

Why Have Attempts at Pan-African Unity Been So Problematic?

Written by Madeleine Gunn

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MADELEINE GUNN, APR 18 2015

In a world made to appear smaller by globalisation, the concept of “unity” between actors within the international system may seem discordant – the market integration and cross-border flows that globalisation has facilitated appears to render deliberate attempts at unity subject to inevitability. Interactions between African states, however, have not followed this pattern, despite assertions since decolonization that not only can pan-African unity “be achieved, it *must* be achieved” (Green and Seidman 1968:22). This essay aims to explain why attempts at pan-African unity have been so problematic. The broad nature of this question necessitates a deliberate investigative focus in order to provide a useful analysis; the author has therefore chosen to focus on the conditions in which attempts have taken place and why this has rendered them problematic. The first section will discuss the development of Pan-Africanism as a philosophy, providing context to the essay’s analysis and facilitating an understanding of reasons for attempting to unify. Secondly, the essay will place Pan-Africanism and unification attempts within an analytical framework, primarily using social constructivism to argue that pan-African unity has been attempted within an agency-restricting framework – the current global political system – and under a condition of “rule” that is at odds with the ideals and aspirations of pan-Africanism. Having established a basis for evaluation, the essay will address the different principles that relate to sovereignty and explore why they make pan-African attempts at unity problematic. The essay’s final section will assess rules related to development and how one of the primary aims of pan-African unity has become a tool that obstructs it. Whilst the concepts of sovereignty and development are extremely broad terms that appear to refer to entirely separate topics within international relations, this essay will demonstrate that this is not the case, and that the prescribed guidelines for actors involving themselves with these concepts constitute part of the restriction of agency that makes attempts at pan-African unity so problematic.

It is acknowledged that an examination of two concepts, with more analytical space according to sovereignty, will necessarily leave out important factors related to why attempts at pan-African have been so problematic. Sovereignty and development have been deliberately chosen as themes that relate to both the fundamentally practical difficulties of unifying actors and the conceptual difficulties of constructing a new regional framework to operate within. For the purposes of brevity, in-depth analysis of other practical and objective-related issues will not be included, such as institutional financial issues or conflict prevention/resolution as an aim of pan-African unity. They will however be referred to when necessary, as international interactions do not occur in thematic separation. Furthermore, the “global socio-political system” or the “international system” referred to throughout the essay refers primarily to interactions between states. This approach is recognised as being state-centric and does not account for the abundance of other actors who have an effect on the aims and implementation of pan-African unity, but is necessitated by the essay’s theoretical framework which provides focus and limits the analysis appropriately.

For the purposes of analytical clarity, the essay will provide a brief overview of the concept of “Pan-Africanism”, outlining key points in the philosophy’s development and its intended practical application in African politics. Pan-Africanism is “difficult to define because of its amorphous character”, described by proponents and detractors alike as “more a movement” than a “unified school of thought” (Welz 2013: 2; Murithi 2012:11). Whilst allowing for diverging stances upon the means through which certain goals are realized, these goals involve “an aspiration to realise or recapture the dignity, freedom, autonomy and/or unity of Africans and/or people of African descent” (Welz

