

DREAMS OF A UNITED CONTINENT: KWAME NKRUMAH AND PAN-AFRICAN STRUGGLES FOR CONTINENTAL UNITY.

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Pan-Africanism and Kwame Nkrumah's contribution to the growth of African unity. It argues that Pan-Africanism was a global movement to unite Africans against racial oppression and exploitation associated with European hegemony. It emerged as a response to the inferior social status to which Africans in White dominated societies were consigned. The article also talked about a brief history of KWAME NKRUMAH and his growth towards the dream of Pan-Africanism as a political and cultural phenomenon that regards Africa, Africans and African Descendants in the Diaspora as a single unit. This study adopted the qualitative approach in historical research to investigate and analyze information from both primary and secondary sources. The study further argues that the greatest impediment to the realization of Nkrumah's dream of African unity to as the issue of the newly acquired sovereignty by the African states. Indeed, the newly independent states of Africa viewed Nkrumah's dream of a "United States of Africa" with common planning, defense, diplomacy and foreign policy goals with great suspicion and even hostility.

Keywords: *Pan-Africanism, colonialism, imperialism, African-unity, neo-colonialism.*

INTRODUCTION

There is no better time to evaluate the concept, principles, problems and prospects of Pan-Africanism than now. This is in view of the fact that the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into African Union (AU) eighteen years ago, in the year 2002 had Pan-Africanism as its underpinning philosophy. Therefore, it is believed that if African peoples have a strong union, it will serve as a basis for mutual cooperation and development.

Essentially, Pan-Africanism is a global movement to unite Africa and its people against racial oppression and exploitation associated with European hegemony. It started as an idea before it became concretized and later metamorphosed into a movement. It began not in the home land but in the diaspora. It grew out of a sense of racial exclusiveness. In fact, it developed through what has been described by scholars as a complicated Atlantic triangle of influences between the United States, Europe and Africa.

Kwame Nkrumah's saw Pan-Africanism as a method to develop a collective strength that might subvert global power relations, in addition to being a way to show unity. However, there are difficulties in balancing Nkrumah's Pan-African ambition with the realities of the twenty-first century. The idea of a united, centrally administered Africa faces challenges in the modern world, which is marked by regional economic blocs, globalization, and a more varied set of political and economic priorities among African nations. New strategies are needed to address intra-African tensions, promote political unity, and integrate the economy. Furthermore, African nations are also subject to additional external pressures as a result of problems like China's ascent and the changing nature of the global economy. Pan-Africanism needs to adjust to the shifting geopolitical and socioeconomic landscape in order to bring Nkrumah's vision into line with current circumstances. This adaptation might entail upholding individual governments' sovereignty while promoting closer regional collaboration through organizations like the African Union (AU). With programs like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA), the focus on economic

cooperation may also help to advance the unity Nkrumah envisioned in a more practical, contemporary way. Furthermore, in order to guarantee that Pan-Africanism is an inclusive and unifying ideology, it is still imperative that African Diasporas be included in this vision. Ultimately, a balanced strategy that honors both the historical aspirations of African unity and the current need for adaptability, autonomy, and responsiveness to changes in the world is needed to reconcile Nkrumah's vision with the difficulties of the twenty-first century.

Kwame Nkrumah's vision of Pan-Africanism was based on the principles of African unity, freedom, and self-determination. Nkrumah believed only through collective action and solidarity could Africa effectively combat legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and external exploitation. His vision of a united Africa with a strong central authority capable of driving development, fostering inter-African cooperation, and standing as a global force, was an ambitious and transformative one (Ajom, 2006; Nurain & Abdulyakeen, 2024).

However, Nkrumah's Pan-African goal has faced several obstacles in the twenty-first century due to regional diversity, global geopolitics, and economic interdependence. Efforts to achieve political unification and economic integration are complicated by the complex array of national interests, economic inequities, and sovereignty concerns that characterize the African political scene today. Furthermore, the framework in which African unity must be pursued has changed due to external factors such as shifting global power dynamics, China's increasing influence in Africa, and shifting global trade dynamics (Michelle, 2015; Samuel, 2018).

