

Beyond Pan-Africanism: Garveyism, Malcolm X and the end of the colonial nation state

Pan-Africanism is often viewed as being at the forefront of the global movement against imperialism. Black radicals linked the connection of struggles in the West to Africa. Kwame Ture argued that the logical conclusion of Black Power was Pan-Africanism.¹ In his founding of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity in 1964, Malcolm X proclaimed that ‘Africa will not go forward any faster than we [the Diaspora] will and we will not go forward any faster than Africa will. We have one destiny’.²

Pan-Africanism was seen to represent the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism on the African continent, providing a land base necessary for a new economic system. In this regard Pan-Africanism has become synonymous with movements such as Garveyism, which spread across the globe in the early twentieth century aiming to liberate ‘Africa for the Africans’.³ The Pan-African movement has come to represent the liberation struggle that took place across the continent in the post war period, spurred on by the infamous fifth Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester in 1945. The Pan-African struggle is seen as the anti-imperial, decolonial movement, which was savagely put down by Western powers.

Part of the problem with contemporary understandings of Pan-Africanism is that ‘because it has no founder, or particular set of political tenets it almost defies definition’.⁴ So broad is the realm of the Pan-African that it has been defined as radical politics of liberation on the continent; a liberal approach to promoting Africa within the imperial system and; limited to embracing African cultural forms. In order to begin to distinguish between the varying ideas Shepperson marked the difference between big and small ‘p’ Africanism.⁵ Pan-Africanism with a capital letter marks the series of conferences and congress that were started in London in 1900. Whilst pan-

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Africanism captures the array of political movements that have put the unity of Africa and the diaspora their core.

This paper will reject the orthodox approach of viewing Pan-Africanism as range of different and competing ideas. Instead, Pan-Africanism should be viewed only as the formal movement that emerged in the first conference in 1900. To separate out the movement in this way is to trace a different genealogy than the place it holds in the radical imaginary. It is vital that make distinction so that we can appreciate the vastly different and competing political projects that are currently conflated under the banner of Pan-Africanism. Garveyism, for example, emerged alongside and in opposition to the Pan-African Congress movement. By drawing out Pan-Africanism as distinct political movement means that we can better analyse alternative and more radical anti-imperial approaches that embrace African and her diaspora. Pan-Africanism has its roots in American colonisation movement from the 19th century and through its formal meetings maintained a distinctly pro-imperialist agenda. The legacy of Pan-Africanism is the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and after its demise the African Union (AU). Both of these institutions have been heavily criticised for cementing imperialism on the African continent.⁶

The fundamental limit of Pan-Africanism is that it has always accepted the colonial nation state framework created by imperialism. This has meant it developed on imperial terms and should come as no surprise that its legacy is the OAU and AU. For all the faults of Garveyism, its central premise of a global Black nation⁷ not hampered by the Westphalian sovereignty provided a revolutionary and parallel concept of nationalism to that developed in Pan-Africanism. The paper will argue that Malcolm X advanced Garvey's work, dealing with the most problematic elements and fashioning a truly anti-imperial concept of nation. It is not simply that Pan-Africanism ignored

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these developments, the movement should be viewed as the liberal counterpart to radical notions of Blackness and diaspora that have been so influential in the anti-imperial struggle.

Pan-Africanism as imperialism

In many ways the forerunner to organised Pan-Africanism was not the politics of resistance embedded in slave revolts and anti-imperialism. Instead, it was the imperial movement to resettle the formerly enslaved in the West back on the African continent.

Post-emancipation in the United States the first solution sought to the “problem” of having to share the nation with free African Americans was a supposedly benevolent form of repatriation.⁸ Key figures including Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson were all in favour of removing the race problem. The American Colonization Society (ACS) was formed in 1816 and attempted to establish settlements in Liberia, pre-emancipation and in Haiti, post-emancipation in 1867.⁹ It aimed to secure equality for the formerly enslaved, because they could of course never find it in the West and; for those who had the benefit of Western society to go back to the African continent and lead the drive to modernisation. In both aims we can see the roots of racism and colonialism that were so important to the imperial project. It was not just the supposedly enlightened forefathers of the United States that supported colonialization but also a number of high profile African Americans of the time. Figures such as Martin Delaney, Hubert Harrison and Edward Blyden all at times supported the colonisation agenda.¹⁰ This collusion in the imperial project is essential to understanding the emergence of Pan-Africanism.

