

## **PAN-AFRICANISM AND THE THREAT OF TERRORISM: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL**

**Sirajudeen Owosho, Ph.D**

Department of Philosophy,

University of Lagos, Faculty of Arts,

Email: sowosho@unilag.edu.ng, owogrrh@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

The crusade for a formidable Pan-Africanism has been an age long project in the annals of the struggle for African emancipation. However the project has witnessed more rhetoric than action. The African continent has been severely plagued by political and economic instability and endemic poverty. The level of corruption and insecurity in the continent is so worrisome that even Africans in the diaspora have been discouraged from making meaningful contribution to the development projects in the continent. The most recent is the menace of terrorism. Terrorism continues to be one of the most serious threats to peace and security in Africa. The continent has and continues to pay a heavy toll for these outrageous and criminal acts, which have resulted in mass casualties, destruction of infrastructure, loss of livelihood and displacements. These among other problems are some of the fundamental obstacles militating against the realization of the desired goal of the project. It is against this background that this paper makes a philosophical appraisal of Pan-Africanism in the new millennium. This paper aims at tackling these challenges and re-awakening Africans, particularly, African leaders on the fundamental objectives of Pan-Africanism. It recognizes terrorism as a global threat, requiring commitment at all levels. It emphasizes the critical importance of cooperation and collaboration with the international partners in order to defeat terrorism. It further suggests leadership training with emphasis on moral education for African leaders. It posits that, only in a community of people with moral rectitude and unflinching collective will can Pan-Africanism attain greater heights that would guarantee enduring socio-economic security and political stability in Africa.

**Keywords:** Pan-Africanism; Political Instability; Economic Insecurity; Terrorism; Leadership Training

### **Introduction**

The development and transformation of African nations and the construction of a Pan African identity through the development of a shared goal, are some of the fundamental challenges of Pan-Africanism in the twenty first century. Pan-Africanism emerged as a philosophy of integration. It is also a movement that emphasizes resistance to the exploitation and oppressions of Africans and their kin in the diaspora, as well as staunch opposition to the ideology of racial superiority in all its overt and covert guises. Essentially, the purpose of Pan-Africanism is unity and development for Africa. From the time when the idea was first conceived, up till the formation of Organization of African Unity (OAU), and from OAU to African Union (AU), a critical examination revealed that apart from the problems of lack of a common culture and language that divides Africa, there is the fundamental challenge

of security and the lack of effective leadership in the search for unity.”<sup>1</sup> The objective of this paper is not to tell stories about the historical development of Pan-Africanism, rather it is to identify those crucial factors that constitute challenges to the objective realisation of its aims and objectives and their implications for Africa’s unity and development in the twenty first century.

### **Defining Pan-Africanism**

The ideology of Pan-Africanism is premised on the theoretical framework of "Afrocentricity". Afrocentricity has been defined as "a manner of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values and perspectives dominate".<sup>2</sup> It is also defined as "a transformation of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour results, suggesting that it is the first and only reality for African people - a simple rediscovery".<sup>3</sup> Afrocentricity is also defined as meaning "African centeredness", according to which Africans should be given their intellectual pride as the originators of civilisation".<sup>4</sup> However, as an academic exercise, Afrocentricity is defined in terms of the methodology, theory, and ideology that should be employed to achieve its objectives towards attaining the proposed change. Explaining these three terms, Chawane posits that:

Methodologically, Afrocentricity is intended as an answer to the intellectual colonialism that undergirds and serves to validate political and economic colonialism. In regards to theory, it places African people at the centre of any analysis of African phenomena in terms of action and behaviour. It is described as a devotion to the idea that what is in the best interest of African consciousness is at the heart of ethical behaviour and seeks to cherish the idea that “Africanness” itself is an ensemble of ethics. As an ideology it represents the continued longing among Africans for some set of ideas that would bind them together as a community and offer some alternative to an assimilation that is either excluded by Europeans or seen by Africans as an admission of inferiority and defeat.<sup>5</sup>

Given the above, Afrocentricity serves the purpose of binding together the various elements of African ideological and intellectual goals, political purpose, and a set of

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Okhonmina, "The African Union: Pan Africanist Aspirations and the Challenge of African Unity", *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 3, No.4, (2009), 85.