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2013:2). Such aspirations are identifiable in the early manifestations of Pan-Africanism, with the first Pan-African Conference held in London in 1900 stating an aim to “influence legislation in the interests of the black races; and to ameliorate the condition of the oppressed negro in all parts of the world” (Sherwood 2012:107). These goals were reflected in the actions and writings of advocates such as W.E.B. DuBois, who in 1909 helped to establish the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) in America (Woronoff 1970:12). The “fragmented nature” of the “African” identity created divergence within the movement, with differing opinions on methods of emancipation and the eligibility of different groups to share in the proposed solidarity (Murithi 2005:7; Young 2010:60). The main underlying theme of conferences, publications and organisations remained an active desire to reject the social, political and economic inequalities left by slavery and continued by colonialism, and arguably shaped the (albeit varying) political stances of the first “wave” of independent African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah (Sherwood 2012: 108). The Manchester 1945 Congress saw the “cautious and meek demands of earlier days ... replaced by an analysis and condemnation of colonialism” (Woronoff 1970: 23). The resultant “Declaration to the Colonial Powers” marked a more aggressive stance on the part of institutional Pan-Africanism with regards to overall aspirations of dignity, freedom and equality, but notably also emphasised an active rejection of “systematic exploitation” and “the monopoly of capital” (Ibid.). Furthermore, the “demand for... autonomy and independence” was made within the parameters of “inevitable world unity and federation” (Ibid.). Whilst the delegates “only explore[d] the sentiment of similarities of origin” rather than outlining any plan of action, the latter assertion is remarkable as it arguably demonstrates a lack of acceptance of the world “system” at the time, as well as a belief that it could be changed.

This commitment to a change in Africa’s ability to exercise agency on the international stage was reflected in discussions of unity following independence. In basic terms, the pan-African Congress was divided into the Casablanca Group, who supported Nkrumah’s concept of a “United States of Africa”, and the Monrovia Group, who favoured an integrationist approach to unity. The latter group succeeded in their argument for the maintenance of sovereignty, within the institutional structure of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU); in a newly postcolonial context that was wary of centralised governance on a large scale this was not surprising (Young 2010:48). Whilst, as explored later in the essay, this decision to act under principles of sovereignty restricted the OAU, the first intergovernmental institution in the name of Pan-Africanism was born. With the replacement African Union (AU) established in 2001 as a means of taking on the challenges of an “increasingly global environment”, a union technically exists “but the African continent is not yet united”; this essay will explore why these attempts have been so problematic (Yihdego 2011:569; Murithi 2005:6). In the context of the international relations of Africa, Pan-Africanism can therefore be seen as a proposed new set of “rules” or “principles” for the way in which agents conduct themselves. By developing their “own means for overcoming ... challenges”, with a focus on uniting to work towards common aspirations and goals, the aim to provide “African solutions to African problems” can be read as a call for a shift in the way agency is exercised and therefore the structure that it operates in, by actively rejecting the global status quo that demands external orientation and instead “looking inwards” (Dersso 2012:13; Amin 2002:50).

Having established that the practical application of Pan-Africanism to international interactions calls for a change of the “rules” that govern agents, the essay will thus operate from a constructivist perspective, drawing on other theories’ concepts or terms where appropriate. Based particularly on the work of Nicholas Onuf and the idea that rules governing agents yield “conditions of rule”, the problems of pan-African attempts at unity will be investigated as constraints upon actors within the international system; this approach has been deliberately chosen as a means of examining African agency within international conditions, as Africa is arguably not a passive continent of “mere victims” to be acted upon (Belachew 2010:81). Onuf’s constructivism argues that there are “many rules, constituting and regulating the relations of states” (2014:2). Each time an interaction takes place within the international arena, there is an exercise of agency taking place within a structure i.e. a set of rules that regulates conduct. If these rules are followed, the social structure that they are a part of is continually constituted and reconstituted each time agency is exercised (Ibid:4). If a rule is not followed and therefore agents involved do not contribute to the reconstitution process, it is necessarily weakened to some degree. In this context, any “persistent pattern of domination and exploitation” is thus a continually reconstituted structure and social arrangement that agents operate in, with attendant “rules affirming and supporting these activities” (Onuf 1997:93).

