

Africanity and the Quest for a Permanent Seat in the United Nations Security Council for Africa

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Abstract

This article draws on interviews with practitioners, academics and a textual analysis of secondary data in analysing how Africanity connects with Africa's quest to obtain permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. The paper argues from two sides, first, is there the capacity for Africa to articulate its strengths, knowledge and to espouse a development capability through African institutions such as the African Union, rather than relying on a set of nations purportedly demeaning African identity and importance in global affairs, and development assistance? Second, what is the benefit that a permanent United Nations seat offers Africa to further propagate strength, value and importance in global affairs?

Introduction

Africa, the world's second largest continent by geographic and demographic size, is endowed with resources. Conversely, it remains largely underdeveloped, with poor infrastructure and low human capital development mirroring socio-political and institutional deficiencies in many of her 54 member countries. The continent has been plagued with very high level of corruption, mortality, diseases, insecurity, inequality, poverty, low literacy level, violent conflicts, sit-tight syndrome of political leaders, among other socio-economic and political deficits (Abegunrin, 2009; Hyden 2006; Taylor and Williams, 2004; Ukeje, 2005).

While slight growth has been recorded over the decades, many countries still lack noteworthy development. Significantly, life expectancy at birth is relatively low. In 2014, the average figure for African people was 58 years, 12 years shorter than the global average (United Nations Children's Fund, 2014). Also, the United Nations Children's Fund (2014) estimates that about 60 per cent of the African population, and 70 per cent of Africa south of the Sahara, survives on less than US\$2 per day. The *2016 Human Capital Report* noted that with an overall average score of 55.44, Africa south of the Sahara is the lowest-ranked region in the world. In terms of trade, Africa remains a marginal player in services trade, with an export share of only 2.2 per cent, and a struggling services sector constraining her aspiration to be a global services trade player (United Nations, 2016). Home-grown ideas, like foreign ones, have been postulated in addressing her 'deeply troubled' status (Gberie, 2005: 337). Among the former is Africanity.

Africanity, as has been noted in the literature, is an amalgam of ideas on the shared histories, cultural and social practices that unite people of Africa, the promotion of a sense of recognition of the *Africanness* of the African as well as spatial and political affiliation on the Africa continent (Mkandawire, 2006). It aims at fostering development on the continent and promoting the values and institutions of the continent on the global stage as a way to correct the foreign actors' denial of an African identity prior to colonialism. While Western literature often denounce African indigenous knowledge and identity, authors of African descent have argued that African knowledge and ideas existed prior to colonialism. Thus, Africanity is a collection of ideas aimed at reaffirming and rediscovering the identity of Africa and African people. It is argued that, this cannot be achieved without the promotion of "African knowledge" which has been suppressed and overlooked by imperial powers and substituted with "developed knowledge" of the West. On the one hand, intergovernmental organisations and institutions, such as the United Nations (UN), one can argue, offer platforms for the espousal of Africanity, especially through its most powerful organ, the Security Council. On the other hand, arguments also tilt towards limiting such articulation and espousal, first and foremost, to African institutions.

The UN was founded in 1945 with the aim of preventing another war on the basis of the principle of collective security. Unlike its hapless predecessor, the League of Nations, which could not save humanity from the disaster of the First World War, the UN survives for more than seven decades (Akindele, 2000; Khanna, 2004). Its Charter, signed in 1945, provides six principal organs, which are; the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Secretariat and the Trusteeship Council. The Trusteeship Council became irrelevant after the process of decolonization was completed (Khanna, 2004). The negotiations which saw the birth of the UN, took into considerations the roles played by the victorious allies in the First World War. As part of the spoils of victory, the allies negotiated themselves into the Security Council, which is the most powerful organ because of the veto power wielded by its permanent members (Kugel, 2009). It has the responsibility of maintaining world peace and security and can make compelling decisions on member nations.

