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AFRO-ARAB RELATIONS: SOME CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

BY DR. AHMAD MUHAMMAD KANI

LA PRESSE ARABO-ISLAMIQUE AU SENEGAL

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DIRASAT IFRIQIYYA

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FOREWORD

Many Muslim scholars in Africa feel that there is a pressing need for a journal to bridge the academic gap between Africa and the rest of the Muslim world, and also to serve as a forum through which scholars can exchange ideas and develop research ties.

This project is being taken by the Islamic African Centre in Khartoum. This is an academic institution set up for the purpose of strengthening Islamic culture in "Africa South of Sahara". One of the challenges which we have to face is the lack of accurate information about this area and the many misunderstandings about its history and societies. Such areas of study have, in the past, been the monopoly of a few western scholars who have not always been unbiased vis-à-vis Islam and African Muslims.

The time is now ripe for Muslim scholars, who specialize in this area, to come forward and bring some balance to the world of research. We are accordingly inviting our readers, to join hands with us, so that we may set this project moving. We hope that you will be able to participate by sending papers on any of the subjects mentioned below. It will also help if you would kindly circulate this journal among your colleagues and (or) draw our attention to any scholars whom you feel will be able to help in realizing this project. Dirasat Itriqiya takes special interest in the following areas of specialization:

1. Islamic education in Africa.
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6. Social, economic and political relations between Africa and the rest of the Muslim World.
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The journal will publish essays in their Arabic, English or French. It will initially be published twice annually. Authors of papers accepted for publication are offered an honorarium in appreciation.
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(*) Maps, figures and tables should include all necessary explanations; they should not exceed the size of one page.
(*) Authors are requested to indicate their qualifications, their present occupation, address etc.
(*) The author should enclose with his paper a signed letter to certify that the paper has not been published in part or whole before. He should also under-take not to pass it to any other publisher before the journal decides on it. On the other hand the editors will decide whether or not the paper is accepted for publication not more than three months after it has been received.
(*) The author will receive 20 off prints of his published paper.
(*) The author will be offered an honorarium of $ 200 or its equivalent.
(*) The journal welcomes reviews of books recently published and in case the reviews are accepted the reviewers will be offered $ 100 or its equivalent. Documentation work such as bibliographies will be treated as reviews if they include less than 3000 words but will be considered full papers if they contain 3000 works or more.
(*) All papers, reviews & documentary material should be mailed to the Editor-in-Chief of “Dirasat Isriqyia”, the I.A.C., P.O. Box 2469, KHARTOUM, SUDAN.
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Tres nombreux sont les chercheurs musulmans en Afrique qui éprouvent le besoin pressant de un journal qui puisse jeter un pont sur le fossé académique séparant l'Afrique du reste du monde musulman et qui serve de forum où les chercheurs peuvent échanger leurs opinions et développer des liens de recherche. Le projet est maintenant pris par le Centre Islamique Africain de Khartoum. C'est l'institution académique spécialement fondée dans le but de renforcer la culture islamique en "Afrique au Sud du Sahara" Parmi les défis auquels nous devons faire face est le manque d'information exactes sur cette région ainsi que les multiples malentendus concernant son histoire et sa société. Ces domaines d'études étaient, dans le passé, le monopole de quelques chercheurs occidentaux qui n'étaient pas toujours neutres vis-à-vis de l'Islam et des musulmans Africains.

Il est temps que les chercheurs musulmans dans ce domaine se montrent et établissent un certain équilibre dans le domaine de la recherche.

Nous vous écrivons maintenant pour vous inviter, en tant que chercheur accompli, a nous donner la main pour relancer ce projet.

Nous espérons que vous pouvez y participer en envoyant des études consacrées aux sujets mentionnés ci-dessous:-

Il serait très utile si vous pouviez faire circuler cette lettre parmi vos collègues et/ou nous signaler les chercheurs qui vous paraissent capables d'aider à la réalisation de ce projet.

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1- L'Education Islamique en Afrique.
2- La langue arabe en Afrique.
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5- Les relations sociales, économiques et politiques entre l'Afrique et le reste du monde musulman.
6- Un arrière-plan culturel des sociétés musulmans africaines et leurs influences sur la pratique de l'Islam en Afrique.
7- Les établissements de Bourses en africain et/ou en rapport avec l'Afrique.
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Dans l'attente de vous lire bientôt, nous vous remercions d'avance et nous vous prions d'agréer l'expression de nos sentiments distingués.