Furthermore, Pan-Africanism is a political and cultural phenomenon that regards Africa, Africans and African descendants abroad as a unit. It seeks to regenerate, and unify Africa thereby promoting a feeling of oneness among the people of the African world.

(Esedebe) Therefore, Pan-Africanism is not a new concept neither is it a dwindling phenomenon. In 1900, the first Pan-Africanist Congress was held in London. It was principally sponsored by a Trinidadian, Barrister Sylvester Williams. It was in this conference that the idea and concept of Pan-Africanism was first introduced to W.E.B DuBois, who later became a leading figure of Pan-Africanism. During this period, virtually all the colonial powers were hostile to the movement and they did everything to discredit and even suppress it. (Tarikh 1978) From the diaspora point of view, Pan-Africanism refers to the different African movements of the descendants of African slaves in the United States and West Indies anchored on a Negro identity that flourished in the first half of the twentieth century.

EVOLUTION AND GROWTH OF PAN-AFRICANISM

Understandably, Pan-Africanism is the casting aside of subservience to foreign domination in all forms, and the confident assertion that African interests are paramount. Although the precise definition of Pan-Africanism tends to be elusive, there is unanimity among scholars that Pan-Africanism encapsulates the conscious attempts of black peoples all over the world to establish a united front that is aimed at combating the dehumanizing effects of slavery, racism, colonialism, and oppression of various kinds against all peoples of African descent (M'Bayo, 2004:23). The African Union (AU) takes a holistic view the concept of Pan- Africanism when it established that:

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 on the continent and in the Diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny. (AU ECHO 2013).

Essentially, Pan-Africanism involves efforts to mobilize continental Africans against colonialism and racism. It provides the philosophical foundations and springboard for the unity of Africa through the African Union. It seeks to unite African descent and by so doing it demonstrates the mutual bond that is believed to exist among black peoples regardless of their geographical location. Although, the African-American and the Afro-Caribbean Pan-Africanists often adopted contradictory positions that denied their Universalist Pan-Africanist aspirations. Evidently, Pan-Africanism did not begin in Africa, the home land but it began in the diaspora. Indeed, it began in the United States, becoming articulate during the 18th century starting from the period of the declaration of independence in 1776.

Fundamentally, Pan-African thinking and movement developed through what has been described by scholars as a complicated Atlantic triangle of influences between the United States, Europe and Africa. It represents a reaction against the oppression of blacks and the racial doctrine that marked the era of abolitionism. Obviously, the term

Pan-Africanism began to gain widespread usage at the turn of the twentieth century. It is often associated with Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian barrister who convened the first Pan-African conference to protest against the expropriation of lands in the colonies, racial discrimination, and other problems affecting all peoples of African descent. Against this background, it found expression in the independent church movement in the United States and Africa particularly in resistance to European colonialism in Africa. The available evidence suggests that, 'Pan- Africanist' and 'Pan-Africanism' became popular expressions after the London Congress of 1900 convened by the Afro-West Indies barrister Sylvester Williams. However, before this congress in 1900 there had been a feeling of Pan-Africanism especially in the United States, where the Afro-Americans, although freed suffered disabilities that reduced them to the status of inferior citizens. There is also no unanimity among scholars as to when Pan-Africanism began. Nevertheless, there is consensus among them that Pan-Africanism congresses were held in London in 1900, Paris 1919, London and Brussels 1921, London and Lisbon 1923, New York 1927, and 1945 in Manchester. Nkrumah, 1970:31. Despite the challenges that bedeviled Pan-Africanism, it began to grow in leaps and bounds such that it was able to accommodate the cleavages and rivalries between its adherents.

Firstly, the rivalry between W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey. Whereas Garvey preached, "Blacks to Africa" to the Negro masses of the new world, DuBois fiercely resisted this idea by setting his dual objectives: regeneration of black people in the lands of their adoption and in association with a freed African continent. Legum 1962:26 this bitter and prolonged controversy led to a cross-fertilization of ideas between the West Indies and the United States. These ideas were subsequently carried to Europe and back to Africa through Pan-African conferences and African students.