Pan-Africanism, as the basis for attempts at pan-African unity, denotes goals and aspirations that are in direct

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opposition to the current rule patterns that facilitate exploitation. The attempts themselves are thus undertaken within a social framework that will hinder progress towards these goals. With the explicit rejection of “systematic exploitation” and advocacy of continental solidarity, Pan-Africanism can be seen as a suggestion for an alternative social structure. Attempts at pan-African unity should therefore be attempts to operate in accordance with such a framework, interrupting the maintenance of the current global socio-political structure by breaking current rules and thereby constituting a new set of rules for African actors which will facilitate achievement of the goals of pan-Africanism. The essay will illustrate the ways in which attempts at pan-African unity are instead enacted in accordance with the current global structure, and how this impacts upon the objectives of pan-African attempts at unity: “asserting that Africa must “gel” with the world ... without interrogating the structural situation within which the continent ... finds itself, is highly problematic” (Taylor and Nel 2002:166). The above theoretical outline is not a basic prescription to “do x instead of y, so that the rules will expect y rather than x”: it is not a simple case of rule breaking and re-making. Onuf and Klink’s concept of “conditions of rule” will be used to explain the difficulties of exercising agency in an autonomous way towards desired ends; in this case, pan-African unity for the increased wellbeing of African people.

“Conditions of rule”, as yielded by the current patterns of rules that govern actors within the current global political structure, denote a “system for the distribution of privilege” (Onuf 2014:5). The interactions that occur within the constraints of these rules – for example, exchanges of goods, capital or information between states – cause a “pattern of outcomes consistently benefitting some states over others. That this pattern broadly reflects the differential capabilities of states may raise questions of justice and calls for redistribution” (Ibid:8). In this way, supposedly equal states following the same rules do not benefit in the same way from interactions. World-system theory notes this asymmetry of outcomes to be arranged according to states’ positions within the core/periphery model, referring to the rules that govern such interactions as “terms of trade” (Mahutga and Smith 2011:257). Actors at the core, with highly differentiated capacities, will enjoy higher levels of benefit than those at the periphery, which depend on the export of primary commodities to the core to benefit in any way. Onuf and Klink conceptually separate the different ways in which the benefit asymmetry is maintained into “hegemonic”, “hierarchical” and “heteronomous” conditions of rule, corresponding to the different functions of the categories of rules that govern interactions (1989). It should be noted that all three “conditions of rule” may exist simultaneously, as patterns of rules related to interactions may include particular rules of different categories.

Hegemonic rule in the current global structure is produced by adherence to “instruction rules”. This rule category serves to “establish statuses and routinize activities” by prescribing a certain way of thinking and exercising agency as the best form of action (Onuf 1997:93; Onuf 2013:67). Adherence to these guidelines within the current global political structure therefore maintains the process of “promulgation and manipulation of instruction rules by which superordinate actors monopolise meaning, which is then passively absorbed by subordinate actors” (Onuf and Klink 1989:160). Within the dominant neo-liberal paradigm in international relations, with integration into a globalised free market promoted as aspirational, are sets of instruction rules that constrain and enable different actors and facilitate a condition of hegemonic rule. Hierarchical rule is derived from rules that dictate a “chain of command” and place actors in relation to one another, recommending courses of action based on their position in the hierarchy. Whilst the condition of hierarchical rule of the international system is informal, the prevalence of the idea of a “Division of Labour” within global markets prescribes rules for actors according to their differential capabilities (Mahutga and Smith 2011:258). As mentioned above, this is reflected in the asymmetry of benefits yielded in international interactions. Lastly, the condition of heteronomous rule is caused by adherence to commitment-based rules during interactions. Actors fulfil their “duties” and exercise their “rights” within the international system in the same way as they perceive others are doing so. However, because of the existing conditions of hegemony and hierarchy, agents that are supposedly reciprocally acting upon these commitments will not benefit equally (Onuf 2014:3). Heteronomy in particular presents problems for international actors because it is upheld on the basis of “presumed autonomy” – agents are not “trapped” in unequal exchanges, they have the same rights conferred upon them as everyone else, but the conditions of hierarchy and hegemony make exercises in agency outside of these conditions extremely difficult and risky (Onuf and Klink 1989:168).