The first Pan-African conference, and second congress were convened in London, and perhaps the most influential meeting took place in Manchester in 1945.¹¹ Britain as the location

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of the birthplace of the organised Pan-Africanism is not a coincidence, nor should it be overlooked.

Not only was the congress held in the seat of imperial power, it actually took place in the palace of Westminster. This is not mere symbolism, but testament to the fact that the movement's origins were not in direct conflict with the colonial administration.

The first Pan-African Conference was organised in Britain in 1900 and spearheaded by the barrister Henry Sylvester Williams.¹² Though the aims of the conference included African unity and improving the conditions of those on the continent and in the Diaspora, the routes to achieving these lie more in the colonisation movement from the United States than in any radical politics of liberation. Williams saw one of the goals of Pan-Africanism being to improve the relations between Europeans and Africans, not to overturn the oppressive relationship. He also wanted to 'to start a movement looking forward to the securing to all African races living in *civilized countries* their full rights and to promote their business interests'.¹³ Pan-Africanism was founded as a bourgeois project to bring modernisation to the African continent, within the framework of imperialism. There were subsequently Pan-African congresses held in London, Paris and New York. It was not until the fifth of these, in Manchester in 1945 that the delegates called for the independence of Africa. Up until this point they had argued for a form of trusteeship over the colonies, which would still be ruled by European powers. This was the liberal, gradualist, reformist approach of the civil rights movement being enacted on the world stage.¹⁴

Britain as a location for the emergence of Pan-Africanism also speaks to the limitations of the movement. What should not be overlooked is that when Pan Africanism emerged in 1900, Britain was not limited to the shores of the British Isles. Large parts of Africa and the Caribbean were a part of the Britain's imperial project. Henry Sylvester Williams born in Trinidad; was a barrister in South Africa and; founded the first Congress in London;¹⁵ and did all of this in the

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British Empire. It is no coincidence that London was the site for the first conference, given its status as the metropolis for the colonial outposts it was the logical venue.

As the seat of British imperial power London also had a central role in reproducing empire. Colonialism could only be carried out with the help of a native bourgeois class who would impart Western wisdom in the colonies. The civil servants and future leaders of Africa and the Caribbean were trained and educated in the West, with Britain being a key landing point. The Pan-African congresses in Europe were therefore mostly made up of this class, the appointed colonial elite. Even some of the more celebrated and anti-colonial leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta received their education in the West.¹⁶ Attempts to hold the congresses on African soil were prevented by the imperial powers who worried that ideas of African unity were too dangerous on the continent itself.¹⁷ Separated from the masses, the congresses were free to develop along lines amenable to the continuation of imperialism.

Parallel to the emergence of Pan-Africanism there was a far more radical alternative that called for immediate independence and claimed 'Africa for the Africans, at home and abroad'.¹⁸ The Garvey movement built the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) into a global organisation with over five million members across fifty countries, at its peak.¹⁹ Garvey's message was similar to Pan-Africanism in that he planned for a physical return to the African continent, but not under the auspices of the colonial powers. Central to Garvey's appeal was the rejection of the Westphalian notion of the nation state.²⁰ Garvey aimed to create a global Black nation with Africa at its centre and a key part of this endeavour were the 'great conventions', which were held in New York from the 1920s.²¹ Unlike the smaller Pan-African congresses with their invited delegates from the limited bourgeois class of blacks, these were mass events that drew in thousands of people. Though New York was just as much an imperial centre as London, the embrace of the

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masses and the parades through Harlem made these very different settings to the imperial venues of Pan African Congresses. Due to Garvey's embrace of Africa he is often incorrectly seen as a founder of Pan-Africanism. In fact, Pan-Africanism not only developed at the time he was active, during the formative stages of the movement it rejected both him and his more radical ideas of Black sovereignty. The intellectual figure at the heart of Pan-Africanism was W.E.B Dubois, who was vehemently anti-Garvey, leading to a bitter personal rivalry. DuBois's rejection of Garvey is instructive in outlining the limits of Pan-Africanism.

