

KWAME NKRUMAH AND THE PAN- AFRICAN VISION: BETWEEN ACCEPTANCE AND REBUTTAL

Henry Kam Kah¹

Introduction

The Pan-African vision of a United States of Africa was and is still being expressed (dis)similarly by Africans on the continent and those of African descent scattered all over the world. Its humble origins and spread is attributed to several people based on their experiences over time. Among some of the advocates were Henry Sylvester Williams, Marcus Garvey and George Padmore of the diaspora and Peter Abrahams, Jomo Kenyatta, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah of South Africa, Kenya, Guinea, Tanzania and Ghana respectively. The different pan-African views on the African continent notwithstanding, Kwame Nkrumah is arguably in a class of his own and perhaps comparable only to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. Pan-Africanism became the cornerstone of his struggle for the independence of Ghana, other African countries and the political unity of the continent. To transform this vision into reality, Nkrumah mobilised the Ghanaian masses through a popular appeal. Apart from his eloquent speeches, he also engaged in persuasive writings. These writings have survived him and are as appealing today as they were in the past. Kwame Nkrumah seized every opportunity to persuasively articulate for a Union Government for all of Africa. Due to his unswerving vision for a Union Government for Africa, the visionary Kwame Nkrumah created a microcosm of African Union through the Ghana-Guinea and then Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union. In defending the need for a United States of Africa, he made friends and foes alike. The impact of the vision of an African Union vigorously defended by Nkrumah still finds relevance today among Africans even those who feel that Nkrumah was realistically idealistic. His ideas

¹ Department of History of University of Buea, Cameroon. E-mail: henry.kah@ubuea.cm

about a United States of Africa have placed him between acceptance and rebuttal or denial. Those leaders who oppose these ideas have an egotistical disposition meant to benefit themselves and their supporters from the West. The current onslaught on African people and resources still calls for a rethinking of the concept of AU as propounded and defended by Kwame Nkrumah.

Pan-African Visions

There are several notions of pan-Africanism. This notion has evolved over time, changing from one focus to another and broadening in definition and practice. These diverse visions about continental Africa are all in attempt to give Africa a visibility and importance even if in the negative sense. Some notions of pan-Africanism have also stressed on greater collaboration and union of African countries on certain issues such as climate change and terrorism. Others views are at the centre of disunity and conflict within and between some African countries like South Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Nigeria among others. It has argued that pan-Africanism is a global movement to unite Africa and its people against racial oppression and exploitation associated with European hegemony. M'bayo and Okhonmina also opined that pan-Africanism involved efforts to mobilise continental Africans against colonialism and racism and was the philosophical grounding for the unity of Africa through the AU (Kuman-Abiwu 2013, 124).

These two visions or definitions or explanations of pan-Africanism seem to be similar but very different. In the first notion, Williams as cited in Kuman-Abiwu (2013, 124) is more concerned with the unity of the black people all over the world against what is hegemonic control of the Europeans and today the United States. He is apparently calling on all people of black descent in the Caribbean, Latin America, the United States and other parts of the world to come together and articulate their common grievances as a united group. These grievances are oppression and exploitation. M'bayo and Okhonmina lay their emphasis on the need to mobilise Africans within the continent against colonialism and racism. They view pan-Africanism essentially as an affair of people resident in the continent and are seemingly blind to or deliberately do not care about the plight of other black people in other parts of the world notably Latin America. Their mention of racism however is relevant to pan-Africanism beyond the people of Africa residing in the continent. Racism has been a common problem to the people in Africa as well as their kith and kin in other parts of the world. Their vision of pan-Africanism is also limited by their appeal only to colonialism. Today, pan-Africanism is also used to fight against neo-colonialism in all its forms.

The AU has also clearly stated what its vision of pan-Africanism is. According to this continental body which is successor to the OAU, 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*. At its core Pan-Africanism is a belief that African peoples, both as the continent and in the Diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny (Kumah-Abiwu 2013, 124 - emphasis is mine).

This notion of pan-Africanism where socio-economic and political progress is brought to the fore is shared by Kimaryo (2013, 16-17). He also argues that pan-Africanism at its core is “a belief that African peoples, both on the continent and in the Diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny” (Kimaryo 2016, 16-17). Pan-Africanism according to the AU highlights a number of issues meant to benefit all Africans wherever they may find themselves. The AU argues that for pan-Africanism to be a success the solidarity of Africans worldwide is necessary. This solidarity will lead to socio-economic and political progress which will improve the lives of African people. Again, the AU defines pan-Africanism taking into consideration the Diaspora which consists of people of African descent and those who have migrated and settled in other parts of the world. Although the fates of all Africans and their countries are intertwined, it is rather unfortunate some African leaders have not gone beyond lip-service in their defence of pan-Africanism. This explains the difficulties that the AU is facing to move Africa forward through a Union Government.

Other articulations of this very broad concept of pan-Africanism include the Afrocentric interpretation. This interpretation traces the struggle of Africans from self-assertion dating back to the era of 3200 BC. Meanwhile the Eurocentric assumptions on the other hand lay emphasis on pan-Africanism as African response to slavery and colonialism. The deep desire by Africans that their brothers and sisters who were taken out of the continent should be safely brought back was a manifestation of a pan-African spirit. It has also been taken down to the nationalist struggles in individual African countries like the spirited fight that Yaa Asantewaa of the Gold Coast and Shaka Zulu of South Africa put up against European colonial domination and traders (Kumah-Abiwu 2013, 125). These struggles like many others have been described in some circles as the struggle for pan-Africanism because this was trying to rid Africans of foreign domination. Afrocentricity in pan-Africanism is there-

fore seen to have started many years before the birth of Christ and not at the time of the slave trade and then colonial rule. Today, African people and blacks all over the world are not only united in their condemnation of the trans-Saharan and Atlantic slave trade but also all forms of enslavement perpetuated by the developed countries against developing economies in Africa and elsewhere. Colonial rule led to subjugation but today pan-Africanism is focusing on other forms of subjugation such as human-trafficking and wanton exploitation of African resources including all the problems associated with it.