Having presented the theoretical lens through which the problematic character of pan-African unity will be investigated, the essay will begin its analysis by examining the rule patterns that constitute the notion of state

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sovereignty. In the current international system sovereignty is a set of organising principles – therefore containing instruction and commitment based rules – demanding territorial integrity for states within designated borders, assigning spaces in which individual agents exist, live and act according to another set of governing rules or laws (Welz 2013:10). Despite assertions that “traditional notions of territoriality, independence and non-intervention are losing some of their meaning”, the adherence to the rules of sovereignty and the related conditions of rule arguably present serious problems for pan-African unity (Ferreira-Snyman 2010:140). The debate between the Casablanca and Monrovia groups discussed above was centred upon sovereignty, with an alternative conception to the Westphalian model championed by Kwame Nkrumah as a new set of principles for African agents to follow (Farmer 2012:93). However, the triumph of Nyerere and the Monrovia group saw sovereignty imparted as a “ready made” principle, a newly acquired combination of commitment and instruction rules that constrained outside forces and enabled those within accepted borders “the right to self-determination ... long denied to the African people” (Young 2010:46; Welz 2013:11). In this way, the principles of sovereignty became cornerstone rules of the first intergovernmental manifestations of Pan-Africanism, an assertion of the new rules “aimed at colonial powers” in the OAU Charter in a pledge “to defend their sovereignty, integrity and independence” (Yihdego 2011:573; Article II, quoted in Bukarambe 1985:133). This deliberate articulation of an anti-colonial stance through an affirmation of the principles of sovereignty appears to reflect the aspirations of Pan-Africanism, gearing African state actors towards combatting the formal condition of hierarchical rule of the colonial era and strengthening solidarity within the periphery.

However, applying Onuf’s concept of rule to the principle of sovereignty and its relationship with African agents yields several observations about why attempts at pan-African unity have been so problematic. Firstly, the transfer of a “ready made” set of principles from the ex-colonisers to the newly independent states illustrates conditions of both hegemonic and heteronomous rule – the former because of the passive, absorptive nature of the transfer, the latter because of the appearance of progress and the “presumption of autonomy” required in order for African states to “accept” their newly granted access to agency within the principles of sovereignty. In other words, states were granted “independence” or control over their own agency, but within a social arrangement of rules that did not allow for changes to address the asymmetry of the international rules of interaction under colonialism: “a confused cultural amalgam to the disadvantage of Africans” (Oke 2006:332). Instead, for interactions between supposedly equal sovereign states to have any benefit whatsoever for peripheral African actors, the external orientation of African economies and infrastructures must be maintained to continually favour actors at the core. This is supported by the core’s hegemonic and hierarchical rule through the encouragement of all equal sovereign actors to pursue their “comparative advantage” rather than seeking change. The condition of heteronomous rule results from the “granting of agency”, the assumed reciprocity denoted by norms of international recognition and the associated adherence to sovereignty principles therefore greatly inhibits attempts at pan-African unity. Onuf summarises that “states seek recognition and thus the right to participate in these relations because it benefits them to do so. How much they benefit is another matter” (2014:8). African state agents choose a “losing deal” with core actors rather than risking “no deal” with each other (Hirshman quoted in Onuf and Klink 1989:168). From the perspective of Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah’s assertion that “independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent” illustrates the disparity between the granting of sovereign agency and the ability to exercise it outwith the demands of those who granted it in order to work towards pan-African unity (1963, quoted in Welz 2013:3).