Garvey was initially an admirer of DuBois who was actually part of the group that welcomed the American scholar on his visit to Jamaica in 1915.²² When Garvey moved to Harlem he sought out Dubois in his offices at the *Crisis* magazine in order to see how the two could work together. His experience here was instructive to the differences between the two. Garvey was struck by the lack of black people employed by the magazine, and Dubois was not keen to embrace Garvey.²³ In fact Dubois became one of Garvey's fiercest critiques, not only attacking his politics but also calling him stupid and black, in reference to his dark skin tone.²⁴ This personal attack demonstrates some of the very limited racial politics of early DuBois. A hallmark of early Dubois' (and continued to some extent later) work is the idea that:

The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.²⁵

This notion of the 'Best of the race' elevating the masses is the kind of bourgeois sentiment that is the antithesis of Garveyism. Even more problematically when civilisation is defined as proximity

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to Whiteness, these ideas also become entangled in the notion of colourism, where being phenotypically closer to whiteness also becomes marked as a sign of advancement.²⁶ Unfortunately, these sentiments are embedded within the early forms of Pan-Africanism, which involved bringing together these upright men to imagine the future for the African continent and diaspora. Whilst for Pan-Africanism, colourism may not play as central a role, the central thesis of the plan to colonise Africa with the more civilised black people who had benefitted from the West, is at the core foundation of the movement. For all the problems of Garveyism, the movement always insisted on being rooted in mass appeal. Pan-Africanism has never achieved this, being mainly coordinated between the 'Best of the race' in formal settings.

Dubois himself admitted his earlier problematic view of the African continent. Writing towards the end of his life in 1959 he explained that:

Once I thought of you Africans as children, whom we educated African Americans would lead to liberty. I was wrong. We could not even lead ourselves, much less you. Today I see you rising under your own leadership, guided by your own brains²⁷

The fact that this realisation had to come to Dubois is telling. Interestingly, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, and close friend of DuBois saw his politics as representing 'bourgeois Negro reformism'.²⁸ In his celebration of DuBois at the sixth Pan African congress, held in Tanzania in 1974, Julius Nyerere, president of the country, pointed out that he was not a 'mass or popular leader' and limited his achievements to 'the advances towards human dignity which black people have recorded'.²⁹ This is one of the greatest limitations of DuBois, from the beginning his work aimed to prove that black people were equal to and deserving of the same treatment as whites.

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He was not interested in overthrowing the system of imperialism, he was fundamentally committed to carving out a space of equality for black people within it. We can see this in his final vision of Pan-Africanism, where he calls for a re-engagement with the Pan-African congress movement. He warns the continent from making deals with Western powers, but his alternative is just as telling:

You can starve a while longer rather than sell your great heritage for a mess of Western pottage. You can not only beat down the price of capital as offered by the united a monopolized western private capitalists, but at last today you can compare their offers with those of socialist countries like the Soviet Union and China, which with infinite sacrifice and pouring out of blood and tears, are at last able to offer weak nations needed capital on better terms than the West.³⁰

For DuBois Africa could not stand on her own feet, and needed to ‘starve a while longer’ waiting for the best deal from either the West or the East. This is not a vision of overturning the system of imperialism, but rather one where Africa can pull itself up to the level where it can fully integrate into the global order. The goal is a form of equality and not a politics of liberation. It is for this reason that ‘DuBois’s pan-Africanist activities fit squarely within the realm of classical liberal thought’³¹ and has contributed to the development of a Pan-African movement that never challenged imperialism. To fully understand the limits of Pan African it is necessary to examine the role of the nation state in the movement.

Colonial nation state

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Pan-Africanism starts as movement for African unity and some sort of autonomy, organised in Europe and led by a largely bourgeois class of those in the Diaspora or from the continent being educated in the West. At the momentous fifth Pan African Congress in Manchester in 1945 the tenor the movement changes. There is a declaration that independence is needed for Africa and many of the delegates including Nkrumah, Nyerere, Kenyatta and Hastings Banda, from Malawi, went on to lead their countries to independence.³² Though there was only one more formerly recognised congress, in Tanzania in 1974, after this the movement continues through the legacy of formal Pan-African organisation on the continent through independent states. The preceding Pan-African congresses laid the foundation for a politics where Africans ‘entrusted their new found independence in the colonial state, despite the fact that none of these states had any existence prior to their invention by colonial regimes’.³³

