. Access to essential knowledge was sexised, aristocratised and later racialised. Vandalism to acquire non-European form of essential knowledge became inevitable as Europe saw the vast pool of such knowledge beyond their territories. Arabs, Asians and Africans became hunting ground which requires subjective dehumanising approach to extract essential knowledge and where impossible suppress their development and use through political and religious controls. Since then, essential knowledge has been exclusive right of Westerners and in non-Western world it has been replaced with shallow religious doctrinaires which potency is evidence in the helpless state of Africa and elsewhere today. (We don't have time to waste discussing this African religious intoxication.) Let's rather look at some examples of the relevance of essential knowledge in other continents.

Asians who have migrated from oral to written documentation and preservation have benefited in protection of their essential indigenous knowledge whilst not discarding new ones, have survived the information assault of the older western order and have become a global and universal force today by dint of knowledge and what it can do to advance societies. We do not say all is well in Asia but the level of change and transformation taking place in many Asian states from India to China and Korea cannot be divorced from tradition knowledge base and meticulous borrowing of western thoughts. Today, westerners have embraced many ideas from Asian context in terms or redefining

management, decision-making, health and sciences, sports and entertainment and putting aside many other false assumptions in the Western world.

Information armament is the key to sustainability, the weapon required today for Africa to protect citizens and sustain the environment and create wealth. Sustainability is not financial grant neither loan from International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Sustainability is knowledge based wisdom and such knowledge is home made and though can be improved with blending of other knowledge sources. For example, Okomfo Anokye sword in Kumasi, Ghana, has much to tell about other unknown information about gravity that keeps the sword there. Has that feat ever become an issue of academic and scientific inquest sensation in West Africa? (Unless there is proof that it is quackery). Ancient Empires in contemporary Mali were in process of blending technological knowledge from Arabs with African ones. What went wrong is when the Arab knowledge was allowed to overwhelm local systems and knowledge and it speaks much of the death of whatever has started which cannot be attributed to colonisation by the French and other factors alone. Egyptian secrets have been Westernised as non-African in modern world. The need to begin to direct political energies towards information armament is critical to carry the continent into the fast upcoming complex information paradigm that may not be necessarily scientific mechanistic toolery form but practical rudimentary knowledge that is localised and sustainable.

There are various arrays of essential knowledge that can be captured under information armament: esoteric knowledge, herbal medicinal, linguistic, historical – oral and document, local values (ethical), astronomical and astrological, agricultural and land management, art and pottery, artefacts interpretation, totemism and environmental relations, traditional leadership and governance (an initiative started under University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Leadership Centre), psychology (which already UKZN Psychology School has initiated African Psychology as an integral dimension of study to explore) among some others. In October 2009 the South African Broadcasting Corporation showed two documentaries of first, a Jewish man who has come to learn African tradition medicine from our own *Sangomas*; and second was an American

medical doctor who has come to train in *Sangoma* School and now writing books on defending the efficacy and relevance of unorthodox African practices. It would not be surprising that in a few years we shall be paying sums of dollars to have access to African indigenous knowledge stored elsewhere because we are unable to recognise them as essential knowledge and systematically organise them for application and decision-making.

The work of compiling knowledge requires research and resources which relegate it to the state or as regional task. If knowledge therefore can be seen in Africa as potential to move Africa into its own vibrant paradigm that can offer some solution in the current stagnating inadequate ideologies and knowledge from non-African sources, then such significant attainment will also change the wrong perception about Africa. It is a costly project that worth pursuit as it is equally a potential power for advancement, development explosion and transformation that has relevance of sustainability.

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