The reciprocal nature of sovereignty as a pattern of rules also presents a barrier for pan-African unity by facilitating the agency of neo-patrimonial state regimes. The heteronomous interactions between actors at the core and neo-patrimonial states are, according to the principles of sovereignty, free exchanges between equal sovereigns with the same rights and duties. However, the nature of neo-patrimonial regimes, a legacy of colonial governance, allows the minimal benefits accrued by African states within these asymmetric interactions to be used to “prop up” the regime within its own borders. Flows of capital are directed through state organisations that are a reproduction of neo-liberal core state institutions in name and little else – this in itself reflects hegemonic rule in that subordinate actors make a show of sharing the monopolised good governance models of the superordinate core (Andreasson 2010:149). In turn, the neo-patrimonial state is accorded the right to participate in the international system on behalf of its population, despite only representing a very small percentage who have a material interest in exercising agency in a way that continually reconstitutes the conditions of rule; the blow of asymmetrical benefits is softer when the distribution of capital is limited by highly personalised political systems (Bretton and de Walle 1994:486). Whilst

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recognised as legitimate representative actors outside of the state, these elites are dependent on outside recognition and support because “control of the state equates to control of resources and control over power” (Gibb 2009:716). In this way regimes are able to suppress opposition by allocating resources to state-controlled tools of repression, exercising the rights according to them by the commitment-rules of sovereignty within the international system (Tsie 1996:91). Neo-patrimonial elites therefore retain “what lies at the heart of the deep-seated reluctance of African leaders to share ... elements of sovereignty”: the sole ability to exercise agency on behalf of their country, reconstituting the conditions of rule that make pan-African attempts at unity problematic (Gibb 2009:716). The conditions of rule within the current international system facilitate regimes within Africa that are unlikely to aid in the constitution of a more balanced structure through attempts at pan-African unity, particularly when lip-service to the “legitimacy and professional competence that are the hallmarks of the modern state” is enough to maintain the appearance of following hegemonic instruction rules (Taylor and Williams 2008:141).

The principle of non-intervention within the sovereignty framework also presents several problems for pan-African unity. A “lack of willingness to cede sovereignty vis-à-vis the AU” has been described as “one of the bigger ... stumbling blocks for deeper integration” (Welz 2013: 5). Instruction and commitment-based rules that would facilitate supra-national institutional agency and thus allow international intervention in the name of the aspirations of pan-African unity – increased wellbeing for African people – are at direct odds with the rule of non-intervention held up within the sovereignty framework. Leading on from the discussion of neo-patrimonial regimes, this means that the AU, as a manifestation of pan-African attempts at unity, has limited scope for addressing the inequalities within its member states, which are recognised as legitimate sovereign actors in the international system with accompanying rights and duties. These limitations were reflected in the criticisms levelled at the OAU as a “club of dictators” and a “toothless bulldog”, and such charges imply that expectations for the contribution of the organisation towards the cause of pan-African unity were at least there in the first place (Welz 2013:3; van Walraven 2004:200). This in turn supports the argument that practical manifestations of Pan-Africanism which have been undertaken under conditions of rule have necessarily been subject to these conditions and therefore have been problematic. The principle of non-intervention within a sovereignty framework limits the scope of institutions based on Pan-Africanism to demand a change in agency that would facilitate the aims of unity. For example, the Memorandum of Understanding adopted at the Durban summit in 2002 placed emphasis upon civil participation and grassroots involvement in pan-African attempts at unity, aiming to provide “an essential missing link” to the facilitation of pan-African goals (Tieku 2004:256). However, the continuation of neo-patrimonial regimes prevents mass participation in domestic politics in order to prevent any effective opposition to the ruling elites and thus minimise the risk of losing personal material wealth and/or patronage. In the large number of African states that are ruled by neo-patrimonial regimes (figure), the potential contribution of non-governmental groups to pan-African unity is thus minimised.