Furthermore, Motsoko Pheko argues that Pan-Africanism advocates the use of the riches of for the benefit, upliftment, development and enjoyment of the African people. It is a system of equitably sharing food, clothing, homes, education, health care, wealth, land, work, security of life and happiness. It also means the privilege of African people to love themselves and to give themselves and their way of life respect and preference (Nyangena 2003, 5). This perception of pan-Africanism is quite appealing to the people in the streets who see the looting of the riches of Africa like oil, agricultural products, and forest resources among others to develop the North. There is very little of any development like hospitals, good roads, and electricity to benefit the areas providing these resources. There has not been any equitable sharing of these and other resources and accounting for the civil unrest in several African countries.

Pontificating on pan-Africanism Bujra (2002, 108-9) traces its roots to the 1800s. He argues that from 1900 when pan-African conferences started, this was no longer simply a protest movement by people of African descent in the Caribbean and the United States of America. Beginning in 1900, pan-Africanism became a weapon with which African nationalists fought colonial rule. Another slightly different perspective of pan-Africanism is that of Che-Mponda (1987, 53) who argues that African unity is a genuine desire of African peoples on the continent itself and the surrounding islands. He explains that it is in opposition to self-determination of African peoples by colonialism and imperialism. With the struggles against subjugation came the perception that the totality of Africa had a common front. This historical root of pan-Africanism differs from the Afrocentric interpretation which traces the origins of pan-Africanism to 3200BC instead of the 1800s. In spite of the differences in tracing the roots of pan-Africanism, there is however agreement that pan-Africanism began before the 20th century. The new dimension of the African peoples' willingness to unite by Che-Mponda is the surrounding islands joining in the unity drive. Although there is genuine desires to see Africa united from the base or bottom, at the top there is still a hide and seek game by those who holds of realms of power in different African countries.

The notion of Pan-Africanism as presented by Ratcliff (2009, vi) is similar to that of other authors. According to him pan-Africanism has a political, social and cultural ideology but is also a complex movement which attempts to ameliorate the dehumanising effects of “the global Eurocentric colonial/modern capitalist model of power.” Pan-Africanism therefore is a response to racist and sexist oppression and economic exploitation of Afro-descendants. The element of racism surfaces again as a core issue in defining pan-Africanism. In the midst of racism, pan-Africanism is seen more or less as a revolt against this and a projection of the African personality as dignifying. Radcliffe observes that through political, social and cultural actions, African countries were able to challenge the colonial and neo-colonial antics of Europe which was and has remained steeped in the exercise of power over other people. African people must therefore fight against this sexist and economic exploitation through pan-Africanism that is built on unity rather than disunity.

In addition, Nyamnjoh offers yet another definition or notion of Pan-Africanism. This notion is built around multiple identities. He contends that Pan-Africanism is about offering a mental space for disparate identities to co-exist in freedom and dignity. It is a flexible, inclusive, dynamic and complex aspiration in identity making and belonging in the global community. Pan-Africanism is also defined by Adi and Sherwood (2003) as the perception by people of African origins and descent that they have interests in common and this has been a by-product of colonialism and the enslavement of African peoples by Europeans. While Sherwood’s notion is shared by many others, the one of Nyamnjoh lends credence to the differences in opinions as to what best form of pan-Africanism should be. He examines the disparate identities that co-exist with one another as Africa tries to position and or reposition itself in the so called global community. This notion is more academic and does not necessarily boil down to what Kwame Nkrumah had prescribed for Africa. He was aware of other versions of what pan-Africanism should be but argued that for Africans to rise up to the challenge of the West they needed political unity and every other form of pan-Africanism will be attained. He saw in political unity a great Africa able to take its own destiny into its hands.

Pan-Africanism within the Diaspora community was meant to dignify the black people and serve as a political and cultural link to Africa that they sentimentally wanted to be united with. For the Africans living on the African soil, pan-Africanism served as a collective platform for self-definition and an onerous struggle against colonialism (Momoh 2003, 32). Pan-Africanism was also conceived as a movement for political change with deep emphasis on the identity and oneness of Africa (Momoh 2003, 44). This notion of the

oneness of all people of Africa and those of African descent is recurrent in the views of many people who have written about pan-Africanism. The theme of colonialism also comes out clearly and shows that the struggle during the colonial period was for African people to gain their independence and freedom from colonial subjugation. Today, instead of emphasis on colonialism, the discussion is on neo-colonialism which is more damaging than colonialism. The need for the Diaspora to work together for African unity has been made difficult but not impossible by the failure of Africans in the Diaspora to work together with those who are of African descent. Ideological and other differences between them and some advocates of African unity on the continent have made it difficult for the emergence of a sustained common front against the global destruction of Africa.