Furthermore, the United States provided a stimulating training ground for these black African students not only for formal education but also for constantly rising against racial discrimination, which made them more receptive to the ideas of Negro intellectuals and independent religious movement. Despite the hostile stance of the colonialists against the movement, it kept waxing strong such that between 1900 and 1945, six different congresses of Pan-Africanism were convened, across the continents of Europe and America. In 1919, Paris played host not only to the Versailles Peace Treaty but also to the Pan- African congress. This was a follow up to the London congress of 1900. Two years later, there was another Pan- African congress in both London Brussels. In 1923, there was another congress that was held simultaneously in London and Lisbon. By 1927, another Pan-African congress was held in New York. In all of these congresses, the need for greater participation of Africans in their welfare were the burning issues.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF KWAME NKRUMAH 1909-1972

Kwame Nkrumah was born on 21st September 1909 in Nkroful, Gold Coast, now Ghana. He was one of the most prominent and prolific Pan-Africanists of the 20th century. He was trained as a teacher at the Achimota College in Accra from 1927 to 1930. Thereafter, he worked as a teacher for the next five years, teaching in various schools across Ghana. (Eiguedo- Okoeguale 2009-:36). However, from 1935 to 1947, he shuttled between the United States of America, and the United Kingdom for his higher education. First, he enrolled in Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1939 with a Bachelor of Arts. In 1942, he received a Bachelor of Sacred Theology. During this period, Kwame Nkrumah also earned a Master of Science in education from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1943, he obtained a Master of Arts in Philosophy. Thereafter, he taught Political Science at Lincoln and at the same time he was preaching at the black Presbyterian churches in Philadelphia and New York. During this period, he also privately devoted himself to study Marcus Garvey's books on liberation of black African from colonial bondage. Indeed, he pointed out that while a student in the USA, he believed that of all the literature that he studied, the book that did more than any other to fire his enthusiasm was the Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey Furthermore, between 1945 and 1947, Kwame Nkrumah was a student in London. He studied at the London School of Economics and Political Science. During this period, he took an active part in the politics of the coloured and colonial peoples. He also identified himself with the Pan-African Congress - an organization that was as concerned with the rights of African people and their struggle against colonialism. (Nkrumah 1968:76) The available evidence suggests that Nkrumah helped the Pan-African Federation to convene the sixth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England in 1945. The resolution that he wrote, which was adopted by the Sixth Pan-African Congress was captioned, "Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World." Thereafter, he established the West African National Secretariat to work for the decolonization of Africa. The secretariat pledged itself to promote the concept of a West African Federation as an indispensable pedal for the ultimate achievement of a United States of Africa.

PAN-AFRICANISM AND AFRICAN UNITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