<sup>2</sup> Molefi K. Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, (Chicago: Peoples Publishing Group, 2001), 3.

<sup>3</sup> W.E.Reed, sante, E. J. Lawson, and T. Gibbs, "Afrocentrism in the 21st Century", *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, (2009), 73-79.

<sup>4</sup> J. C. Chukwuokolo, "Afrocentrism or Eurocentrism...", *New Journal of African Studies*, (2009), 32

<sup>5</sup> Midas Chawane, "The Development of Afrocentricity: A Historical Survey", *Yesterday & Today*, No. 16, (2016), 80.

commonly understood methods and theories. Theoretically therefore, this work on Pan-Africanism is premised on the theory of Afrocentricity.

Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encourages the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social and political progress and aims to unify and uplift people of African descent. The ideology asserts that the fates of all African peoples and countries are intertwined. Pan-Africanism is a belief that African peoples both on the continent and in the diaspora share not merely a common history, but a common destiny.<sup>6</sup> Stephen Okhonmina identifies two general approaches to Pan-Africanism namely Afrocentric and Eurocentric conceptions.<sup>7</sup> The Afrocentric conception is used to explain and evaluate the position that the struggle for self-assertion in Africa dates back in time to the era before Christ;<sup>8</sup> whereas, the Eurocentric position conceive Pan-Africanism as a direct response to European slavery and colonialism.<sup>9</sup>

In the submission of Thompson, the idea of Pan-Africanism was intended to challenge the main activities of European imperialist domination, namely, the slave trade, European colonisation of Africa and racism.<sup>10</sup> Murithi posits that, Pan-Africanism is an invented notion with a purpose.<sup>11</sup> This position begs the question of what the purpose of Pan-Africanism is. Essentially, Pan-Africanism seeks to respond to Africa's under development and exploitation, and the culture of dependency on external assistance that unfortunately still prevails in the continent.

Pan-Africanism as a philosophy represents the aggregation of the historical, cultural, artistic, scientific and philosophical legacies of Africans from past times to the present. Pan-Africanism as an ethical system traces its origin from ancient times and promotes values that are the product of the African civilization and the struggles against slavery, racism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. It is an endeavour to return to traditional African concepts about culture, society and values. The cardinal objective of Pan-Africanism is to foster unity and integration. Countries unite and integrate because they require collective regional approach when addressing issues of regional security, terrorism, drugs, arms and human trafficking and environment. The desire to accelerate the process of unity and integration led to the gradual and systematic formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), African Union (AU), African Renaissance (AR), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel Asante, "Pan-Africanism and Regional Integration", Edited by, Ali Mazrui, *General History of Africa*, (California: Heinemann, 1993), 724.

<sup>7</sup> Okhonmina, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Kofi Natanmbu, "Pan-Africanism versus Pan African Nationalism", *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 28, No.5., (1998), 568.

<sup>9</sup> John Londssale, "The Emergence of African Nations: A Historiographical Analysis", *African Affairs*, (1968), 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Vincent Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism*, (London: Longmans, Green and Company Ltd., 1969), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Murithi, *The African Union: Pan-Africanism, Peace Building and Development*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 58.

(NEPAD). However, the threat of terrorism and several other obstacles constitute serious challenges to the process of unity and meaningful development in the continent. Some of these challenges are political, economic, security and geographical challenges.

### **The Threat of Terrorism**

One of the major security challenges for the AU is terrorism as it is difficult to define. However, Wardlaw defines terrorism as the use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group, whether acting for or in opposition to establish authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and, or fear including effects in a target group larger than immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators.<sup>12</sup> Radu also defines terrorism as any attack or threat to attack unarmed targets, intended to influence, change or divert major political decisions.<sup>13</sup> The 1999 OAU Convention defines terrorism as:

any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any member or group of person or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institutions, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency; or create general insurrection in a state.<sup>14</sup>

In contemporary Africa, the threat of terrorism has assumed greater proportion. As a matter of fact, regions in Africa that previously did not perceive the seriousness of the threat or were considered to be immune from terrorism have become the targets of terrorist.<sup>15</sup> It is highly lamentable that foreign terrorist groups are recruiting unemployed African youths with promise of a better life, in order to perpetrate their dastardly acts. The terrorists are cleverly exploiting weak internal systems to spread their wings. Their propaganda has convinced vulnerable youths that legitimate African governments are to blame for their alienation. Powerful donors are financing

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<sup>12</sup> Grant Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics and Counter-Measures*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Radu, "Terrorism after the Cold War: Trends and Challenges", *Orbis- A Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 295.