The container to which independence was allowed to develop in Africa was the colonial nation state. Whilst there were a number of liberation struggles, Britain was often happy to turn over the running of African nations to the natives.³⁴ The limits of the nation state set enough boundaries to control against revolutionary notions of African unity. The impact of accepting nation state boundaries was to balkanise the continent allowing imperial powers to control small territories with limited power. It also solidified national boundaries as artificial divides pitting the proliferation of nations against one another. Pan-African leaders at the time such as Nyerere insisted that ‘the African national State is an instrument for the unification of Africa, and not for dividing Africa’³⁵. The stated aim was to use the development of national movements to independence as a platform to developing a more fundamental African nationalism, which would permeate the colonial borders. However, in much the same way that Communist revolutions tend get stuck in the dictatorship of the proletariat, Pan-Africanism remained firmly rooted in the

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colonial nation state. As Diop noted ‘for all the fine public statements, multifarious individual and general interests are at work to make people cling to the established frontiers of the various territories’.³⁶

From the outset of Pan-Africanism in practice on the continent there were competing nations and groups. The most notable split was between what came to be known as the Monrovia and Cassablanca groups of countries. The Cassablanca bloc met in Morocco in 1961 and included nations such as Ghana, Egypt and Guinea whose leaders were open to a more fundamental cooperation of African states, under a federal system. Meanwhile a group of nations met in Monrovia, also in 1961, composed of Nigeria and much of Francophone Africa.³⁷ The setting of Liberia is more than symbolic given that the country had been the setting for one of the largest settlements in the drive to colonise the continent with Africans formerly enslaved on American soil.³⁸ This group was steadfastly against the federal approach and insisted on maintaining the nation state boundaries and Westphalian sovereignty.

If we trace Pan-Africanism through the formal organisations of African unity, then the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) is a key milestone in the movement. Founded in 1963, the organisation officially brought together the disparate Cassablanca and Monrovia groups. This formal commitment was seen by many as a radical step towards unity. Malcolm X took inspiration, explaining that the,

organization consists of all independent African states who reached the agreement to submerge all differences and combine their efforts toward eliminating from the continent of Africa colonialism and all vestiges of oppression and exploitation being suffered by African people.³⁹

So impressed was Malcolm with the OAU that he named his organisation to bring radical change in the West the Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Malcolm's optimism, however, proved to be misplaced. The problem was that the question of national sovereignty had to be resolved in order to bring all of the newly independent nation together. The way this was achieved, was to insert into the constitution of the OAU the principle 'non-interference in the internal affairs of individual states'.⁴⁰ This compromise blunted the radicalism of the OAU by promoting colonial state nationhood. As Adoghome argued,

The dilemma of African post-colonial states is that they have not really abandoned the colonial logic of oppression and domination as well as the exploitative and the predatory politics that are inimical to African unity and development. One major obstacle to African integration is the fear of losing state sovereignty.⁴¹

As much as is made of the Monrovia group leading the charge towards neo-colonial statehood, the Cassablanca group were just as complicit. There are a number of reasons that the Cassablanca group caved to the demand of colonial nation state sovereignty,⁴² but if the principle of African nationalism beyond the nation state was so important they should have remained steadfast. So fundamental is the issue of sovereignty that basing unity on the premise of the individual nation states essential makes the collective extremely limited. Even the preferred creation of a federation of states by the Cassablanca group would have maintained colonial borders. They may have had less meaning but it is instructive that they would still have been the vehicle for African nationalism. The uncomfortable truth is that most of the leaders who attended the much heralded fifth PAC, did

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not strive for African nationalism and revolutionary change, but became heads of African states and remained in power well beyond any reasonable period of time. The only leader who this does not apply to is Nkrumah who remained a stalwart for a federal Africa and was central in forming the Union of Independent African States, which included Ghana, Guinea and Mali.⁴³ The plan was to develop a common currency and foreign policy. However, this alliance lasted only five years, the plans were not implemented and it was over in 1963. It is certainly no coincidence that Nkrumah was steadfast in his arguments for African unity, and he was subject to a Western backed coup in 1966. Accepting the limits of colonial nation statehood was a prerequisite for maintaining power in Africa. The reality is that Nkrumah's vision for the United States of Africa was never incorporated into Pan-Africanism, which formalised itself as a movement predicated on the colonial state.