Garveyism as a variant of pan-Africanism sought to root the ideas of African redemption in a concrete organisational form, that is, in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Campbell 1988, 75). Meanwhile the pan-African movement of the 1930s focused attention on the study and understanding of pan-Africanism through African kingdoms and civilisations prior to European colonialism (Campbell 1988, 76). The 'Pan' concept in itself is considered an exercise in self-definition by those in power. Pan-Africanism as an example of the 'Pan' concept was a manifestation of nationalist consciousness leading to decolonisation of African countries. The concept is internationalist in so far as it seeks the unity of people living in a large number of juridical independent states (Campbell 1988, 78-9). During the period of the slave trade and colonialism, one of the main principles of pan-Africanism was that people from one part of Africa were responsible for the freedom of their kith and kin in other parts of the continent and all black people everywhere in the world. Pan-Africanism is also a philosophy in which Africa is regarded as the spiritual home of a united African people with emphasis laid on solidarity and 'brotherhood' between all people of African origin. It has in fact disparate origins in the political thought of African Americans and West Indians as well as the African elite educated in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Sturman 2007, 3). There is therefore convergence and divergence of views on what pan-Africanism is.

Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African Vision

The venerated Kwame Nkrumah, born in Nkroful in Ghana in 1909 influenced African history and unity in a significant way. He was the foremost and fearless advocate of the liberation and unification of Africa against western imperialism and for a series of actions aimed at total liberation and con-

solidation of this freedom (Nyamnjoh and Shoro 2011, 2-3). His thoughts took shape while he was studying in the USA. In the early years he wrote about the need for a West African Federation to enable Africans govern themselves without interference from outside as was the case in the colonial period (Sherwood 2012, 109-10). Asante (2012) has aptly argued that Nkrumah's vision was political but also more than political because it was also cultural and philosophical and above all Afro-centric. The Pan-African vision of unity was supported by the Concept of African Personality and a non-racial African Identity (Dei 2012, 42-4). Added to these was scientific socialism for all of Africa (Poe 2003, 3; Lawson 2004, vii). Africa was to learn from pre-colonial societies and not sacrifice those values for material progress (Frimpong 2012, 39).

In numerous speeches at home and abroad and in his writings, Nkrumah was clear about the nature of the African state, that is, a United States of Africa for its own stability, security and independence (Asante 2012, 17). At the philosophical level, Nkrumah in his book *Consciencism* intimated that Africa was capable of evolving its own ideology and philosophy in order to solve the crisis that affected African conscience and which was affecting society. Still in connection with philosophical pan-Africanism, Nkrumah suggested that it was necessary for Africa to harmonise the three cultural currents that now existed within African societies namely the traditional African, Euro-Christian and the Islamic (Biney 2012, 133). He believed that the cultural poles in Africa were capable of bringing about freedom and respectability among the people (Dodoo 2012, 84). Nkrumah did not mince words when he said over fifty years ago that:

If we do not formulate plans for unity and take active steps to form political union, we will soon be fighting and warring among ourselves with the imperialists and colonialists standing behind the screen and pulling vicious wires, to make us cut each other's throats for the sake of their diabolical purposes in Africa (Quist-Adade and Chiang 2012, 1 - emphasis is mine).

From Nkrumah's excerpt one is not left in doubt that he wanted the political union of Africa because of the diabolical actions of European countries in Africa. He was aware of the consequences that befell a divided continent and divided people. As early as in 1960, the independent Democratic Republic of Congo fell into this trap. The British also held on to Southern Rhodesia much to the chagrin of the people and the unity of Nigeria was threatened by the civil war of 1967 to 1970. Several decades after independence several African countries are tearing themselves apart and include Somalia, Libya, Nigeria, Burundi, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Mali. The Libyan example shows how in 2011, the West assassinated Colonel Muamar

Qaddafi and threw the country into chaos. Apart from internal bickering by various factions, the Islamic State has found a safe haven in Sirte and other surrounding towns. Besides, the migrant crisis is also a fall-out of the killing of Qaddafi. These scenarios in Libya, Mali and Somalia are telling of what Nkrumah foretold several decades back but no one will listen to him. In another prophetic excerpt of his pan-African vision Nkrumah opined that:

We need the *strength of our combined numbers and resources* to protect ourselves from the very positive dangers of returning colonialism in disguised forms. We need it to *combat the entrenched forces dividing our continent* and still holding back millions of our brothers. We need it to secure total African liberation.... At present most of the *independent states are moving in directions which expose us to dangers of imperialism and neo-colonialism* (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 123).

The vision of Nkrumah stressed the importance of strength in unity and not division. African countries were moving in different directions. Many French speaking countries were tied to their former colonial master and others in East Africa led by Julius Nyerere were defending with all might the need to achieve continental unity through regional blocs. All these and other divisive forces exposed African countries to the avarice of their enemies. Nkrumah firmly believed that in unity African people would ensure their total liberation from the pangs of imperialism and neo-colonialism which was the order of the day and has remained so in the world today. In spite of his warnings against a return of colonialism in disguised forms to destroy Africa, this call was not hearkened to. Rather, some countries like Nigeria accused him of being seek-seeking in the struggle for pan-Africanism.

Faced with the overwhelming forces of gradualism and pessimism during the historic founding of the OAU in 1963, Nkrumah passionately expressed his thoughts for Pan-Africanism in these words:

If we *do not come together, if we do not unite, we shall all be thrown out*, all of us one by one-and I also will go.... The OAU must face a choice now-we can *either move forward to progress through our effective African Union or step backward into stagnation, instability and confusion-an easy prey for foreign intervention, interference and subversion* (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 126 - emphasis is mine).

Still at this historic meeting in 1963 Nkrumah speaking of the need for African unity he opined that:

Just as *our strength lies in a unified policy* and action and development, so the

strength of imperialists lies in our disunity. We in Africa can only meet them effectively by presenting a unified front and a continental purpose. Our freedom stands open to danger just as long as the independent states of Africa remain apart (Muchie 2000, 1 - emphasis is mine).