<sup>14</sup> Organisation of African Unity, *Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism*, 207.

<sup>15</sup> Radu, 96.

terrorism in Africa while ethnic and religious strife has only worsened the challenge.<sup>16</sup>

There is a growing realization that terrorism networks have spread tentacles across the African continent. For example, in West Africa, specifically in Nigeria, Boko Haram has increased the frequency and intensity of its terrorist activities, in particular, indiscriminate bombings of civilians, incessant attacks against security forces and destruction of property and public infrastructure, leading to significant displacement of populations.<sup>17</sup>

Boko Haram has engaged in all sorts of criminal activities to finance its operations. It has also resorted to kidnapping as a way of forcing the Nigerian government to release its members held in Nigerian Prisons. According to Zuma, the spread of terrorism in Africa is influenced by a number of factors. These relate to radicalization and violent extremism, the links with transnational organized crime, kidnapping for ransom, the proliferation of arms, weapons and ammunitions, mercenaries and consequences of political instability.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to maintain that a number of vulnerabilities, which are common to most AU member states and regions, have contributed to increase threats of terrorism and transnational organized crime in Africa. Among the common vulnerabilities are the vast sparsely populated and poorly administered territories that can be found in virtually all the countries affected by terrorism, particularly in the Sahel. Such vast expanse of land provides hidden training camps for terrorist and criminal organizations.<sup>19</sup>

Economic, political and institutional weaknesses leave many countries vulnerable to terrorist penetration. Lack of employment and opportunities for youths, create a breeding ground for alienation and radicalization, and most importantly, render these segments of the population vulnerable to terrorist and criminal groups that offer them money and provide them with sense of belonging. Also, inadequate perception and awareness of the evils of terrorism and organized crime is also another contributing factor.<sup>20</sup>

The lack of adequate training, limited capacity and monumental level of corruption among law enforcement agencies, customs and other security officials contribute to the impunity of terrorists acts in Africa. For example, the governor of Borno State in north-east Nigeria, Babagana Zulum, has suggested efforts to defeat terrorist group Boko-Haram are being undermined by elements of the security apparatus. He specifically accused some soldiers of frustrating efforts at ending the insurgency. Also, the lack of adequate capacity and motivation to intervene militarily is another

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<sup>16</sup> Medeira, 18

<sup>17</sup> Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa at the Peace and Security Council 455 Meeting at the Level of Heads of States and Government, Nairobi, Kenya, (2014), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Dlamini-Zuma, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 6.

major factor. As a consequence of this, Africa in some instances has had to resort to military support from foreign powers in order to address the security challenges at hand.<sup>21</sup>

### **Other Challenges of Pan-Africanism**

Political challenges, ranging from corruption and ineffective leadership crises have devastated the African continent and deprived it in its struggle towards sustainable development. According to Ebegbulem, the tentacles of corruption has reached everywhere in the African continent. From the government ministries to the smallest administration unit of government, corruption is found everywhere. Crucial to this crisis of corruption engulfing the African continent is the problem of purposeful leadership that could act as architect and engineer of progressive change and development.<sup>22</sup>

Lack of political will on the part of the African governments to submit domestic political and economic interest to supranational institutions is also a major challenge. Some years back, Nigeria conceived a developmental project called vision 2020, and now that year 2020 is almost winding up, the actualisation of the project is yet to be seen.<sup>23</sup> One important lesson of regional integration theory, which draws on the success of European Union is the existence of elites with a shared commitment to democracy as the foundation of long term economic cooperation and development.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the African elites have fallen short of offering any such meaningful economic and political ideological consensus that is capable of transforming the continent into a modern democratic state.<sup>25</sup>

Politics as it prevails in the African context today is inimical to political and economic development. The contest for public office has become a matter of life and death as the African elites struggle to take control of their state apparatus. Lack of good governance and rule of law are formidable obstacles to the objectives of Pan-Africanism. The real challenges to democratic rule and good governance in Africa include the lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the African ruling elites, political repression of opposition, lack of respect for the rule of law and other corrupt government practices in many African states.