The Security Council has fifteen members made up of five permanent members with the veto power, namely, China, France, Russia, United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America. These permanent members enjoy some privileges, including filling positions in the major UN Secretariat posts, the ICJ, and other decision making bodies of the organisation (Kugel, 2009). The other ten non-permanent members are elected for a period of two years. With less than sixty member states at inception in 1945, the organisation has today grown into a truly universal organisation with 193 members following the addition of South Sudan on 14 July, 2011 (United Nations, 2011).

At present, there appears to be an ironic connexion between Africa and the UN, in the sense that, there is a lot of talk about Africa with development issues in Africa dominating discourse, there is not so much talk with Africa and even less the role of Africa at the UN (FES Conference, 2008). At the time when the UN Charter was drafted there were few independent African states. However, Africa became actively involved in the UN throughout 1960s as most countries became decolonised. The newly independent countries joined the UN and used it as a platform for advancing interests, most notable was the struggle against colonialism and institutionalised racism against supremacist regimes in Southern African (Saliu, 2005). With over a quarter of all member states, African constitute the largest regional grouping in the UN. However, this does not necessarily translates to active participation and unified decision making as African Members States have a problem of speaking with one voice and synchronizing their positions in the global body.

Africa is without a permanent member in the Security Council. This and other factors have led to agitations for reforms, notably, the enlargement of the United Nations Security Council (Abegunrin, 2009). It has been argued that since the establishment of the United Nations Security Council, permanent members have used their veto power to advance their national interests. The use of that power rapidly distanced from the initial reason for which it was included in the UN Charter, namely preventing the UN from taking direct action against any of its principal founding members (Okhovat, 2012). Thus, critics make demands that the Council should be more representative, accountable, legitimate, democratic, transparent, effective, fair and even-handed (Nahory, 2004).

This paper, thus, attempts at connecting Africanness with Africa's quest to espouse its qualities on the global arena. It examines if such espousal will be suitably done through African institutions or through the platforms that a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council could provide.

Africa and Africanness

Africa is a region of cultural and geographic diversity. But with a few exceptions, like the Arabs, Botswana, Mauritius, and South Africa, countries in the region share the common fate of being among the poorest in the world. In the milieu of the current global economy, most African countries, especially Africa south of the Sahara, languish in severe deprivation and underdevelopment. Various explanations have been provided for this state of affairs: colonialism, traditional values, lack of capital – human as well as financial – and so on (Hyden, 2006).

With over 3,000 ethnic groups, about 2,000 languages are spoken across the continent (Abegunrin, 2009), reflecting wide ethno-cultural and linguistic differences among the population. Arabic, which dominates in the north of Sahara, is also spoken in countries in the Sahel belt immediately south of the desert, notably, Mauritania and Sudan. Mandinke, Yoruba, and Hausa dominate in West Africa; Swahili is most prominent in eastern Africa; Zulu, Sotho, and Xhosa are the most common languages in southern Africa. Many countries have chosen the language of their former colonial power for official and business purposes. Thus, French is the official language in twenty-one countries, English in twenty, and Portuguese in five. Cameroon and Mauritius use both English and French as official languages (Hyden, 2006). In terms of sub-regional geography, Africa is broadly divided among the North and countries south of the Sahel, or Africa south of the Sahara, the latter made up of countries in West, East, Central and Southern Africa. The picture of the continent is further captured by Thompson (2010).

There is no such thing as a typical African polity. There are 53 [now 54] separate independent states. Each is unique, and each has its own system of politics. The Gambia is a tiny country of just 11,000 square kilometres, while the [former] Sudan's territory is 250 times larger than this; Nigeria has a population approaching 150 [now over 170] million, while Lesotho has just two million inhabitants; Botswana is largely an arid state, but Congo-Kinshasa is lush in vegetation; Ethiopia is racially homogeneous, while South Africa is home to several 'races'. The north of the continent is predominantly Muslim and the south Christian, not to mention the mixture of indigenous spiritual traditions found throughout (Thompson, 2010:3).