This was a fervent call from someone who was aware of the destabilising influence of Western European countries. He stressed on the need for coming together, uniting, moving forward to progress, a unified front if African leaders would be spared being thrown out one by one including himself. This will lead to a step backward, stagnation, instability and confusion on the African continent. This clarion call was not heeded to by Nkrumah's contemporaries. It would seem Nkrumah was too intelligent for his contemporaries because all that he predicted have come to pass. The failure to unite has slowed down development and has led to the departure of some African leaders like Qaddafi as discussed earlier. It has also led to the humiliation of former Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and Omar El Bashir of Sudan with threats of arrest by the International Criminal Court at The Hague. There is stagnation of African economies with many of them still relying on the production of primary products. Industrialisation remains a dream for most of them. Others have been entangled in the web of loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). There was confusion among member states of the AU when Muammar Qaddafi was at the mercy of the West. Instead of speaking up and condemning in the strongest terms and probably getting into the war in support of Qaddafi, many leaders were mute or confused on what to do. Many have remained undecided on a wide range of issues affecting Africa. The rise of terrorism has brought confusion on how this can be handled.

A United States of Africa would have defended the people against neo-colonialism and the threat of fragmentation or balkanisation and prevented Africa from being a pawn for Cold War politics (Lawson 2004, 122). With a common a single federal government, with one president, a common currency and a common economic and foreign policies (Sturman 2007, 3) Africa would have been stronger and be able to shape its own destiny. Like Christ the Messiah, Nkrumah foresaw his own downfall caused by the imperialists. He was not the only one. Others had and eventually faced the same fate such as Patrice Lumumba of the Congo who was virtually eliminated by the pro-Western forces in his country. His death was destabilising to Nkrumah because he was a comrade in arms who wanted the liberation of the Belgian Congo from strangulation but ended up being strangled. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a fierce critic of Nkrumah, would never have believed that the Nigerian Civil War will end up consuming him. Nkrumah had seen this coming but Tafawa Balewa was naïve to analyse this. Nkrumah had passionately advocated

a Union Government for the economic, social and political emancipation of Africa (Wapmuk 2009, 645; Olaosebikan 2011, 218; Gassama 2008, 6). He was emphatic that no single independent African country could develop without a complete political unification of the continent for their collective benefit (Kumah-Abiwu 2013; Mei 2009; Abbas; Kimaryo 2013, 15). He was resolutely against African countries joining military alliances and the establishment of military bases and the testing of nuclear weapons on the African soil (Afari-Gyan 1991, 6). This was because it left Africans at the mercy of European countries.

Kwame Nkrumah also argued in favour of an African Personality that should disentangle Africa from attachment to European and American cultural entanglements. He advocated pan-Africanism through an approach of governance based on the black world, that is, on the unity of all black people around the world. Through this, he advocated support for the war against racism and segregation like was and is still obtained in the USA and other parts of the world. Nkrumah also emphasised the need for cultural autonomy and the personal self-esteem of black people wherever they found themselves (Frimpong 2012, 41). Nkrumah's thoughts on pan-Africanism were clearly elaborated in his books and especially in *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. In this book he denounced the exploitative activities of multinational companies, the dependency of African countries on foreign aid which was tied with strings, rising debts of African countries and increasing poverty among its people. He wanted Africa to pursue greater economic and political integration to overcome these hurdles (Quist-Adade and Chiang 2012, 3; Gassama 2008, 333-38). Nkrumah firmly believed that western multinational companies and institutions in Africa established an economic stranglehold over its economies not in the interest of its people (Biney 2012, 128). Schittecatte (2012, 58) classifies the pan-African vision of Nkrumah, also reflected in what he hoped for Ghana, into three namely, to gain political and more importantly economic independence for Ghana and the continent. The second vision was the ability of the newly independent countries of Africa to be able to de-link themselves from the past colonial masters and the new neo-colonial ones and finally the strength and feasibility of a united African continent. Kwame Nkrumah, the visionary that he was, also warned the potential elite of colluding with external interests but to listen to the African masses who would never become agents or partners of neo-colonialism as the elite would be (Schittecatte 2012, 61). On the other hand, Doodoo (2012, 86) identify three main objectives of Nkrumah in his pan-African vision of political integration of Africa. The first was the overall continental on a continental scale; then a unified land, sea, air, military and defence strategy as well as a common for-

eign policy for all African countries. These ideas found support among some people at the time and after Nkrumah.

Acceptance of Nkrumah's Vision

The ideas of Kwame Nkrumah on pan-Africanism though very profound and rejected by many of his contemporaries still found a place in the hearts of many a people and institutions during the colonial period and thereafter. These ideas are being recited and given greater meaning today by those who truly want to see Africa become a single continent like the United States of America and much of Europe through the European Union (EU). One of the foremost African-American who supports Nkrumah's idea of a United States of Africa is Molefi Kete Asante. As a passionate advocate of pan-Africanism, Asante (2012, 12) intimates that a United States of Africa will preserve its resources through a common external policy and an integrated continental market. This is in line with the vision of Nkrumah before and after independence of African countries. There is wanton exploitation of African resources by Western companies with no central command to negotiate better or to mobilise the human capital necessary for the exploitation of these resources for Africa's benefit. A common external policy and an integrated continental market will rid African of divided voices when it comes to major international issues dealing with the economy, the backbone of every people's ability to provide for the basic needs of the larger community.