Some of the economic challenges facing Pan-Africanism include the fact that the inadequate mechanism for equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of regional arrangements are also working against the ideals of Pan-Africanism. This challenge is largely owing to the inability or unwillingness on the part of member states to pay their annual dues.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph C. Ebegbulem, "Corruption and Leadership Crisis in Africa: Nigeria in Focus", *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, Vol. 3, No. 11, (2012): 221

<sup>23</sup> Okhonmina, 93.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Schraeder, *African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation*, 2nd Edition, (Belmont, CA: Wardsworth Thomas Learning Press, 2004), 265.

<sup>25</sup> Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), 70.

The NEPAD basic document has an orientation problem. There is too much dependence on the West for its success. NEPAD as designed presently allows the West to take undue advantage of it and use for its own benefit at Africa's expense. Critics have charged that "the adoption of failed economic policies and programmes of the World Bank/IMF in Africa, such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), makes NEPAD a doubtful strategy and decades of underdevelopment and marginalization of the continent".<sup>26</sup> The objectives of SAP were intended to restructure and diversify the productive base of the economy and curtail dependence on oil, achieve fiscal and balance payment viability and improve efficiency through private-led development. The strategies for the realisation of SAP by government were through adoption of realistic exchange rate policy, devaluation, rationalisation of tariff regime to aid diversification, trade and payment liberalisation, commercialisation and privatisation of public sector enterprises among others. Unfortunately, the SAP policies led to the collapse of manufacturing and agricultural industries, heightened unemployment and social insecurity in Africa. In particular, SAP led to the collapse of Nigeria state which gave fecundity for ethno-religious manipulations and further affected the Nigeria labour sector and caused intense strain and disorganisation of labour movements. This was manifest in sporadic industrial disputes and strikes which hampered economic development in Nigeria.

On security challenges, it is a fact of history that the enduring legacy of colonialism in Africa has been the national borders and economic exploitation, which have distorted the contemporary pattern of political and economic development in the continent. To what extent is Africa prepared for a borderless continent, in which the African peoples can move freely without hindrance, including the right to permanent residence in countries other than their own? How can the African Union guarantee the right to free movement of persons in an atmosphere of xenophobia, given the ethnically and racially motivated violence in many parts of Africa? The chronic internal conflicts in Africa have resulted in vast population movement in and out of different national boundaries.<sup>27</sup> Africa has one of the largest number of refugees and of internally displaced persons in the world. The treatment and intolerance of refugees in many African countries still poses a great threat to the ideals of Pan-Africanism.

Pan-Africanism also has geographical challenges. The reality of contemporary Africa is that, it is still marked by political, economic, social and linguistic diversity which are formidable challenges to establishing a supranational union or a federal state.<sup>28</sup> The absence of organisational harmony between and amongst regional groupings in Africa poses threat to the success of Pan-Africanism. Overlapping memberships of several regional groupings, with duplicative mandates and structures leading to

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<sup>26</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi, "Governing the African Development Process: The Challenges of the New Partnership for Africa's Development", *NILA Lecture Series*, No. 82, (2002),:1-35.

<sup>27</sup> Paul G. Adegambe, "Pan-Africanism Revisited: Vision and Reality of African Unity and Development", *African Review of Integration*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2008): 19.

<sup>28</sup> Sheikh Anta Diop, *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis of Federal State*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1984), 72

inadequate financing of the integration process and inefficient use of limited resources, is one major index of this organisational disarticulation.