A social and political movement known as Pan-Africanism promotes the unity and solidarity of all African countries, peoples of African heritage, and African Diasporas. The fundamental tenet is the conviction that African peoples share a common history, culture, and destiny, with a focus on eradicating racism, exploitation, and colonialism. Pan-Africanism has been influenced historically by a number of turning points: Africans and people of African heritage began organizing internationally to confront racial injustice and seek equal rights in 1900 with the First Pan-African Congress, which was led by individuals like W.E.B. Du Bois. Clare and George (2008). Through the creation of the African Union in 1963, pan-African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah envisioned a united Africa that would eradicate the effects of colonialism and establish a powerful political, economic, and cultural bloc. In the twenty-first century, the idea of Pan-Africanism continues to be essential to the discussion of African integration and unification. Nonetheless, the movement has changed to reflect the opportunities and problems of the modern world. Discussions on enhancing political unity and cooperation throughout the African continent are now part of Pan-Africanism. Greater political unity, peace, and security throughout Africa are still goals of the African Union (AU), which took the position of the OAU in 2002. Through programs like the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the African Standby Force, the AU seeks to address concerns including human rights, democracy promotion, and conflict resolution. Concerns about national sovereignty and political disintegration endure in spite of attempts. Although there are still issues like coups and civil conflicts, regional political unions like ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) have been active in maintaining peace. The 2021 implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) serves as an illustration of Pan-African economic unity. By promoting economic cooperation, lowering barriers, and boosting intra-African commerce, it might establish the largest free trade area in the world. Pan-African philosophy has placed a strong emphasis on economic integration and shared prosperity. Africa's economy has seen significant development in the twenty-first century, with industries including technology, agriculture, and services expanding quickly Acheoah, 2018. Africa still faces issues like poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and economic reliance on outside forces despite encouraging growth. Moreover, there are glaring disparities among African nations. One important step toward achieving economic unification is the AfCFTA. (African Continental free trade Area) By establishing a single market for products and services, it seeks to increase the competitiveness of African economies on a global scale. Initiatives like the Africa Infrastructure Fund and the African Development Bank are also aiming to finance and enhance industrialization and infrastructure throughout Africa. Reclaiming African cultural identity, promoting pride, and combating the effects of colonialism have all been goals of Pan-Africanism. This element has broadened in the twenty-first century to include not just Africa's history but also its present and future. Native African cultures are frequently eclipsed by Western cultural domination in the media, education, and technology. Furthermore, unity can also be hampered by internal divisions based on cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. African culture is widely promoted by the continent's expanding entertainment sector, which includes Hollywood, Afrobeats music, and African literature. African languages, customs, and art can also be shared and revitalized through digital technologies. Pan-African Solidarity is still based on the fundamental cultural principle of Ubuntu, or humanity toward others. New socioeconomic and human rights issues have emerged in the twenty-first century, including young unemployment, gender inequity, and the rights of marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ people. Human rights violations, corruption, and authoritarianism continue to plague many African nations. Despite advancements, women's empowerment is still a major problem in many African countries. In the twenty-first century, Pan-Africanism promotes social fairness and the defense of human rights. Important tools that direct initiatives to solve social inequities throughout the continent are the Maputo Protocol (2003), which focuses on women's rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981). In Africa, there is also a burgeoning youth movement that promotes social innovation, leadership, and change. Given that a sizable portion of individuals of African origin reside outside of the continent, mostly in the Americas and Europe, the African diaspora is crucial to Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism has expanded to encompass not only African countries but also those with African ancestry around the world. Identity concerns, discrimination, and a lack of direct participation in Africa's political and economic future are common problems for the African diaspora. Initiatives to strengthen ties between the African continent and the diaspora have been developed by the African Union.

CONCLUSION

This article examined Pan-Africanism and Nkrumah's concept of African unity. It established that pan-Africanism provided the philosophical foundations and springboard for the unity of Africa through the Organization of African Unity now, African Union. It succinctly explored the biography of Kwame Nkrumah and his contribution to the growth of African nationalism that led to the struggle for independence. At Ghana's independence in 1957, he informed his compatriots that Ghana's independence was incomplete so long as any other part of Africa was still under colonial domination. Therefore, upon the independence of other African states he invited them to share his dream of a United States of Africa. However, rather than accepting Nkrumah's invitation, most African leaders of his time viewed Nkrumah's dream of African solidarity and unity with great suspicion. There was also the issue of the traditional ideological cleavages between the Casablanca group, Monrovia group and the Brazzaville twelve. Against this background, the idea of African unity, as a supranational organization with an African High Command and common currency became unattainable. However, a compromise was agreed in May 1963, when the various African leaders agreed to and signed the charter establishing the Organization of African unity in the African Hall at Ethiopian's capital Addis-Ababa. Today, the name Nkrumah, elicits a mixed reaction from scholars. While some are of the view that Nkrumah was ambitious, desiring a "United States of Africa" where he would have been the Head of State, others believe that he was far-sighted in the face of contemporary international relations, particularly after the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 that turned Europe from "Europe of States" to a "State of Europe".

END NOTE

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