However, the rise of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) discourse within sovereignty-related rule patterns yields further “confused cultural amalgam[s]” to the detriment of attempts at pan-African unity. The concept of “popular sovereignty”, in which the commitment-rules detailing the rights and duties of sovereign actors include the condition of “earning” sovereign authority by adherence to rules concerning human rights, has developed within the current global framework as an embodiment of the neo-liberal ideals of good governance (Makinda and Okumu, quoted in Murithi 2005:17). Whilst undoubtedly well meaning, R2P is still an example of a hegemonic monopoly over ideas about appropriate conduct in international interactions – a suggested alternative framework that is supported by core actors has had nowhere near the number of issues that pan-African unity has. Furthermore, an initial reading of this sovereignty principle may posit that a focus on human rights and universal equality is in keeping with the aspirations of Pan-Africanism and the desire to address asymmetry; therefore adherence to the rules of sovereignty as suggested by R2P is likely to facilitate pan-African unity. However in practice, this set of rules, already subject to debate among state actors across the global socio-political structure, is directly at odds with the way in which sovereignty was originally “bestowed” upon African actors as is therefore extremely difficult to implement even when institutional agency has been facilitated. For example, AU Constitutive Act Article 4h, which “envisages that the AU will have the right to intervene in a Member State in response to grave circumstances” may be treated as a proposed alternative rule to the principle of non-intervention, but within the principles of “rights and duties” as conveyed by the notion of popular sovereignty (quoted in Belachew 2010:86). However in practice, the AU Commission’s rejection of the International Criminal Court’s arrest warrant for Sudan’s President al-Bashir in 2009, with reference to Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, represented a decision to exercise agency according to one set of sovereignty-based

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rules over another (Ibid.). This particular example illustrates the choice of “pan-African agents” to act according to the instruction and commitment rules of sovereignty that were imparted at the end of the colonial era. The citing of the Charter of an international institution with the perceived authority to recognize legitimate states, rather than facilitating pan-African institutional agency that may weaken the rules of the current global system by removing elements of neo-patrimonial regimes that maintain external orientation, reinforces conditions of hegemonic and heteronomous rule and their attendant rules for state actors within them.

Having illustrated that pan-African attempts at unity have been made problematic by the conditions of hegemonic and heteronomous rule that almost guarantee the adherence of actors to the rule patterns of sovereignty imparted during decolonisation, the essay’s final section will assess the rules that govern interstate interactions when the “mutually desired outcome” for at least one of the states involved is development. The following description of the implications of development can be directly compared with the aforementioned aspirations of pan-African ideology: “increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being” (Nakpodia 2011). Whilst referring to implications at the sub-state level, these effects describe a change in actors’ ability to exercise agency, and therefore denote a new set of rules for agents that have experienced “development” to conduct themselves by. The process of development can therefore be seen alongside Pan-Africanism as a call for, and the taking of practical steps towards, a new structure that facilitates these positive exercises in agency, by suggesting and attempting to constitute a new set of rules. Consequently, in the context of the “global structure”, development should constitute a process through which the “gaps” between the agencies of core and peripheral actors in the global political system are closed. Within the dominant neo-liberal paradigm, development occurs on a linear trajectory, with countries going through “transitions” and achieving “levels” of development depending on how “modern” they are (Gibb 2009:705; Amin 2002:49). Regional integration – i.e. a practical manifestation of pan-African unity – has been prescribed on multiple occasions by international institutions as an important course of action in order for African countries to “unleash their full potential” (World Bank website 2014; IMF Seminar “Africa Rising” 2014; Malaudzi 2006:9). This aim is reminiscent of Nkrumah’s assertion that unification would allow African actors to “harness the economic potential and resources on the continent for the betterment of its people”, but on their own terms (Biney 2008:131).