Geographically, Africa has a very large landmass which is about 25 percent larger than North America with the inclusion of Canada and Alaska. It is almost the same as Europe and South America put together (Young, 1994). The continent is mostly tropical with hot summers and mild winters. Altitude moderates the climate especially in eastern and southern Africa. Africa's two highest mountains are Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and Mount Kenya in Kenya (Brown, 2004).

It is paramount to emphasize here that African history does not begin with European colonialism as it is sometimes portrayed. Africa and its people existed prior to the advent of colonialism in various autonomous communities and empires. In fact, pre-colonial Africa has been cited as the source of much of human history and culture (Young, 1994). However, one cannot talk about the history of Africa without talking about European colonialism of the continent, which started with the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 where the entire geography of the continent was officially portioned among Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Portugal for colonialism. Several reasons have been provided for colonialism, including, adventure, search for raw materials, search for market for finished produce and the civilization of the "Dark Continent" as Africa was called (Awofeso, 2014:10).

A school of thought links colonialism to the colonialists' aim of obliterating the indigenous culture of the African peoples by denying their history and denigrating their achievements and capacities. The colonialists' posture was that of showcasing Western culture as universal and better off and as such operated with the mandate of civilising the 'Dark Continent'.

African cultures were painted as inhumane, pre-modern and non-civilised, thus, demoting the cultures and values of the African people. It then became the agenda of Africa's intellectual class in the post-colonial period to break out of this colonial mentality. It was conceived that placing African people at the centre-stage in the history of their continent was an urgent task for the liberation of the continent and the decolonization of the mind (Mkandawire, 2006). It is in this light that Africanity, the cultural unity of African people and the promotion of the *Africanness* of African people both home and abroad, is espoused. Africanity hinges on "African knowledge" which, to paraphrase authors including Mama (2001), Howe (1998) and Maquet (1972), have been suppressed and overlooked by global imperial powers and substituted with "developed knowledge".

In the literature, the idea of Africanity has no universally accepted definition with authors using the concept in different ways. For instance, Mama (2001:10) states that 'not only is there no all-encompassing concept for identity in much of Africa, but there is no substantive apparatus for the production of the kind of similarity that the term Africanity seems to require'. She argues further that 'identity is at best a gross simplification of self-hood, a denial and negation of the complexity and multiplicity at the roots of most African communities' (Mama, 2001:33). Howe (1998), earlier, noted that the notion of Africanity brings us back to the early days of 'Pan-Africanism' and 'Negritude', as well as 'Afrocentrism', and the criticism of such concepts and ideologies from both within and outside the African continent. For Geschiere (2001), the whole issue of Africanity and African identity and its changing parameters is a nodal point, which brings together a wide gamut of preoccupations and facets including cultural, economic and socio-political ones.

The foregoing is further noted by Alumona (2016), that:

When we look at the concept 'Africanity' as an all-encompassing identity of African people, then we make generalisations that cannot be backed by empirical evidences but when we look at the concept in terms of similarities that run throughout Africa, we tend to have a better understanding of the concept as there is no all-encompassing trait or cultural value that unify Africa as a whole apart from the humanity of Africans. However, in terms of similarity, there exist lots of similarities between several cultures and knowledge in the continent (Alumona, 2016).

The foregoing is a pointer to the difficulty in capturing what Africanity connotes in actuality. It is often a subject of intellectual debate if indeed there is any attribute generally traceable to the various peoples of Africa who have between them several and varying races, languages, culture and political organisations. Thus, while it is possible to identify features of African cultures which appear to be similar and shared, there still exists deep-rooted variations. As a way to synchronize this, and birth a general idea that is uniquely African, Africanity talks about a cultural unity of the African people, made up of two main racial groups, the Negroid found majorly south of the Sahara and the Caucasoid in the north. It attempts at synchronising unique cultural heritage, institutions and ideas that are common to most African societies and channelling same for mental reawakening and 'African knowledge' that can accelerate development on the continent.