Les articles non-admis ne sont pas restituables.
AFRO-ARAB RELATIONS: SOME CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

BY DR. AHMAD MUHAMMAD KANI

In spite of the fact that many conferences, seminars and symposia have been organized in different countries on Afro-Arab relations, this topic still remains one of the most complex and misunderstood even in Africa and the Arab world themselves. Various factors, internal and external, are responsible for this unfortunate state of affairs. To begin with, there is confusion in the minds of some people as to what constitutes an Arab and what constitutes an African.

Are the terms African and Arab racial categories, cultural notions, or geographical terms? The term Arab is somehow ambiguous when it comes to be defined within an African context. Some Africans consider it to be synonymous with Islam. Therefore when one talks of “the Arab”, it is often assumed that he is talking basically of Arab-Muslims ignoring the reality that the Christian minorities in the Arab world look at themselves first and foremost as Arabs.

Some people conceive of the Arabs within a racial context categorizing them, some times, as whites but the Arabs themselves do not, either racially or culturally, regard themselves as part of the white race. The combination of religious and racial elements created psychological barriers between the “white” Arabs and the Black Africans. Intellectuals of the latter view, tend to see historical relations between the Arabs and Africans basically as relations between a colonizer who imposes his alien culture and civilization on the indigenous culture of the Black people; thus placing the Arabs and Europeans on the same scale, as far as the destiny of the Black race is concerned. This master-slave relation still blurs the vision of many African intellectuals, who therefore view Afro-Arab co-operation as, basically, a relation between a superior race and an inferior one. This fixed view is reinforced by the nationalistic sentiments which are constantly expressed by Arab nationalists who see themselves as a distinct people with a unique culture and common historical experience.

The confusion is further compounded when we come to see how the

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This paper was presented at the Afro-Arab colloquium organized by the Institute of African and Asian Studies at the university of Khartoum in collaboration with the Association of Arab Historians in February 1987.

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Arabs look at themselves. It is a well known fact that more than 70% of the Arabs are also Africans who live in Africa. It logically follows that those Arabs also regard themselves as Africans as far as Afro-Arab relations are concerned.

However in looking at themselves as Arabs these people sometimes seem to ignore the fact that they are both politically and geographically Africans, thus providing justification for the critics of the Arabs who emphasise the point that the term Arab as viewed by the Arabs has a racial undertone.

To understand this fully, it is necessary to find out how the Arabs look at themselves. To the Arab nationalists, with all their various categories of Nasirists, Bathists and Monarchists, Arabism is a way of life as well as an ideology.

For them it is basically a combination of common language, historical experience and a cultural heritage which produced the Arab Umma. Islam is conceived by their ideologies as no more than a product of Arab genius, though it represents an important epoch in the history of Arab civilization. However, these views are strongly challenged and rejected by Islamic thinkers as well as the masses in the Arab world who see themselves first and foremost as Muslims and then as anything else.

To them being an Arab is merely an identification label which does not entail special socio-cultural or political advantages. Since in most parts of the Arab world Islamization preceded Arabization, it is logical to identify people on the basis of their Islamic faith and way of life rather than by their colour, race, nation or linguistic groupings. The following statement may shed light on the stance of the Arab nationalists vis-a-vis Islam.

Radical Arab nationalists and intellectuals view the Prophet as a purely political figure, one to whom all the Arabs owed primary allegiance as a founder of a united Arab nation. It is significant to note here that as far as the role of Islam is concerned there is no basic difference between the position of these Arab nationalists and that of such African nationalists as the Southern Sudanese who consider religion merely as a private affair to be confined to the house.

Our dilemma is further complicated when we try to pin down Afro-Arab relations to specific cases like that of the Sudan where Arabism is expressed in the intellectual, social, economic, cultural and all other aspects of life.