However, as discussed above, the regional integration models facilitated by the current international system are prescribed sets of constitutive instruction rules – neo-liberal integration is seen as “the only way forward” and is presented as such (Taylor 2011:200). The “obvious tension between on the one hand supporting global free trade, and on the other committing oneself to changing the rules of the system to ensure greater equality” creates problems for pan-African unity (Thompson and Leysens 1996:8 quoted in Taylor and Nel 2002:169). The idea of Pan-African “regional solidarity” as advocated in the years following independence supported “concerted regulation” of core inputs “instead of perpetuating an artificial specialisation in unskilled labour and cut-rate natural resources” (Chase-Dunn 1975:736; Green and Seidman 1968:21). A process of perpetuation did occur, however, with “little sign of a counter strategy” against the “danger of being co-opted by the holders of power” (Taylor and Nel 2002:178). This can be attributed partly to a “completely misconceived analogy with the European Union” (EU) as the exemplar attempt at continental unity, despite the fact that the political culture of participating states and therefore their aims are entirely different (Gibb 2009:702). State actors within the EU have not needed to facilitate development as a primary objective, and have not been subject to imprudent allocations of resources as a result of prevalent neo-patrimonial regimes within their member states, yet the organisation has faced difficulties in exercising agency in opposition to principles of sovereignty (Welz 2013:4). Despite these disparities, the global structure constrains exercises in agency that might weaken it (such as the joint “acquisition of technological capabilities”), rather than unity as a means to capitalise upon available resources of externally-oriented economies (Booth and Commack 2013:3). Instead, core-centric instruction rules and “opportunities” are presented as helpful guidelines on how to “move up” the modernisation chain (Mangala 2012:4; Onuf 2014:14). This can also be seen as a condition of hierarchical rule, with the guidelines as directive rules that prescribe roles relative to other actors based on where they are placed within the chain. As a result what should be a display of pan-African unity in the face of exploitation, by working together upon regional integration projects that increase intra-African exchanges and diversify production, instead becomes “an essential acceptance of the basic tenets of the ongoing world order”, as the actors involved in the “unity” of regional projects remain externally orientated and firmly situated within conditions of hegemonic, hierarchic and heteronomous rule (Taylor 2003:312).

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In conclusion, attempts at pan-African unity have been problematic because the aspirations of these attempts are directly at odds with the rules governing the current global socio-political system, and attempts to exercise agency in a way that would break this rules is made difficult by conditions of hegemonic, hierarchial and heteronomous rule. This essay has provided an in-depth analysis of the rules that prescribe appropriate behaviour in interactions between sovereign states. It has been found that the transfer of sovereignty principles simply shifted conditions of formal hierarchical rule during the colonial era to informal hierarchical rule within the international division of labour, as well as facilitating highly personalised neo-patrimonial regimes within states that have vested interests in maintaining the external orientation of their countries' economies; therefore they do not see the exercise in agency required to facilitate pan-African unity as worth risking their neo-colonial arrangements or international recognition for as due to conditions of hegemonic rule, a "losing deal" is better than a potential "no deal" situation. The rise of the R2P discourse was also addressed, and found to be at odds with the sovereignty principles imparted at independence. This complicated the exercising of institutional agency that *could have* been granted, causing the AU itself to reinforce the overarching structure that its philosophical basis is opposed to. The essay's focus then shifted to development as an embodiment of pan-African aspirations, finding that attempts at unity in order to facilitate development are also enabled according to sets of rules that does not address the asymmetry in international interactions. In a longer evaluation, further analytical space would have been dedicated to South Africa's "African Renaissance" and other deliberate exercises of agency within the international system contrary to the aims of pan-African unity. Whilst certainly narrow, this essay has comprehensively addressed some of the "non-economic, state-centric objectives that underpin the majority of regional agreements" by contrasting the philosophical underpinnings of Pan-Africanism with actors' attempts to put it into practice and work towards the goals ultimately shared by those who first fiercely debated the paths to unity. One of them, Nyerere, asserted more than thirty years later that "we of the first generation leaders of independent African have not pursued the objective of African Unity with the vigour, commitment and sincerity that it deserves" – these traits will be required in abundance if agency is to be exercised in a way that will challenge neo-liberal rhetoric and reconstitute the "patterns of domination and exploitation" inherent in the current conditions of rule (quoted in Biney 2008:147; Onuf 1997:93). Attempts at pan-African unity are attempts at change in an unequal system, which means they are likely to stay problematic, but to quote Nyerere again: "that does not mean that unity is now irrelevant" (Biney 2008:147).

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Date written: October 2014