The OAU rather than representing a revolutionary body on the African continent played a role of facilitating the continued grip of imperialism. Malcolm recognised that many of the key players were 'considered Uncle Toms',⁴⁴ with a number being complicit in the assassination of the revolutionary leader of Congo, Patrice Lumumba.⁴⁵ He had hoped that uniting the continent would lead to differences being erased in the fight against colonialism. It is interesting that Malcolm looking at the case of Africa becomes more accepting to the notion of compromising ideology. Just a few months earlier he had celebrate China as one 'of the toughest, roughest, most feared countries on this earth'. The reason he gave for this was that there were 'no more Toms in China'⁴⁶, because they had been wiped out in the revolution. On founding the OAAU, however, the idea of sitting down with reactionary, traitorous leaders became 'maturity'.⁴⁷ The OAU could serve as a case study in how unity is not worth sacrificing ideology.

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The failure of the OAU to challenge imperialism is, however, not simply down to a compromise between competing ideas in order to promote unity. The problem is that the ideology of Pan-Africanism was always one suited to maintain and not challenge the imperial social order. Given its historical roots, ideas and the leadership of African countries there was little hope of revolutionary nationalism being embraced in the movement. Even at the most radical of the congresses, held in Tanzania in 1974, the ideological limitations of Pan-Africanism were apparent.

Held at a time of armed struggle in Angola and Mozambique the sixth PAC was the largest of the congresses drawing in over 1400 delegates from the African continent, South America, Europe, the Caribbean and United States. The congress came out in support of the armed struggle and also professed commitment to ideas of socialism.⁴⁸ However, for all the rhetoric of liberation that came from the congress it did not practically offer support to revolutionary movements. If anything it was hallmarked by the differences and disunity that have been features of Pan-Africanism in general. There was little agreement amongst the delegates and the African American delegation came in for particular criticism for being too large and disorganised.⁴⁹ The sixth PAC also marked the last time an agreed congress took place. After this formalised Pan-Africanism became crystallised in the OAU and later its successor the African Union. The development the of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in 2001 and its total embrace of Western ideas of progress the imperial nature of this legacy⁵⁰.

Rejection of Garvey's racialism

Pan-Africanism developed alongside other movements for liberation across the African diaspora and partly shaped itself in relation to them, in particular Garveyism. Whilst the movement was led in the West, with a heavy influence from African American academics like DuBois 'Garveyism

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was an embarrassment to it' but when it moved to the African continent it has been argued that Garvey became 'almost an essential element'.⁵¹ Garvey's influence on the African continent cannot be overstated, with the red, black and green that appears in flags across the continent being a testament to this.⁵² But Garvey's influence in Africa did not shape Pan-Africanism as a formal movement. Garvey's politics were predicated on 'race first', and he saw the African diaspora coming together on the continent to liberate herself.⁵³ This has put him at odds with Pan Africanism, which increasingly embraced a Marxist rhetoric of class struggle, through concepts such as Nyerere's 'African Socialism'.⁵⁴

Garvey's is controversial because he appears to reify the European conceptions of racial difference. He was vehemently anti race mixing so as not to dilute the Blackness of the diaspora.⁵⁵ His belief in this was so strong that he even met with the Ku Klux Klan in America to discuss their similarities on the issue.⁵⁶ This problematic view of race led to accusations of 'racialism', reinforcing the prejudices of the oppressor and therefore being ultimately regressive.⁵⁷ As revered as Garvey became in Africa, his impact on Pan-Africanism itself was limited by the clear denunciation of unity around race, which arose from the movement.

Two of the main speeches at the sixth PAC were given by Nyerere and Sekou Toure, president of Guinea. Nyere makes direct reference to fighting against ideas of 'racialism' in his explanation that the congress had 'non-black participants, and has to concern itself with oppression affecting any man, of any color'.⁵⁸ Toure railed against the *negritude* of Leopold Senghor when arguing that 'the racists of Southern Africa and the poets of Negritude all drink from the same fountain of racial prejudice and serve the same cause'.⁵⁹ Though he does not mention Garvey, this is clearly the same logic used to critique his ideas of race.

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Marxism provided a theoretical basis for the renunciation of Garvey, as he prioritised race over class. The American delegations dogmatic insistence of scientific socialism at the sixth PAC, is emblematic of this reaction to Garvey.⁶⁰ The rejection of Garveyism and the importance of Blackness had important consequences for Pan-Africanism.