For instance, most of the westernized Sudanese intellectuals elite, both Arab and Africans are yet to reconcile the two opposing viewpoints regarding the identity of the Sudan. One School of thought, which seems to me to be realistic, views the whole Sudan (North and South) as an Afro-Arab country a lafle that is less divisive or to put it positively, more unifying.
This statement of belief is paralleled by the traditional school of thought current among the educated elite which tends to see the Northern part of the Sudan as predominantly Arab and the Southern part as African (Negroid), thus confirming the notion of separate development for the Sudanese people.

This school of thought has its roots in the colonial and missionary culture which sowed the seeds of discord among the Sudanese people during the colonial era.

Faced by the resurgence of Islam as a dominant political ideology for the Sudan both among the educated elites and the masses, the secular pseudo-nationalists, Marxists, Arab nationalists and Baathists, have teamed together with the pro-west elite in the South to oppose Islam by way of blackmail, intimidation, misrepresentation, and falsification of its true nature and character. Amorphous ideas about the necessity of recognizing the diverse nature of the Sudanese society which comprises different ethnic groups and nationalities have suddenly come to surface to provide a semblance of an ideological basis for the anti-Islamic tendencies in the Sudan.

A leading luminary in the fields of political science and Afro-Arab relations persuasively attempted to clarify certain misconceptions pertaining to Africanism and Arabism as they affect Sudan. He rejects the position of those who conceive of Africanism on a purely racial concept. According to him Africanism which derives from the continental name, Africa, is essentially a geo-political concept combining within its fold nations with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds such as the Bantus, Berbers and Arabs. In the same way Arabism is viewed as basically a non-racial cultural expression comprising within its boundaries Arabic speaking people irrespective of their race and colour, who inhabit Asian and African continents, mainly the latter.

Furthermore, he gave examples of the cultural and ethnic transformation of various groups from Arabism to Africanism who were thus completely integrated and assimilated into various African peoples ethnically and linguistically. Among these were the Arabs of Rabia who were associated with the establishment of the first Islamic state in the Sudan (during the twelfth century) and who have since been totally absorbed into the Nubian speaking Banu Kanz. Conversely, though in the same manner many African people were Arabized through a similar process of cultural assimilation.

At this juncture one needs to consider how non-Arab Africans look at themselves, Kole Omotosho may be taken as an example of African intellectuals who echo Zionist and colonial propaganda concerning Arabism and Africanism.
Omotosho views Africans as a black race with a distinct culture, separate history and civilization which was obliterated overtime by Arab and later European races. His negative assessment of the Arab and for that matter, Islam is succinctly reflected in his critique of the two-volume essay published by Alecso in 1977 and 1978 entitled Arab-African Connections. He remarks that if Arab attitudes continue to be expressed the way they are being expressed at present there is going to be much growth potential for African-Arab co-operation¹⁶.

In his view however, Africans no longer exist north of the Sahara and they are fighting to repossess Africa south of the Sahara.

What could be gleaned from such an emotional outburst is that the Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians and Libyans who have been whole heartedly identified with the struggle of the Black people in South Africa should be regarded as colonizers who occupied Africa by force, enslaved her people and destroyed her cultural heritage. The philosophy behind such cynicism is obvious; it is that non-Arab Africans should cling to whatever remains of non-Arab Africa and defend it against any possible encroachment by the Arabs.

Such unrealistic assertions should be examined against the background of the rising influence of Islam within Nigeria and Yorubaland in particular where Kole Omotosho happened to come from. His conclusion that, Islam and Arabic as well as Arab civilization are so finely interwined that care needs to be taken to isolate one from the other¹⁶ is basically a sentimental reaction to political developments which he apparently fears are bound to unfold in Nigeria in the near future.

Interestingly enough for the majority of African Muslims and specifically for such muslim intellectuals as Sulaiman Kume, Ibrahim Sulaiman, Uthman Bugaje and Kunle Ishaq, Malik Nadjm, Shaikh Ture and Muhammed Ndiaye to cite a few examples from Nigeria and Senegal, being an African or even a Nigerian does not go beyond the level of identification stipulated by the Shari’a and practised by the Prophet and his companions. Moreover to them, African Nationalism as well as Arab Nationalism are nothing but newfangled forms of tribalism promoted by and through colonial and neocolonial culture¹⁶.