However, a racial divide still exists in Africa between countries in the North of the Sahara and those in the South. The question therefore, is how can a cultural unity be achieved amid this racial divide? This racial difference is evident in how Africa as a continent is demarcated in development indicators issued by organisations including the UN Systems and the World Bank, and in international politics, where North African countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia are mostly classified as part of the Middle East and other countries in Africa south of the Sahara (Hyden, 2006). All African countries, however, are members of the African Union - the continent's largest organisation. This highlights the potential the union has for being used as a launch pad for the espousal of a common identity-politically and economic, which Africinity aims at.

However, if African people are to develop this 'African knowledge' and overcome the colonisation of the mind which has ravaged the continent over the decades, is it important that a common ground that unites the various peoples of the continent be emphasised. This is heavily reliant on the cultural, economic and socio-political values that could expand the growth and development on the continent. Africinity links to the recognition of the Africanness of an African, appreciation of the essence of being an African and rediscovering, reaffirming and developing the indigenous knowledge systems. If arguments are to be made on what constitute Africinity, it can be said, in agreement with Alumona (2016), that the basic building block of Africinity is the humanity that the peoples of Africa share; and historical roots linked to areas within the geographic boundaries of the continent.

The United Nations Security Council and Agitations for Enlargement

There exists a general consensus within the UN that reformation of the Security Council is necessary (Ade-Ibijola, 2015; Kugel, 2009; Souare, 2005). The flaws of this organ have led to many calls for reform from most member states. Relations between the Council and the General Assembly are often strained largely as a result of the perception of the United Nations Security Council as an exclusive club of fifteen members that do not necessarily act according to the best interests of the majority of all member states (Okhovat, 2012). Nonetheless, few reforms have actually taken a hold in the past and the need to reform the primary organ continues to dominate discourse. The United Nations Security Council's permanent membership does not provide for equitable geographical representation and does not reflect today's shifting geopolitical realities. In addition, arguments have also been made on the need for the Council to become more democratic, transparent and accountable in its functioning (Kugel, 2009). Unreservedly, the slow attempt to reform the UN system particularly the United Nations Security Council suffers from its configuration from the very beginning which makes it "inflexible" to structural alteration (Ade-Ibijola, 2015). However, calls for reforms still persist with the United Nations Security Council having undergone restructuring once, although several reform attempts have been made since the late 1940s.

In 1963, the non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council was increased from six to ten. The campaign that brought about this development was led by Spain, and some other Latin American countries which proposed an amendment to the Charter in 1956 seeking to expand the number of non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council from 6 to 8. This amendment was approved by the General Assembly which increased the non-permanent membership seat from six to ten. This was later ratified by the United Nations Security Council (Bourantonis, 2005).

During the late 1970's, there was increased agitation for the enlargement of the United Nations Security Council because several states had been decolonized and became members of the UN and were also seriously concerned about the lack of "equitable representation" for Asia and Africa. Thus, countries from Africa, Asia, and Latin America proposed an increase of the non-permanent seats from 10 to 16. This proposal however, was not successful because of the Cold War (Ade-Ibijola, 2015). In 1993, the GA established an "Open-Ended Working Group" to consider proposals, which had many options, for reforms. This included a proposal by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a group of countries which stood detached from the Cold War ideological crisis, calling for an increase in permanent membership seats from 5 to 9. The group proposed an increase in representation for non-permanent seats, from 10 to 17 because the UN had not acted accordingly on proposals on enlargement submitted by India and other member states in 1979 and 1980 (Bourantonis, 2005).

In 2003, under the leadership of Koffi Annan as Secretary-General, a 16 member high level panel was set up to consider and recommend the appropriate options for restructuring (Ade-Ibijola, 2015; Kugel, 2009). The panel in 2004, proposed two different options for the United Nations Security Council restructuring which are as follows: Option (A) six new permanent seats without veto power and three additional non-permanent seats; Option (B) eight four year renewable seats and one additional non-permanent seat (Price, 2005). The Secretary-General endorsed the panel's recommendations and urged Member States to adopt its proposals before the World Summit. However, amid serious negotiations amongst Member States the Summit concluded without agreement on Security Council reform.