Among the early converts to Nkrumah's pan-African vision of continental unity were Sekou Toure of Guinea, Mali's Keita and Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria (Adi and Sherwood 2003, ix). In contrast to Julius Nyerere's emphasis on strengthening regional groupings as a first to pan-Africanism, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea shared Nkrumah's pan-African ideology of a continental union. On 23 November 1958 shortly after the independence of Guinea from France, Toure and Nkrumah signed an informal agreement pledging to create a union of West African states and solidified their pan-African efforts in the Conakry Agreement on 1 May 1959 (Wilburn 2012, 38; Lawson 2004, 123). This nucleus of a union if pursued would have seen African unite to defend itself from western domination and exploitation. Later on, following a meeting in Accra from 27-29 April 1961, Presidents Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sékou Touré of Guinea, and Modibo Keita of Mali signed a charter which formally established a tripartite Union of African States. This charter came into effect upon its simultaneous publication on July 1 in the capitals of Ghana, Guinea, and Mali. This was after these leaders had met at Bamako, Mali, on June 26 to examine the extent to which decisions reached at their April meeting in Accra

had been implemented. The charter had evolved from a decision announced by the three leaders at Conakry, Guinea, on December 24, 1960. They envisioned a common diplomatic representation and the creation of committees to draw up arrangements for harmonising economic and monetary policies for their countries (DeLancey 1966).

Another person who bought the vision of Kwame Nkrumah of continental unity and who was assassinated through French and American connivance was Colonel Muammar Qaddafi of Libya. Following on the path of Nkrumah, Qaddafi made utterances and suffered the same fate of rejection and frustration like Nkrumah but unlike Nkrumah was killed. Like Nkrumah, Qaddafi argued that it was necessary to have an economic, political, social and ideological position towards the advancement of Africa. Qaddafi saw a united Africa as a harbinger of stability, security and independence. This was because it would lead to the investment of huge sums of money to improve the lives of many destitute Africans. It was this thinking that made Qaddafi during an extra-ordinary summit of the OAU in his home city Sirte Libya on 9 September 1999 to re-table the idea of a Union Government begun by Nkrumah (Muchie 2000, 7; Sturman 2007, 6). He re-affirmed this at the 4th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Abuja on 30-31 January 2005. Then at the close of the Kampala Summit of the AU on 27 July 2010 Qaddafi among other things said “We are approaching the formation of the African Authority each time we solve African problems and also move in the direction of peace and unity.” Meanwhile in another AU summit in Sirte in July 2005 Qaddafi passionately presented the urgency of a United States of Africa in these words:

We accept from others outside Africa to reduce our sovereignty and to interfere in our internal affairs, but we do not accept the same in the name of African unity. When we talk of African unity, we say no on the grounds that it is in conflict with our national sovereignty.... Yet, we are prepared to cede our sovereignty to foreign powers. We accept that, saying this is the way things work in our own time, but when we talk of ceding part of our own sovereignty to the African Union, we say no our sovereignty is too big a thing to compromise (Sturman 2007, 7 - emphasis is mine).

From the excerpt of his speech above, it is clear that Qaddafi made a mockery of those who claimed that they were for African unity when they would not subscribe to a Union Government in defence of their sovereignty but when it concerned foreign powers, they would forget about sovereignty. There are in fact many of such leaders in Africa who act like zombies always at the mercy of western countries. Qaddafi more than ever before ceaselessly

called for a United States of Africa comprising of a presidency and parliament and the establishment of an African military 'High Command' (Asante 2012, 18; Mei 2009). Another committed believer in African unity was Abdoulaye Wade, the former President of Senegal who said that if all African countries agreed to continental unity he was very glad to become the "Governor" of Senegal in that union (Asante 2012, 18; Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 129; Wapmuk 2009, 647). Many have never thought of giving up their positions of Presidents with all the glamour that comes with it for the position of a governor of a region of a united Africa. They pay lip service to the political unity of Africa not for the benefit of all and sundry but their selfishness.

There are other Afro-optimists from all walks of life who have accepted the ideas of Nkrumah on the unity of Africa. They are among other factors pushed by the negative consequences of colonialism and over 500 years of the vestiges of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Besides, the present global economic system is so lopsided that Africa is not benefitting from it because the countries have not closed ranks to work as a team. The Afro-optimists argue that African unity is possible because of African agency of creativity that can contribute to overcome some of their problems (Quist-Adade and Chiang 2012, 2). In addition, the strong demand today from Pan-Africanists and progressive forces for a more just egalitarian economic world order is in line with Nkrumah's vision of Africa and the world (Quist-Adade and Chiang 2012, 135). This view of Africa acting more as a continent and not as individual countries to global issues was re-echoed by the late Rev. Leon Howard Sullivan while addressing the people at an African/African American Summit in Abidjan in 1991 several years after the death of Nkrumah. During this august assembly, the venerated clergyman said that he predicted the revival of Africa as a continent (Dodoo 2012, 78). This was prophetic and could be seen as a call for the people of Africa to unite and fight against racial segregation not only in Africa but all over the world especially America and Europe. Nkrumah had stood against racism anywhere in the world especially against people of the black race.