History and tradition tell us that the affinity between the people living to the South of the Sahara with their brothers in the North of the Sahara is reflected in the oral traditions, legenda, folktales of certain communities like the Fulansis, the Kanuris, the Hausas and even the Yorubas as Kole has rightly pointed out in his Afro-Arab Trippling. The dominance of such traditions among the intellectual of these communities is an indication of a process of intellectual and cultural integration of the Afro-Arab people which goes back to the beginnings of the Islamic era¹⁶.
It is probably convenient at this juncture to state categorically that the concepts of Arabism and Africanism as they are after conceived now are historically speaking a product of colonial culture which dominated the thinking of the early generation of the westernized African and Arab elites in the 19th and 20th century. These elites were products of the western school of thought which viewed human progress in terms of race or colour. The nationalist movements in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were expressed primarily within a racial context.

In this respect both Leopold Senghor and Satl Al-Husari are basically speaking the same language when they speak of Nigeritude and Arab Nationalism respectively. It has been the strong conviction of this author that one of the main obstacles that stand in the way of Afro-Arab co-operation is the question of ideology. Westernized proponents of both Africanism and Arabism consider the role of religion as divisive or at best peripheral.

In the context of Arab nationalism, Islam is considered in one way as a healthy phenomenon that played a revolutionary role in unifying the Arab people up to the Abbasid era according to the argument of Abd al Rahman Nasif. But when it comes to the question of adoption of Islam as an ideology encompassing all aspects of life and embracing other nationalities with equal roles to play then it turns to be divisive. According to some African intellectuals, as we have seen earlier, Islam and Arabism are two faces of the same coin.

They are parts of a well calculated design by the Arabs to complete their drive to the south for the purpose of domination, which ought to be carefully monitored and checked. So, instead of being considered as a solid basis for mutual co-operation between two adjacent (indeed overlapping) geographical areas, Islam is viewed as a subversive ideology which aims at creating two antagonistic classes of people. The non-recognition of the strongest socio-political force in Africa and the Arab world is an exercise in futility.

One needs to turn to history to see how personalities like Mahamed b. Abd al Karim al Maghili and Jalal Al-Din AlIjyuti had identified themselves with the aspirations and hopes of the people of Bilad al-Sudan towards the close of the fifteenth century. One also hopes to reflect on the way Mohammed b. al-Katsinawi an eighteenth century scholar from Hausaland and Shaykh Muhammed al-Amin ul-Kanemi a nineteenth century kanebu scholar from Fezzan regarded themselves as part of larger political culture with a universal appeal that transcends national boundaries, ethnicism and tribalism.

For sure their understanding of socio-political and intellectual happen-
ings of the wider world around them surpasses that of many present day professors and Ulama who chauvinistically restricted their perceptions to their respective nation-states.

Imperialism and Zionism are probably the most serious challenges to Afro-Arab co-operation. In this context western imperialism obstructs the development of Afro-Arabian cooperation by focussing attention on the negative aspects that characterized relations between these people at certain periods in history. Studies which emphasise the pagan origins of African peoples under the guise of reviving indigenous culture and civilization of the African peoples are promoted on a large scale. Thus the African is led to look at himself within the narrow perspectives of ethnicism, tribalism and racialism rather than address themselves to such fundamental questions as to why they have not, like the Arabs and the Europeans, broken away with parochialism and developed comparable universalistic ideologies and cultures, or why they are expected to emphasise their blackness and remain subservient.

It is to be noted here that some pseudo-nationalist African intellectuals like Bala Usman in Nigeria conceal deep-rooted fear of Islam. To avoid generalisation one needs to cite two concrete examples regarding their position.

Their vicious attack on Nigeria’s decision to join the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and their claim that as Africans they have a different identity and different destiny reveals a concealed fear for the Islamic resurgence in their country, which undermines their personal political ambitions. Such a position disguised under the garb of nationalism falls in line with hegemonic super power designs of creating tension and friction between the same people in the name of class struggle. A flimsy reason is always adduced by such pseudo-nationalist groups that any form of co-operation with the Arabs or with the Muslim world is bound to undermine the unity and integrity of their nation. Such groups ignore the fact that when Nigeria was threatened by the forces of dissenion and disintegration between 1966 - 1970 it was Arab and Muslim countries which wholeheartedly identified with her cause and worked for the preservation of its unity and integrity. It is on record by contrast, that some black African countries like Tanzania and the Ivory Coast had supported the secession of Biafra on both political and religious grounds.