In September 2008, with a few hours left before the GA session would draw to an end, Member States agreed to move the deadlocked reform discussions from the Working Group to intergovernmental negotiations in an informal plenary of the GA. In doing so, resolution 62/557 was unanimously adopted as part of a common basis for negotiations in five key areas: categories of membership, the question of the veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Security Council, working methods of the Council; and the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly (Kugel, 2009).

The African Case for a Permanent Seat in the United Nations Security Council

The place of Africa in the UN has been a key source of debate within the United Nations Security Council, especially in view of discussions around development issues in the developing countries, most of which are in Africa south of the Sahara. However, Africa is rarely a source of influence in the deliberations and decisions. There have been views expressed by African leaders on perceived marginalisation from the global economy and how a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council can help Africa negotiate or veto resolutions that infringe on African economic interests (Ade-Ibijola, 2015). For instance, global issues that affect Africa's economy, such as global warming, impacts the developing world more than the developed as the developing world has less capacity to manage its outcome. It can be argued Africa can better discuss such issues as a globally recognised player and permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council offers a great platform to achieving this. A former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, in his address to the visiting United Nations Secretary General, espoused this much, that:

A situation where Africa is totally excluded from the permanent membership of the [UN Security] Council is unfair and untenable. Mr. Secretary-General, given the realities of today's world, a comprehensive reform of the United Nations system is imperative at this time. Specifically, the expansion of the Security Council (Jonathan, 2011:1).

His views corroborate that already espoused by several other African leaders and heads of governments in several countries where socio-economic indicators of development remain perpetually poor. Globally, while new HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) infections declined by about 40 per cent between 2000 and 2013 to 2.1 million new infections, Africa south of the Sahara alone accounted for 1.5 million cases (United Nations, 2015). It is estimated that about 4.6 million (46%) under five deaths is in Africa and 98% of these deaths occur only across 42 developing countries (Global Action for Children, 2008). Out of an estimated 289,000 global maternal deaths in 2013. Africa south of the Sahara alone accounted for 179,000 (62 %), and is still the riskiest region in the world for dying of complications in pregnancy and childbirth (Iaccino, 2014). These issues deserve the same recognition as the war against terrorism in the Security Council. It is, thus, contended that Africa's permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council will enhance finding solutions to such issues. According to Nabuaki (2005), the inclusion of Africa will also highlight the progressive democratic nature of the United Nations Security Council and, thus will legitimise it within the continent. It will also highlight a movement away from the 1945 setup to a more 21st century setup that fairly presents the state of the global community.

Among the criteria laid down by the UN 'Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change' (the Report on UN Reforms) is that the new members of the United Nations Security Council must have contributed 'most to the United Nations financially, militarily and diplomatically', particularly through contributions to United Nations assessed budgets and participation in mandated peace operations.

The other conditions spelt out are that new members should represent the broader UN membership, increase the democratic and accountable nature of the Council, and should not impair its effectiveness (Okumu, 2005). The African Union (AU), the apex continental umbrella body that comprises African States, has taken a position on the UN reforms as it affects Africa. This was an Executive Council Resolution of 7th Extra- Ordinary Session that was held on 7-8 March, 2005 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This position, “the Ezulwini Consensus”, was categorized into three broad segments namely; collective security and the challenge of prevention; collective security and the use of force and lastly, the institutional reform (Okumu, 2005).

Taking into consideration the criteria of the Report on UN Reforms, some of the African candidates put forward so far would appear qualified. For instance, Nigeria has contributed significantly to UN peacekeeping operations since independence. The United Nations in 2006 alluded to the role of Nigeria in the area of troop contribution:

By 2005, Nigeria has been named among the largest contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping missions. A ranking completed by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations on a monthly basis showed that as at April this year, Nigeria is actually the fourth largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping missions coming after Pakistan, Bangladesh and India (United Nations, 2006: 23).