The Third World movement offered promise of a unified resistance to imperialism from the darker peoples of the globe.⁶¹ Pan-African leaders embraced this promise as early as the Bandung Afro-Asian conference in 1954,⁶² and continued to do so in aligning with communism. But by not rooting the politics around Blackness, the movement never safeguarded the interests of the black people on the continent or in the Diaspora. China's increasingly imperial role on the continent is testament to the dangers of trusting nations on the basis of not being white.⁶³

The overt rejection of racialism is also one of the reasons why the movement became trapped in the colonial nation state. For all of Garvey's flaws, once you view the black nation as consisting of '400,000,000 men and women with warm blood coursing through their veins',⁶⁴ it becomes impossible to be contained by the nation state. The irony is that in the desire to avoid racialism, embrace Marxism and make links to the Third World, Pan-Africanism needlessly rejected the one concept that could have provided the revolutionary glue to the project.

Garveyism is by no means perfect as an ideology of liberation. Garvey's was not a revolutionary economic analysis and in many ways his vision was to create a capitalist Africa that could take its place in the existing economic system. It would be tempting to see Garveyism in the same light the American Colonisation Society, a bourgeois Westernised project wanting to colonise and "modernise" the continent. His conversations with the Ku Klux Klan and strong conception of race could be seen to make him even more regressive than the colonists. However,

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this would be an unfair caricature and ignores the importance of how Garveyism's redefinition of nationhood is a revolutionary concept.

The inspiration for Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association was his travel around the Caribbean, South America and the United States. He recognised the plight of the formerly enslaved was the same in each location, that there was a common problem for all to oppose.⁶⁵ From its conception Garveyism transcended the nation state, arguing that 'Black is a country', which includes all Africans and her descendants⁶⁶. At the root of his analysis is the conclusion that the West can never provide freedom for black people and therefore the need to both liberate the African continent and for the physical return by those descendants in the diaspora. This is completely different to the colonisation attempt in that it was neither sanctioned nor controlled by the imperial powers. Garvey was arguing for complete liberation and independence from imperialism in Africa.

It is true that Garvey's position from outside the continent is effectively one of black capitalism but the importance of this has been overstated for two reasons. Firstly, because of imperial control of Africa Garvey was never able to visit and was also prevented from continuing the work of building the Black Star Line by federal authorities in America. These are important because political ideas adapt when they are enacted. Second and relatedly, unlike Pan Africanism, the UNIA was a mass movement, which meant that the people themselves shaped and influenced the politics and economic ideas. Once you base your politics on the concept of the global black nation, it necessitates building an analysis that can provide for the masses. Imperialism can never provide for the masses, so through the process of doing the work the movement would *have* to have oriented away from capitalism.

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We also need to be more nuanced in the analysis of Garvey's apparent racialism. Whilst his abhorrence to race mixing and discussions with Ku Klux Klan are extremely problematic it does not mean he was 'drinking from the same fountain' as the fascists. Western concepts of race are not only based on supposed genetic differences, but also on a hierarchy with Whiteness established as the pinnacle.⁶⁷ Neither of these apply to how Garvey viewed race, or what it meant to be a "Negro", or an African. Garvey consistently mobilises the word "blood" in talking about the connection of the African diaspora and it is vital that we separate this from genetics. Blood is the familial, historical connection to Africa. It does not presuppose any genetic traits, and limits the connection to a shared history and experiences of those whose skin is black. Due to this connection Garvey effectively argues that the diaspora has a responsibility to each other, and must unite. You may well disagree with this, but you could not categorise it in the same vein as Western ideas of racial difference based on genetic distinctions.

There is also no racial hierarchy within Garveyism. Unlike the KKK, Garvey is not arguing that white people are inferior and mixing will ruin the black racial stock. For Garvey, mixing means diluting African blood and therefore weakening the connection to the diaspora and the politics of liberation. It is worth noting that in Garvey's day the impact of colourism across the America's was unmistakable. He would have directly witnessed the privileges afforded to those with lighter skin tones and seen how some had been incorporated into the management of imperialism. Given the colour coded hierarchy it is not surprising that he would have associated dark skin with the masses and liberation and; light skin with the bourgeois and imperial.