Suspicion of anything Islamic has prompted people like Bala Usman to depict a gloomy picture of the most important socio-political movement which took place in the recorded history of West Africa. The history of the most formidable state in the whole of Africa in the nineteenth century i.e. the Sokoto Caliphate was reduced by him to a history of slave raiding, looting, plundering of human resources and impos-
The proponderence of zionist forces on the continent of African is well documented. The same could be said of the penetration and Zionist infiltration into the economic, political and more importantly the diplomatic fields in Africa. It was already too late when the Arabs discovered the fact that as early as 1960 Israel had established strong footholds in a number of African countries. The apparent justification for such co-operation was Black Africa's need for foreign expertise in various fields especially the agricultural one.

But the main objective of Israel was to fill a vacuum which was left by the departure of the colonial masters. The 1973 Ramadan war had afforded the Arabs a golden opportunity to convince the Africans of the expansionist policies of the Zionist entity. It is true that some African countries had genuinely severed diplomatic relations with Israel but many of them continued to maintain secret diplomatic and open economic relations with Israel. The Arabs were not in position to fill in the vacuum created by the break of diplomatic relations with Israel, partly because of lack of knowledge of Africa and partly because of the lack of adequate planning.

Under the influence of the former colonial masters and Zionist propaganda some African countries were reluctant to allow the rich Arab countries to invest or participate in some vital economic endeavours which required substantial amounts of money. On the other hand, some economic and cultural projects were viewed with suspicion by many Africans either for their sectarian nature in the case of the Saudi or because of fear of expansionism in the case of Libya.

The Camp David misadventure greatly strengthened the case of the anti-Arab forces in Africa. It provided a rationale for some African leaders to claim that it was because of Egypt, regarded by them in this case as an African country, that the African countries had severed relations with Israel and that once Egypt had recovered its lost territories and established diplomatic relations with Israel they could not see any reason for their continued boycott of Israel for the sake of the Arabs or the Palestinians.

The fact that Israel and South Africa have in the meantime continued to reinforce their economic, political and military relations to the detriment of both the Arabs and the Africans is often overlooked.

The latest Zionist strategy is to co-operate with the Churches in Africa against what it describes as Islamic action which is bound to offset the socio-political and economic equilibrium in the interest of the oppressed.

Systematic research is being carried out in the Universities of Western-Europe, but particularly Israel, to document the cultural activities of the Islamic Universities like al-Azhar in Egypt, the Islamic Da'wa organization...
in Libya and the African Islamic Center in Khartoum. The information is disseminated by Zionist organizations to convince African Christians of the imminent danger of Islamic Jihad and the alleged re-colonization of the rest of Africa by the Arabs.

The fact that in precolonial Africa, creative intellectual and cultural links between Northern Africa and the Middle East on the one hand and West and East Africa on the other were stronger than what exists today is completely brushed aside by the exponents of these theories.

Slave trading activities are however highlighted by imperialist and Zionist propaganda machines while remaining silent about the far more grotesque tradition of western slavery as well as local African dealing in slaves.

The conclusion of Areloded’s documentation is obviously designed to arouse the fears of African Christians concerning Islamic activities in Africa. He writes:

The militant Islamic political activity particularly in the version of Islam promulgated by Qadafi, has aroused fears, reservations and objections in several African countries regarding the use of religion for political aims.

In addition, although Islam has become solidly entrenched in wide areas of Africa over the centuries, it has been perceived as a local African religion. Christianity by contrast has been regarded as an imported religion with a foreign western coloration.

Arab states it is alleged attempt to arabilize African Muslims and to inject a political element into African Islam. Such attempts in the long run can only serve to emphasize a foreign element in African Islam and to increase suspicion of its political goals of Arab countries.

As might be expected the Zionist state of Israel receives full support of Christian Churches.

The fact that this is being done at the expense of Palestinians who are being systematically massacred, displaced and rendered homeless is nothing to be thought about by the Zionists and their surrogates in Africa. The justification for the existence of the Zionist entity is considered by the Churches as part of the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy which states concerning Israel:

“And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curses thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

It is apparent from the above that it is incumbent on every Christian believer to support, not only the the existence of the state of Israel, but also its expansionist policies.