Also, South Africa, Kenya and Senegal have all played crucial roles in promoting and maintaining peace and security in their respective regions. South Africa’s record in promoting peace on the continent includes playing leading roles to end conflicts in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and most recently in Ivory Coast. Kenya played a central role in ending Sudan's 21-year north-south civil war, Africa's longest running conflict. The peace efforts in neighbouring Somalia have also been maintained through Kenya’s support as host, first to the peace negotiations, and subsequently the government in exile. These countries have also demonstrated democratic posture although, safe for Egypt and Libya (Okumu, 2005).

Africanity and the Utility of Africa's Quest for a Permanent Seat in the United Nations Security Council

Africa's quest for a permanent seat with veto power in the United Nations Security Council has been at the forefront of UN - African discourse. As some African leaders have argued, Africa is one of the major topics of discussion in the UN and as such discussions should involve African people so as to enable the espousal of Africa's identity and represent African interest (Kugel, 2009). The quest, when linked to Africanity, however, can be assessed from various angles, out of which we consider two. First, beyond the UN which exists at a global level, Africa has its regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organisations and institutions.

It is thus worthy to appraise the capacity and capability of Africa using these bodies, primarily, to articulate her strengths and knowledge. In other words, questions need be asked on the extent to which the AU, for instance, as an African body has been used to articulate African competencies and ideas. If, in any way, the body has served as the platform to articulate shared values by the African people on the route to development on the continent, rather than relying on the same set of nations purportedly demeaning her identity and importance in global affairs, for development assistance.

While the literature on Africanity often articulates the denigration of African identity, knowledge and capacity by 'developed' countries, who also dominate proceedings at the United Nations Security Council in which Africa seeks a permanent seat, it can be argued that the mental reawakening that Africanity aims at can be demonstrated, socio-politically, by African countries focusing on finding African solutions to African problems and espousing and consolidating the idea of Africanity using the regional organisation rather than competing for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. In reality, however, what obtains is a situation where the regional organisation, the AU, has not served any purpose in this direction and African countries have not demonstrated their ability to speak with one voice at the continental level, thus, constraining the chances of being found worthy of the global responsibility in the United Nations Security Council. Indeed, even the AU is still heavily dependent on external assistance. As argued by Hodzi:

It is a disgrace for African countries, they cannot foot their own AU bill, and they could not build themselves decent [AU] headquarters [in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia] until China came to the rescue. The implication is that the African voice does not matter in global issues. Take the migrants crisis, despot Africans dying in the seas all that African states through the AU could do is issue a statement. Statements need to be backed by money (Hodzi, 2015).

The above position reflects Africa's over dependence on external bodies which belittles her quest to espouse Africanity at the global level and the need for Africa to look inward before competing at the global level. Hodzi further argued that it is not that Africa countries cannot meet the bills, but that they were used to being provided for by the US, EU and now China (Hodzi, 2015), a situation decried by Annan (2016) who posited that 'African countries must stop begging, cap-in-hand, for assistance from foreigners to address challenges confronting the continent'.

This over dependence of African countries on the West and other external bodies is a major bottleneck that hinders the development of 'African knowledge' and the defence of the cultural, economic and socio-political values that would lead to the internally induced growth and development of Africa. It brings to the fore the need for emphasis on African values and cultures and in looking inward to African capacities and African solution to African problems.

According to Albert, Africa, instead of dissipating energy on agitating for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, should focus on building her regional organisation which can be a platform of espousing African ideas. African countries must look inwards to solve African problems (Albert, 2016).

This however does not mean that Africa cannot relate with the world outside her borders but that in relating with the outside world, the continent should not allow the outside world dictate her affairs and undermine her significance and achievements. African countries must hold a firm position in matters affecting the continent and defend Africa's interest with one voice. This can only be made possible with consensus building. The continent must also take responsibility for her challenges - financially and otherwise. In the words of Obama:

One thing I will say, though, about the United Nations - everybody wants a seat at the table, but sometimes people don't want the responsibilities of having a seat at the table... You can't wear the crown if you can't bear the cross (Obama, 2015).