### **Recommendations and the Way Forward**

A theory of Pan-African Unity must reckon with the formidable challenges which can potentially disrupt any best-laid plan. In the face of the above contemporary challenges, what are the options open to African leaders in order to realize the avowed objectives of Pan-Africanism. This question is legitimate because Pan-Africanism as a socio-political and ideological force, that not only provided a mobilizing and uniting force for the African peoples in their struggle for freedom from colonial rule but also as a socio political discourse, it has become a basis of legitimacy for African action and collective solidarity.<sup>29</sup>

In the light of the above, it is strongly recommended that collective and holistic response to terrorism should be stepped up both at the regional and continental level. Existing counter –terrorism strategies, should be improved upon. The fight against terrorism in Africa requires a very strong commitment of all and its member states. African states must strengthen governance, law enforcement and establish linkages with the civil societies to nip terrorism in the bud. African states must also strengthen border surveillance and invest in social amenities and development of infrastructure, like education and health in marginalized regions that are breeding grounds for terrorism. In the case of state sponsored terrorism, Pan-Africanism must exploit the resources available within its capacity to dialogue with or prevail on the affected member state as the case may be. This goes to confirm that a comprehensive approach to fight against terrorism must include effective poverty alleviation programme. Huge investment in training and technical capacity to detect sources of terrorism fund must be given priority.<sup>30</sup>

It is strongly recommended that member countries of the AU should honour their financial commitments with the AU, as economic independence is a major obstacle to the realization of the aims and objectives Pan-Africanism. This is where the concern for the resuscitation of NEPAD is most relevant.

NEPAD as presently documented has some orientational problem – it needs be redesigned and refocused so that a largely self-reliant continental development programme can be fully and properly articulated with a clear anti-neocolonialist orientation. NEPAD should not be dependent on the West for its success as revealed in the present NEPAD basic document and by the regular meetings of African leaders and the G8 leaders where NEPAD is discussed. NEPAD should not seek to worsen Africa's dependency on the West. It should not have been designed in such a way that the West can easily take advantage of it and be able to use it for its own benefit and at Africa's expense, which is the case with the present NEPAD. In its present form, it is easy for the West to use it as another instrument for neo-colonialism or

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<sup>29</sup> David Francis, *Uniting Africa: Building Regional Peace and Security Systems*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 72.

<sup>30</sup> Zuma, 23.



even re-colonisation. In a re-designed and re-focused NEPAD, the role of the West would have to be limited and de-emphasised.<sup>31</sup>

Fundamental to the success of Pan-Africanism is the question of discipline and efficient leadership. Africa has been plagued by the problem of corruption on the part of our leaders. There is therefore the need to address the problem of corruption in Africa, in order to actualize to the fullest, the ideals of Pan-Africanism. Omoregbe joins his voice to those of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Muammar el-Gaddafi, and other Pan-Africanists and call on African nations to be prepared to let go the sovereignty they currently enjoy, sovereignty in poverty, political and economic instability, and take the bold step to establish the desired goal of the 'United States of Africa. For, there lies the future greatness of Africa. It is much better to be part of a great, strong, powerful, economically and politically stable "United States of Africa" than to remain the weak, poor, and unstable sovereign States, plagued with conflicts all over Africa.<sup>32</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This paper has made a critical examination of Pan-Africanism in the twenty-first century. It identified the task of unity, liberation, provision of socio-economic welfare and social security as the fundamental objectives of Pan-Africanism. The total liberation and unification of Africa must be the primary objective which when achieved will bring the fulfillment of aspirations of Africans and people of African descent everywhere. The activities of terrorists are a serious challenge to the realization of the cardinal aims and objectives of Pan-Africanism, Africa must therefore resolve to adopt new strategies to revitalize the fight against terrorism. African states must act decisively and also ensure that anti-terrorism efforts are not used to stifle political opposition.

Pan-Africanism is a call on Africans to build on their strengths and capacities and become self-reliant. Pan-Africanism is a veritable tool for restructuring and transformation, and if handled by the right hands could be the key to Africa's total emancipation. The extent to which Pan-Africanism can be institutionalized depends on whether the principles and norms that have been adopted by the AU can be translated into policies that impact upon the lives of African citizens at ground level. The challenge is whether the AU can act as an effective conductor so as to ensure that the organisation orchestrates Africa's recovery from violent conflict and put in place, strategies for development.

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<sup>31</sup> Ajuku, 35.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Omoregbe, "Pan-Africanism: Towards A United States of Africa – Problems and Prospects". A Seminar paper presented in the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria, (2010), 5.

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