Similarly the might of Israel and its apparent superiority over the Arabs is explained in a dogmatic way: “.........the Bible is our final authority on any subject and the Bible is not
silent concerning the Jews and the Christians. We are living in exciting
times being privileged to see the literal fulfilment of some Biblical prophesies
(emphasis added) of Israel in Christianity. The nation of the Israel should
be a spiritual barometer to the Christian especially as regards the end of
this age of grace which we live in\textsuperscript{25}.

"On may 14th 1948, Ben Gurion declared Israel a nation when there
were only 620,000 Jews in Israel against the cumulative population of 80
million Arabs. The Arabs had since that time, with a fanatical Mohammedan
/ Ismaelitic zeal threatened to destroy Israel. But no one will destroy the
Church of God\textsuperscript{26}.

In view of the fact that Africa is a developing continent and is in dire
need of expertise and technical know-how, it is argued that it is imperative
for Africa not only to restore full diplomatic relations with the Zionist entity
but, also to borrow from Israeli experience in development:*

"Israel is undoubtedly a unique country. With the constant threats of
annihilation she managed to develop one of the most effective armies in
the world, their desert lands are now lush green. With jews from the diaspora
(different and divergent cultural backgrounds) they have forged a stable
political structure. They have one of the best security systems in the world.
What this means is that we stand to gain from any relationship with Israel\textsuperscript{27}.

The ideological justification for this marriage of convenience between
Israel and the Church is provided in the following lines.

"We (Nigerians and Africans) must not take sides in the Arab-Israel
imbroglio. We must not make popular belief in Nigeria that what is Islamic
must be right.

Since we have relations with the Arabs we should for religious and geog-
graphical reasons have ties with Israel. After all we profess non-alignment
in the conduct of our foreign affairs\textsuperscript{28}.

Needless to say such statements of belief do not constitute convincing
arguments for maintaining or restoring of diplomatic relations with Israel.

The assumed neutrality is nothing but a cover-up for nefarious Israeli
activities in Africa.

It is an open secret that the survival of the apartheid regime in South
Africa depends to greater extent on the financial, technical and above all
military support of International Zionism and particularly Israel. It is also a
well known fact that the Jewish merchant class in Israel derives a lot of
profit from Jewish investment in South Africa\textsuperscript{29}. Only recently, the Israel
Prime Minister expressed his reservation about any form of sanction against
South Africa because of the embarrassment such action may have for the
Jewish settlers in South Africa. The organic link between South Africa and
Israel has long been documented by the United Nations Committee on
Apartheid\textsuperscript{30}.

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The Zionist entity is conscious of the position of all Africans on the question of Apartheid and their determination to destroy it by all means. It is also aware of the effect such co-operation may have on future relations with African nations.

To offset the diplomatic offensive of the Arab nations and some radical countries of the African continent, Israel resorted to counter factual argument by stressing the Arab South Africa connection. The common stand of both the Arab and African nations against the Apartheid regime in South Africa is being deliberately undermined by Zionist propaganda.

Statistical data which reveals the Arab exports to South Africa is given to prove the point that Arab exports to South Africa are almost twenty times as great as those of Israel. According to such reports:-

"Of the 49 shipments that the Bureau was able to trace to origin 37 (67 per cent) came from four Arab countries: Saudi Arabia (36 per cent), (United Arab Emirates: (sic) 24 per cent) Oman (10 per cent) and Kuwait (2 per cent)".

Interestingly enough, such researches do not focus on Afro-South Africa connection to reveal the extent to which certain African countries are maintaining economic and diplomatic relations with South Africa.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, it is pertinent in light of the above to state that both Arabism and Africanism are essentially negative responses to the colonial mode of thinking.

They were conceived and nourished under colonial and neo-colonial domination and in this respect they were bound to create more problems as far as Afro-Arab relations are concerned. The major impediment to forging stronger ties between the Arab world and the African continent consists in the view of this author, in the racist undertones expressed in many ways by the intellectuals and leaders of public opinion on both sides.

A new definition and a thorough re-examination of the factors which enhance or impede co-operation between the Arab world and Africa would provide a solid framework for lasting and healthier relations between them. It is the conviction of this author that both O. A. U. and the Arab League are politically impotent institutions.