It is crucial that the continent realises that global power comes with global responsibility that needs to be financed and since they have not been able to adequately finance the continental organisation, there is the need to take up a more responsible posture as a prelude to competing for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.

Also, the quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council holds prospect of polarising the continent along national interest lines, as questions exist on how the specific country or countries that will hold the seat will be arrived at. This simply implies that there will be rivalry between nations of the continent to occupy the seat which will create tension and unhealthy conflict of interests as well as create the potential of demolishing the concepts of African Unity and African Renaissance which Africanity seeks to achieve. In the final analysis therefore, Africa may need to assert Africanity within before its espousal abroad.

Secondly, this paper argues from the angle of what a permanent United Nations Security Council seat offers Africa to further propagate her strength, value and importance to African and global affairs, and have a say in the biggest decisions affecting the human race. The UN is a conglomeration of nations and as such African countries having a permanent seat on its most powerful organ, the United Nations Security Council, enhances the espousal of African ideas and representation of African interests. Africa's interest through this platform can be adequately represented and her knowledge and accomplishment can be brought to the fore. The continent can also have a say in issues that affect her and other continents of the world as decisions that affect human race are chiefly discussed in the United Nations Security Council.

As earlier stated, African countries consist over a quarter of all UN member states and as such can use this platform to propagate Africanity and draw the world's attention to the uniqueness of Africa's cultures and values. This can translate to increased investment in Africa and increased recognition of the development-inducing potentials inherent in African cultures. The United Nations Security Council provide an excellent platform for the espousal of African identity at the global level. Also, becoming a major player in world politics, through permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council, is a position of strength capable of negating the idea that Africa had no culture or civilisation prior to colonialism. It also brings Africa at par with other regions. In the words of Zimbabwe's Foreign Affairs minister:

We all know that Europe is no longer such an important part of the world as it was in 1945. And then you look at Africa, 50-plus odd countries and not a single country sits on the Security Council as a permanent member wielding the veto, representing Africa and African interests (Mumbengegwi, 2015).

Similarly, Saungweme argues that:

Africa should be given a seat, not only one permanent seat but several. Africa is not a country but a continent with 54 countries. Why can't all the countries have permanent seats in the SC if certain individual countries have permanent seats? The UN needs reforms. It needs to stop treating other countries as more equal than others. It also needs to start respecting Africa and treat it as a continent and not a country" (Saungweme, 2015).

From the foregoing, it is evident that Africa's quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council holds good prospect if it can be achieved. It can provide a platform for the espousal of 'African knowledge' and Africanity. It can also create an avenue for the voice of African countries to be heard. There exist however, the problem of which country is best suited for the seat in terms of representing African interest. If Africa's interest is to be represented then African countries need to have a consensus on which country is to occupy the seat in an enlarged United Nations Security Council. This however, might be a herculean task as a number of African countries have signified interest in attaining the height, most notably, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and Senegal. The AU has failed to come up with a criterion of choosing which country to endorse (Okumu, 2005).

Conclusion

In retrospect, while there is no all-encompassing definition of the concept Africanity, there are similarities between and among African nations and peoples and these similarities can be consolidated to create an African identity. This identity is to be strengthened at home using African intergovernmental institutions. It is also to be projected and promoted abroad using several platforms such as the UN, particularly the Security Council which is the closest thing to a global government. Also, African people in the Diaspora should identify closely with the African roots and promote African indigenous knowledge wherever they are. In doing this, however, African nations and peoples should not isolate themselves from other cultures and knowledge that will help to bring development to the African continent. That is, African nations and peoples must be pragmatic in the search for solutions to the problem of underdevelopment -economic, political and otherwise that has ravaged the continent rather than rely on ideologies and theories.

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