Several other people and organisations have made statements and efforts that venerate Nkrumah as someone who had extra-ordinary force of mobilisation of the African people towards unity. The experiment of a united West Africa by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is close to the kind of unity that Africa should pursue as a continent (Dodoo 2012, 86). Nkrumah had called for the unification of West Africa a first step to African unity while a student in the USA and if ECOWAS is still to attain that goal, it is on the right path to regional unity. In addition, Dodoo (2012, 89) argues that although Adu Boahen, a Ghanaian historian, was a fierce critic of

Nkrumah, he however recognised that Nkrumah inspired and accelerated the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial revolution to such an extent that it engulfed the whole of Africa. This author also points to the efforts of the African-Americans to organise and provide assistance to Africa so that the people should wake up or walk if they are already up. And Prof. Agyeman Badu Akosa who is the President of the Kwame Nkrumah Foundation also argues that Africans can only become self-sufficient and retain their dignity if they unite and terminate all neo-colonialist activities. Meanwhile in 1960 prior to the formation of the OAU in 1963, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia strongly supported the vision that Nkrumah had for pan-Africanism. He said that “a Union of African States is a necessity which should be pursued energetically in the interest of African solidarity and security” (Olaosebikan 2011, 222). Three years later during the formation of the OAU, the emperor further intimated that African leaders should “arouse the slumbering giant of Africa, not to the nationalism of Europe in the nineteenth century, not to regional consciousness, but to the vision of a single African brotherhood” (Sturman 2007, 4). Shivji (2009, 8) on his part has supported the pan-African vision of continental political unity and economic integration but that it could be pursued from a regional level guided by a pan-African vision. These statements are all supportive of Nkrumah’s vision for Africa when he emphasised that Africa must unite and said if the people did not come together, neo-colonial forces would set them apart or force them to fight while these forces watch and take away their resources.

If nothing else people are agreed that Kwame Nkrumah’s politics of mass mobilisation was an effective weapon of the political struggle for the liberation of Africa. It was his foresight and vision as far as revolutionary struggles are concerned in Africa. Revolutionary movements in Southern Africa like SWAPO, FRELIMO and ZANU-PF all learnt a lesson from the mobilising skills of Nkrumah in their own struggle for independence. The pan-African nationalists were proud of Ghana’s role in the African revolution and were hopeful that other African states would like Nkrumah’s Ghana devote themselves to become zones for pan-African liberation (Poe 2003, 25). This was an open recognition and support of the efforts of Kwame Nkrumah in the unity of the African continent. One of the freedom fighters who liberated Namibia from the yoke of Apartheid rule Sam Nujoma in appreciation of Kwame Nkrumah once said:

Ghana’s fight for freedom inspired and influenced us all, and the greatest contribution to our political awareness at that time came from the achievements of Ghana after its independence. *It was from Ghana that we got the idea that we must do more than just petition the UN to bring about our own independence* (Frimpong 2012, 69 - emphasis is mine).

The inspiration that Ghana gave to freedom fighters all over Africa was thanks to the pan-African vision of Kwame Nkrumah. He had stated that the independence of Ghana would be incomplete if other African countries like Namibia and Southern Rhodesia were not freed. This was recognised by Sam Nujoma, the freedom fighter who led this southern African country to independence. Similarly, Kenneth Kaunda, the first President of independent Zambia intimated that “Nkrumah inspired many people of Africa towards independence and was a great supporter of the liberation of southern Africa from Apartheid and racism” (Frimpong 2012, 69-70).

The vision of Kwame Nkrumah concerning a continental body with stronger powers has been bought by the AU. In July 2009, the AU issued a “Declaration on the Celebration of the 100th Birthday Anniversary of Kwame Nkrumah.” This declaration praised him as that advocate of pan-Africanism who played a vital role in the establishment of a continental organisation and the liberation of Africa from colonial rule (Quist-Adade 2012, 6; Olaosebikan 2011, 218). This was an open recognition of the ideals for which Kwame stood and fought for until his death. The AU had openly acknowledged and accepted this vision as good for Africa if the continent must make progress in socio-economic and political development. This recognition makes greater meaning at a time that the African fifty three or so countries are what Quist-Adade (2012, 9) refer to as “desperate, dispirited non-viable... today.” In great recognition of Nkrumah’s legacy of pan-Africanism, the AU has named its newly constructed headquarters in 2012 in Addis Ababa after him. This was because of his unrelenting stance on African unity and his commitment to fight against colonial subjugation (Frimpong 2012, 70). This kind of scenario would have been avoided had African countries listened to the wise counsel of Nkrumah. They are recognising now when the web of neo-colonialism had entangled them to breaking point.

One of the fiercest opponents and contemporary of Nkrumah was Julius Nyerere of Tanzania but he came to recognise and accept what Nkrumah stood for several years after the passing on of the former. In one of his quotes during the 1997 7th Pan African Congress which also coincided with the 40th anniversary of the independence of Ghana Nyerere said “We of the first generation leaders of independent Africa have not pursued the objective of African Unity with vigour, commitment and sincerity that it deserves. Yet that does not mean that unity is now irrelevant” (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 128). A deeper interpretation of this statement shows that Nyerere came to believe in greater unity a thing which he did not believe in the way Nkrumah first suggested it. He was an advocate of gradualism but by 1997 he had recognised that gradualism had not led to the unity that Africa needed more than

ever before. This explains why he said if they were not committed to it before, this did not mean that unity was not a necessity. He was in other words calling on the people to pursue it with greater commitment and vigour than many of them did during the colonial and early post-independence periods.

Ali Mazrui has credited Nkrumah for establishing the agenda for continental unification for Africa. Besides, he argues that no one else has made the case for continental integration more forcefully than Nkrumah ever did. Mazrui holds that through Nkrumah's books his ideas have continued to influence the notion of continental integration for Africa (Kumah-Abiwu 2013, 123). This can be considered to be one of the most important contributions of Nkrumah which is acknowledged even by his fiercest critics. They are aware that as times passes, people read his works and look at what is happening to Africa today and see in these works the need to identify with what Nkrumah had said several decades ago. It is high time to go beyond just identifying but actually working towards to a Union Government for Africa. It may not in the short term provide the much needed solutions to the problems of Africa but will be very useful in the future.