Any future co-operation should not be conceived in terms of white elephant projects that serve the interests of the ruling elites to the detriment of the common people. Also, they should not be looked at as a favour or a charity given from a superior to an inferior people, but rather as a duty bound for the big brother to help his junior brother. The primary objective of any aid project should be the dislodging of the neocolonial foundations,
economic and otherwise, which are characterized by exploitation. The Arabs of today should not regard themselves as 'a hero civilisateur' with a specific mission to modernize a racially backward and economically under-developed people as the Europeans have been doing. Equally the Africans must realize the fact that Islam far from being a divisive and an alien religion as misconceived by many African intellectuals and nationalists, has acted as a unifying force for the various tribal, ethnic, and nationalist groups in and outside Africa.

Imperialism and Zionism have been identified as the main obstacles which stand in the way of forging effective cooperation between the Africans and the Arabs. Effort should be made to identify, expose and deal with the imperialist and Zionist agencies in the economic, social, political and cultural fields.
1- See for example the proceedings of the Seminar “al-Arab wa Ifriqiyya” Beirut, January 1984. English (The Arabs & Africa) and French translations have since been published in London and Paris - Participants in the Seminar which was held in Amman in April 1983 were drawn mainly from Arabic-speaking countries.


3- The Christian population in Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt could be cited here as examples. Actually their Orthodox type Christianity and its antiquity in the Middle East have pre-dated the advent of Islam.

4- M. O. Bashir, Op cit, P. 4.


7- Such pronouncements are clearly reflected by the main ideologues of Arab Nationalism like Michael Aflaq in his “Fi Sabil al-Bath” and Shibli al-Aysami “Islam wa Uruba”.

8- See for examples the writings of Sayyid Qutb, particularly his Ma’alim fi al - Tariq and Abd al - Jawad Yasin’s dispensation, Mucadimma fi Figh al-Jahiliyya

9- M. O. Bashir Op cit, P. 15.


12- The issue of the diverse nature of the Sudanese people was raised recently by some communist and secularist intellectuals in both the South and the North. The main motive behind such new theses in the view of the author is a desire to undermine the role of Islam in Sudanese public life.

13- Interview with Muddathir Abd al-Rahim, al-Siyasa Newspaper, Khatoum,17th November, 1986. p. 5. See also his above mentioned article Arabism, Africanism & Self Identification in Sudan.

14- Ibid


16- Ibid.
18- The writings of Ibraheen Sulaiman, Malik Nujai, and Mahammad Hdjay are continuation of the Islamic tradition conceived by the African Ulama long before the advent of colonial rule.
21- Kolo Omotothro, Ibid.
23- See for example Dr. Bala Usman’s derogatory remarks about the Position of Islam in Sokoto Caliphate and his paper entitled Political Economy and Political Community: the Significance of the Nineteenth Century presented at the National Seminar on The National Question in Nigeria: Historical Origins and Contemporary Dimentions Held at Abuja, 4-9, August, 1986. See in particular p. 35 where he states that the Dhimis in the Sokoto Caliphate were preserved for enslavement and the many among of them who became Muslims after their enslavement or their children were still kept as slaves under some serfdom service status. It is interesting to note that this part of the paper is not documented at all. There is also a great deal of confusion regarding Bala Usman’s conception of what constitutes Umma Dhimima, and Ulama. This confusion is buttressed by the gross ignorance he displayed regarding Muslim institutions, Arabic language and terminology and the varying positions of the Muslim Ulama on such topics. Bala Usman’s main objective is apparently to arouse the fears of Nigirian Christians about Islam.
24- See for example, Areyel Oded, The Islamic Factor in Afro-Arab Relations Middle East Review, vol. xviii, No. 3, Spring 1986, reproduced in the Grand Design the Quarterly Journal of the Nigerian Christian Graduate Fellowship (Zaria Branch, Nigeria) No. 1 no. 3 pp 11 - 16. The author is a lecturer in the University of Tel Aviv.
25- Ibid, p. 16
26- quoted in Grand Design Ibid, pp. 11.
28- Ibid.
29- Areyel Oded, Op, cit, p, III
30- The Grand Design. P. III.
32- Ibid.
33- Ibid.
34- Ibid.