Malcolm X and the OAAU

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By no means does Garveyism provide a fully formed radical alternative to Pan-Africanism. However, it does include some of the key ingredients including building a mass movement and being rooted in the revolutionary concept of nation. The potential for Garveyism to develop into a truly revolutionary politics is demonstrated by the work of Malcolm X, whose ‘basic ideology was Garveyism’.⁶⁸ His father was murdered for being a Garveyite preacher and he was nurtured by the nation of Islam, which was heavily influenced by the Garvey movement.⁶⁹ Malcolm’s analysis also located racism as the fundamental site of oppression, but he evolved from a narrower view of race to develop some of the more regressive positions of Garvey. Focusing on his violent rhetoric and anti-white sentiment, the Malcolm of the popular imaginary is a fiery demagogue with no practical programme. In truth, when Malcolm died he was building the OAAU as the vehicle for revolutionary change and left a detailed blueprint for his vision in the organisation’s constitution.⁷⁰

In outlining Malcolm’s radical vision he provides perhaps the best articulation of the concept of the global Black nation. Malcolm pledged no allegiance to the country of his birth telling black people they were ‘not American’ but ‘Africans *in* America’.⁷¹ The same as Garvey he saw the African diaspora as nation which transcended Westphalian borders and this was the foundation of his politics. Malcolm was raised politically in the Nation of Islam (NOI), which was based on a narrow conception of Black Nationalism limited to the borders of the American state.⁷² When he left the NOI he expanded this notion to include a global concept of Black Nationalism to the point he redefines what it means to be an Afro-American,

When I speak of the Afro-American, I’m not speaking of just the 22 million of us who are here in the United States. But the Afro-American is that large number of people in the Western Hemisphere, from the southernmost tip of South America to the northernmost tip

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of North America, all of whom have a common heritage and have a common origin when you go back to the roots of these people.⁷³

The global conception of Blackness is a revolutionary concept because it connects all the diaspora into a political project. Doing so means that we cannot avoid the problems that plague those at the very bottom of the global order in favour of our national concerns to integrate into the West. The same argument could be made for the connection of Pan-Africanism, but importantly the politics underlying this diasporic link for Malcolm is a revolutionary concept of Blackness.

When Malcolm proclaimed that ‘there is a new type of Negro...who calls himself Black ... doesn’t make no apology for his Black skin’⁷⁴ this was the outline of politics that rejected the bourgeois reformism of civil rights. He specifically contrasted the ‘Negro’ and ‘Black’ revolutions, with the latter not respecting the status quo, nor the gradual integration of the former.⁷⁵ Blackness for Malcolm is not about skin, or even blood, but is centred on embracing a revolutionary politics by making the connection to the African diaspora. It is equally wrong to confuse Malcolm’s revolutionary Black Nationalism with narrow concepts of the idea as it is to reject his position because of supposed ‘racialism’. Malcolm argues for a political essentialism of Blackness⁷⁶ that would not allow for the imperial compromises of Pan-Africanism, especially the colonial nation state.

Malcolm’s move to a global definition of Blackness also intrinsically connected his politics to the wider Third World movement. Even whilst still in the NOI, Malcolm burnished his internationalist credentials by meeting with figures such as Fidel Castro, on his visit to New York in 1960. Once freed from the constraints of the NOI, Malcolm made clear how his Black nationalism fitted onto the world stage. He condemned the civil rights movement for dealing with

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the race problem as an American issue and argued that in order to gain support from across the globe it was essential to convict America in the world court of the United Nations⁷⁷. The Black revolution also included supporting anti-colonial struggles around the world because Malcolm understood that imperialism was a global system.

Inevitably, given his analysis of the system Malcolm also moved away from Black capitalist ideas of advancement. This meant engaging with, though not wholeheartedly embracing Marxism, and it was at the Militant Labor Forum in 1965 that he declared,

it is impossible for this system; this economic system; this political system; this social system; this system, period. It is impossible for it as it stands to produce freedom right now [for Afro-Americans]...in the same way it is impossible for a chicken to produce a duck egg.⁷⁸

It is this impossibility to reconcile racial justice within the framework of the imperial system that led Malcolm to argue for the overthrow of the existing order. He never lived long enough to develop a full political ideology but it is clear that he was able to develop and remove some of the serious limitations of Garveyism before he died. The OAAU represents the organisational expression of this politics.

It may seem contradictory that the organisation patterned after the OAU is offered as an alternative model to Pan-Africanism. Malcolm founded the OAAU shortly after returning from a trip to Africa and a point of optimism for the OAU. It would undoubtedly have been an inspirational time full of promise that the African struggle could be directly linked to that in the West. At times, Malcolm's goal of unity could be seen to contain too much compromise, which

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was one of the flaws of Pan-Africanism. As noted earlier he welcomed the inclusion of ‘Uncle Tom’ leaders in the OAU. At the second founding rally of the OAAU in 1964 the stated plans included voter registration drives; community control of school boards and; developing cultural programmes. All of which would fit firmly within a liberal progressive change agenda. Malcolm was keen to build a mass movement and doing so meant appealing to the masses, many of whom would not have been open to the idea of revolutionary overthrow.