The post-Nkrumah Ghana lambasted him for the economic and socio-political woes of Ghana. Leader after leader tried to undermine all that Nkrumah had done for Ghana before and after independence. Interestingly enough, during the radical period in the early 1980s in the country, Nkrumah and his philosophy of unity was revitalised in the struggle for an African revolution. The government of Ghana exploited his image and legend for the purpose of uniting Ghana and for pan-Africanism (Iljima 1998, 171). Who would have thought that in less than two decades, Ghanaian ruling authorities would give so much attention, honour and respect to Kwame Nkrumah who was 'vomited' by the military in a bloodless *coup d'état*. This came to pass and revealed that the ideas of Kwame Nkrumah penetrated the minds of even the heart-hearted or his fierce critics within his country. Although Ghana is seen as a model for many African countries, it has not escaped the onslaught of the West as far as its resource exploitation is concerned.

African renounce musicians are not indifferent to Nkrumah's pan-African vision. Nkrumah advocated pride in the cultures, histories and peoples of Africa and African descent. This was actualised by musicians like Fela Kuti of Nigeria and Bob Marley of Jamaica. It has also been creatively appropriated by younger generation writers like Chimanda Ngozi Adichie who are constantly negotiating and navigating such myriad identity margins as epitomised by President Barack Obama of the United States (Nyamnjoh and Shoro 2011, 4). The acceptance and valorisation of Nkrumah's ideas of pan-Africanism notwithstanding, these ideas were and still have been refuted

in some circles thereby making pan-African unity to remain a mirage at a time that it is needed most.

Rebuttal of Nkrumah's Vision

The pan-African vision of Nkrumah as compelling and realistic as it can be today's in Africa that is torn apart has persistently been opposed by divisive and anti-unity forces within and outside the continent. There are still people today like in the days of Nkrumah who have voiced very strong sentiments against a United States of Africa. They argue that the continent is too large and diverse to be united and that there are too many languages. Above all, they opine that European countries will not allow this to happen because it would mean losing grip of former colonies. Still others intimate that blacks and Arabs cannot live together on the continent and that Qaddafi like Nkrumah wanted to be the President of a United States of Africa (Asante 2012, 18-19). They define Africa in terms of colour when they talk about Arabs and blacks. The 'gradualists' since the days of Julius Nyerere have opposed 'rapidists' on the idea of continental unity. This is because they are more concerned with the false idea of the loss of sovereignty. According to them, there should be economic before political integration which is opposed to the call for political union as a means of economic integration (Asante 2012, 20). The Afro-pessimists dismiss pan-Africanism as utopic and which can never be realised. The debate which was given greater visibility on the African continent by Nkrumah has been further compounded by these views of 'anti-unificationists.' Unfortunately, many of them are steering the ship of state in their countries. They talk about sovereignty only when it come sot political unity of Africa. In their dealings with Western Europe, the United States and today China, they are virtually ribbed of their so called sovereignty. Based on this thinking at a time that all Africans including those in the Diaspora should be coming together lead one to ask which is the best approach to a continental government that would be acceptable to all? Some are for political unity, others for sovereignty and still others for a regional federation (Quist-Adade and Chiang 2012, 2 and 6; Shivji 2009, 4; Wilburn 2012, 37). Regionalism and sovereignty have failed Africa in its drive for a Union Government and it would be a logical and wise thing to try political unity.

After the independence of many African countries, instead of joining forces, many of their leaders opposed Nkrumah's call for a United States of Africa. While Nkrumah's Ghana pushed for a political union of Africa, Nigeria for example fiercely resisted it. Countries like Nigeria, Senegal, Benin, Tunisia, Kenya, Tanzania and many other French speaking states were

content with maintaining close links with the Western countries. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania preferred a gradualist approach to pan-Africanism. Nyerere laid emphasis on the dilemmas and problems that militated against pan-African unity and criticised Nkrumah for political unity of Africa as mere propaganda. The unity of Africa was compounded by the emergence of different blocs such as the Casablanca bloc which wanted political union and the Brazzaville and Monrovia blocs that were more concerned with their sovereignty and closer ties with their former colonial masters. The Francophone speaking countries especially argued forcefully that the time was not ripe for a pan-African organisation. They wanted to remain on good terms with France and supported only sub-regional pan-Africanism. While the more radical states like Ethiopia, Guinea and Mali belonged to the Casablanca group of states and supported Nkrumah for political union, the more moderate states like Ivory Coast, Liberia, Togo, Benin, Sierra Leone and Nigeria of the Monrovia group were for economic cooperation as the best way to achieve African unity (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 121-3; Wapnuk 2009, 646; Kumah Abiwu 2013, 123; Mei 2009; Olaosebikan 2011, 218; Akonor). In a forceful expression of denial of political union for Africa, President Sourou-Migan of Benin among other things said:

My Government feels, however, that it would be wise to maintain for a certain time the liberal conception of flexibility or organisation of our conference. We should also *abstain from giving a supranational character* to the bodies it sets up. Caution demands that the O.A.U. be maintained for the present as a multinational organisation (Olaosebikan 2011, 223 - emphasis is mine).

Similarly, the Prime Minister of Nigeria Sir Abubakar Tafewa Balewa argued very strongly against political unity of Africa in these words:

Nigeria stand is that if we want unity in Africa, we must first agree to certain essential things. The first is that *African States must respect one another*. There must be *acceptance of equality* by all the States. No matter whether they are big or small, *they are all sovereign and their sovereignty is sovereignty* (Olaosebikan 2011, 223 - emphasis is mine).

The excerpts from the speech of the President of Benin and Prime Minister of Nigeria reveal the strong opposition against political unity. Sourou-Migan cautioned that the OAU should not be turned into a supranational structure and Tafewa Balewa stressed on the equality and sovereignty of all countries. In apparent reference to Kwame Nkrumah, he talked about the need for states to have respect for one another. This could be understood

based on an earlier statement made in June 1960 in Ethiopia during the Conference of Independent African States (CIAS) by the leader of the Nigerian delegation Yusuf Maitima Sule. Sule had during this conference intimated that “If anybody makes the mistake of feeling that he is a Messiah who has got a mission to lead Africa the whole purpose of pan-Africanism will, I fear, be defeated” (Biney 2011, 139). The President of Senegal Leopold Sedar Senghor publicly lambasted Kwame Nkrumah for his support of political unity telling him to accept defeat. With this kind of thinking and behaviour which was re-echoed by Qaddafi when he challenged states to rise above sovereignty is what has made Nkrumah’s dream to remain a dream in the 21st century Africa.

While the AU as a continental body is an improvement in itself, it remains an inter-governmental organisation that is still far away from a United States of Africa as envisaged by Nkrumah before and after independence and Qaddafi at the turn of the 21st century (Mei 2009). To make nonsense of what Nkrumah all along fought against the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the brainchild of the AU is still tied to the apron strings of the West. Through NEPAD, the colonial matrix of power is still active in shaping fake partnerships that do not work practically. The proponents of NEPAD did not learn any lesson from Kwame Nkrumah’s insistence that neo-colonialism was a major threat to Africa’s struggle to control its own destiny (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 129). The AU also espouses a model of development based on liberal democracy and market principles (Frimpong 2012, v). This is a fundamental and radical break away from the thinking of Nkrumah and this is a rejection of his philosophy of pan-Africanism.

In the pursuit of pan-Africanism, Nkrumah had opponents from within his own country Ghana and also from his partners. Ghanaian nationalists argued that he was using the resources of the country or squandering them to make Ghana a base for the African Revolution. Some regionalists in his country violently opposed a central pan-African government because it undermined the sovereignty of their country and their own interests (Poe 2003, 25). Many chiefs of Ghana and their councils believed that an independent Ghana would restore ethnic power over government and this believe was in conflict with the path of African unity that Nkrumah had chosen. The argument was that before Nkrumah could create a pan-African nation he needed to tackle the entrenched regional and ethnic divisions that plagued Ghanaian society (Lawson 2004, 113). His partners like Sékou Touré of Guinea, Modibo Keita of Mali and Abd Al-Nasser of Egypt did not always see with Kwame Nkrumah. They did not always agree with his positions although this was not done violently (Poe 2003, 35). This is to show that the forces against Nkrumah’s vi-

sion were from both within his country and within his closer circle of reliable friends. It was therefore a distant dream for continental political unity to be achieved at that time. This thinking of “micro-interests” above the collective good has so dominated African leadership that it will take a new and radical generation of leaders to put the interest of Africa and the suffering masses above petty interest. Africa needs political unity to fight the many wars that it is confronted with from without and within the continent. Nkrumah’s clarion call still beckons on them to make haste while the sun shines.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the acceptance and rejection of the pan-African vision that was propounded by Kwame Nkrumah prior to and after the independence of many African countries in the 1960s. We began the paper through an introduction and then examined different views about the best possible ways that pan-Africanism can become a reality in and between Africans and those of African descent. These views have their roots in the past. While some authors have traced the pan-African vision to several years before the birth of Jesus Christ, others have argued that pan-Africanism began with the slave trade that took place between Africa and the Arab world and later on between Africa and Western Europe. The colonial period is also highlighted as having contributed to the development of pan-African ideas among Africans especially those of African descent in the diaspora. The different pan-African views is a clear indication of how diverse Africans are with regards to the best way to express a common position that will contribute to the independence of African states from the ‘invasion’ of Europe and the United States of America.

There has been a focus on the vision of Kwame Nkrumah and how it was and has been acknowledged and accepted as the way to save Africa from dismemberment. Early attempts were made by Nkrumah and the leaders of Guinea and Mali to make political unity a reality. His ideas were also bought by writers, musicians, Muamar Qaddafi, the AU and others. Sceptics who found in Nkrumah’s pan-Africanism a dream are beginning to see the need for a united Africa more than ever before because of the destruction that is going on in the continent today. The resources of the continent are exploited with reckless abandon; European countries intervene and further exacerbate the problems of fragile states like Mali, Ivory Coast and Libya.

In as much as Nkrumah’s ideas have found fertile ground in some circles, it has been out-rightly rejected in others. The Afro-pessimists are more concerned with safeguarding the territorial integrity of African states.

They also point to diversity in languages and historical experiences that will make it near impossible for a United States of Africa to be achieved. Their arguments fail to take into account the fact that regionalism and sovereignty have not helped Africa close ranks and defend the collective good. It is high time Nkrumah's vision of a political union be given a try so that Africans will be given the opportunity of comparing these and make their judgements as to which of these has been more successful.

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the pan-African vision of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana, and how this vision has been appreciated over time. Nkrumah was the greatest advocate of the political unity of Africa. This was to enable the continent to ward off exploitation by the West and then build a continent self-reliant. This paper examines the divergence in the acceptance and rebuttal of his vision for Africa through a content analysis of written works.

KEYWORDS

Pan-Africanism; Kwame Nkrumah; African Unity.

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