As much as the OAAU incorporated some of Pan-Africanisms weaknesses it was actually a fundamental different organisation to the OAU for two main reasons. The first is the clear revolutionary ideology that underpins Malcolm’s work. As he got closer to his death he was becoming more revolutionary in his ideas and it is only logical to assume this would have carried over to the political programme of the OAAU. Malcolm made it clear that he could only support organisations that preached ‘Black Nationalism’,⁷⁹ and as his definition of this nationalism crystallised its revolutionary form compromise would have different meaning.

Perhaps, more importantly the OAAU was built to transcend the colonial nation state, not to reinforce it. It was a mass member organisation organised around departments on issues such as education, health and defence. Its legitimacy was drawn from its grassroots base and not leaders who sanctioned its existence. The idea was that different locations in the diaspora would develop their own strategies for combating the key issues that faced them, funded by money from within those communities. The different chapters would then form to make one cohesive organisation built for radical change. Key to this was that the OAAU was made to be an organisation for the Western hemisphere, taking no regard for nation state boundaries. If this plan were to be fulfilled the OAAU would have effectively created a government for the African diaspora in the West, developed from the grassroots level into a global organisation. This may sound unlikely but it is a

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model taken directly from the Garvey's UNIA. If the OAAU were expanded to include the African continent, the blueprint would allow for the creation of a mass movement, rooted local concerns replacing any idea of the colonial nation state. This is the antithesis of the bourgeois, nation state defined tradition of Pan-Africanism. The disregard for nation state sovereignty embedded into the OAAU made it completely incompatible with the OAU. The OAAU aimed to build the global Black nation from the ground up, rather than from the top down based on colonial nation state borders.

Conclusion

Pan-Africanism is an identifiable movement with its own history and ideological roots. It formally began at the first Pan-African Congress in London in 1900 and has a distinct lineage up to the present day African Union. Unfortunately, the movement has not presented a challenge to imperial domination in Africa, rather it has helped continue the exploitation of the continent. Accepting the colonial nation state has prevented any politics of liberation from developing in the movement. It is important to decentre Pan-Africanism from radical histories of resistance because the movement developed in parallel to and rejection of more revolutionary, anti-imperial politics. Garveyism developed a mass movement rooted on the global black nation, shattering the boundaries of Westphalian sovereignty. Malcolm X picked up the work of Garvey, developing on some of its regressive weakness to form the OAAU. By unpicking this tradition from Pan-Africanism we can begin to chart a route to revolutionary concepts and practice of nationalism that can present a challenge to the imperial social order.

It is yet to be seen whether the revolutionary Black Nationalism at the heart of the OAAU could be bought into existence to end imperialism. However, by holding this tradition in stark

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contrast to Pan-Africanism we can begin to mobilise a new set of practices and demands. We can begin to imagine a movement that transcends the colonial nation state, which must be the starting point for ending imperialism.

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³ Garvey, “Philosophy and opinions”, 1

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⁵ Shepperson, “Pan –Africanism”.

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⁷ Andrews, “Black is a country”

⁸ Guyatt, “Bind us apart”

⁹ Essien-Udom, “Black Nationalism”

¹⁰ Shelby, “Two conceptions of Black Nationalism”

¹¹ Adi and Sherwood, “1945 Manchester”

¹² Sherwood, “Origins of Pan Africanism”

¹³ Logan, “Historical aspects”, *emphasis added*, 38

¹⁴ In her book *Bourgeois Radicals* Carol Anderson explores how the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People fought imperialism along these same lines.

¹⁵ Sherwood, “Origins”

¹⁶ Geiss, “Pan Africanism”

¹⁷ Nyerere, “Speech to the Congress”

¹⁸ Garvey, “Philosophy and Opinions”, 138

¹⁹ Martin, “Race first”

²⁰ Shilliam, “What about Garvey”

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²⁴ Makalani, “Cause of Freedom”

²⁵ Dubois, “Talented Tenth”

²⁶ Hunter, “Problem of colorism”.

²⁷ Kendhammer, “ Dubois the Pan Africanist”, 61.

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29 Nyerere, 16
30 DuBois, "The World and Africa", 197.
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