

Pan West Africanism and Political Instability in West Africa: Perspectives and Reflections

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This reflection paper elaborates within the context of contemporary Pan Africanism on the contrasting features of the political landscape of West Africa via a historical and comparative approach that provides possible explanations and discussion on the drawbacks of political instability, with a special focus on the question of refugees, policy approaches, and emancipation philosophy.

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Introduction

Five years of within the 21st century, and observation of the social and political landscape of West Africa imposes deep reflection because recurring instability has infested the sub-region. For the past ten years, political transformations gave Africa in general and West Africa in particular, two contrasting features. There is the improvement of political institutions and the spread of democratic principles and discourses which resulted from the desire for freedom, liberty, free choice, and good governance that the African masses expressed intensely in the early 1990's coupled with external factors, such as the influence and policies of international donors, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the France –Africa Summit of La Baule in 1990 (Bourgault 1995:207), and the new US and Russian foreign policies towards Africa (Bratton 1997:162; Faes, 1995, Chazan, 1992) triggering new social and political orders with democracy as the common denominator embedded in the notion of globalization and its neo-liberal drive.

However, despite the joys and hopes of better lives they instilled in Africans, the new political orders thrive simultaneously with the resurgence of political coups, civil wars, power struggle, rigged elections, ethnic and communal clashes to the point that via multiplication and perpetuation has now installed West Africa in a new spiral of violence, placing it as the riskiest region of Africa.

Because of West African leaders' commitment to tighten their relations and to advance the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) integration schemes, the positive communal actions against diseases (malaria, HIV-Aids, cholera, etc), poverty, illiteracy, and drug-trafficking can work, yet current political instability annihilates all the efforts towards building strong democracies with guarantee liberties, good governance, the rule of law that can assure that people have a bread on their plate everyday.

Hence, I contend that because of the intensity of current conflicts in West Africa and their complex and vicious nature, it is impossible for countries to win the fight for stability and peace individually. This statement echoes Kwame Nkrumah's 1958 appeal that the salvation for Africa resides in freedom and unity (R. Emerson & Kilson, 1965, p. 14). If one can loosely claim that independence is attained in Africa, unity is yet to come to allow African states to have a certain influence in world affairs. Therefore, I support the philosophy that only a West African collective action can better resolve durably the threats of destabilization. It is this collective effort that I call Pan West Africanism, which constitutes the *raison d'être* of this reflection/thought that with the realities of today teach that only pragmatism is salutary as Ayi Kwei Armah indicates in one of his recent works, stating: *time has come to shift the paradigm from the criticism of old orders to the design and implementation of new ones* (Oriris Rising, 1995, p.).

This reflection paper has three parts. The first elaborates on the contrasting features of the political landscape of West Africa using a historical and comparative because of the possible differences that exist from one country to the other. The second part discusses the drawbacks of West Africa's political instability with a special highlight on refugee questions, and the last on the policy approaches and emancipation philosophy of my visions for contemporary Pan Africanism.

The Post 1990 Political Landscape: Conflicting Realities

Even though the social upheaval of the early 1990 did not begin the political transformation of West Africa, it did accelerate to create better institutions than what existed before. The shift to multiparty systems, the growth of the media, the thriving of the independent media, the drafting of constitutions, and the holding of pluralistic elections on a regular basis (in some countries at least) proved that predictions and ideas that Africa had a doomed political future were absolutely wrong. Thus, theories of failed states as well as the Statist approach to African politics do not hold anymore inasmuch as African states and governments stopped operating as major political forces in the making of nations. Like the rest of the continent, the West African states entered the 21st century with renewed hopes and enchantment.

The 1990's were akin to a new departure in the consolidation of democracy, the respect of republican institutions, the strengthening of West African integration, the respect of civil liberties, and the rule of law for all, thus the social political commitments of the early 1990's and the economic choices triggered hopes that Africa would recover from the lost decades of the 1980's.

The enthusiasm of the 1990's came from the beliefs that the expansion of free market economy and political liberalism /democracy would allow Africa to make progress in the 21st century. Following in the steps of the 1990 Washington consensus, it became crystal clear to African countries that market and political liberalism were inevitable. Thus, the newly appointed prime ministers in the 1990's became, for the most part, strong advocates of private investments. In Cote d'Ivoire former IMF deputy director and former governor of the Central Bank of West African States engaged Cote d'Ivoire in the privatization of water, electric, telephone, and gas companies. From this high speed liberalization and privatization, French companies generally enlarged their influence in Cote d'Ivoire national markets.

Also the constitutional dispositions, which prevented political leaders from holding power indefinitely, were seen as roadblocks against the proliferation of military and civilian dictators. Clark (1997) writes that democracy regained credibility in Sub-Saharan Africa, while fascination with democratic political reforms led to the eventual overthrow of long time dictators, some of whom had ruled their countries since independence (1997, p. 1). For example, the Benin route set a peaceful transition to new leadership in 1990 (Clark 1997:4), while the army-led a removal of General Moussa Traore in Mali which showed that there were valid reasons to rejoice in a better future. Another sign of hope rested on the different protocols of protection and cooperation in terms of peace, which African leaders signed and were compelled to respect each other's sovereignty and condemn any unconstitutional regimes. And likewise, the Economic Community of West African States' 1993 revised treaty attests to the awareness of West African leaders that unity and cooperation are important to achieve integration to establish a community parliament, an economic and social council, a court of justice, an arbitration tribunal, and an executive secretary (ECOWAS Treaty).

Whoever studied or learned about West Africa, from 1960 to 1989 one must acknowledge that the early 1990's brought in new and fresh feelings.

In fact, from 1960 to 1989, West Africa was the most politically instable region of Africa because it hosted 60% of the coups d'état and military interventions with the most affected countries being Burkina Faso (1980, 1982, 1983, 1987), Mauritania (1980, 1984), Liberia (1980, 1989), and Nigeria (1983, 1985). And in 1985, 11 of the 16 countries of West Africa had military regimes (C. Asante, 1986:144; J. Emeka & S. Wright, 1990:4; G. Mwakigagile, 2001:2).

In general, the intrusion of the military in politics triggered many problems. At the national levels, military regimes often failed to respect their commitment to return power to civilians and turned into worst dictators. Nigeria stands as the best example, because their military controlled power for more than 25 years from 1960 to 1995, a Nigerian case so extraordinary that many analysts did not believe that 1999 and 2003 presidential and constitutional elections would not take place. And instead of improving the social and political environment as they promised, when they seized power, military regimes failed West Africa more than any corrupt civilian regimes of before. This failure to improve political, social, and economic conditions often justified repetitive military overtaking, usually known as palace coups that took place in Nigeria with a succession of different military leaders.

Today, a retrospective look at military regimes shows that they ruined democratic values and confiscated the freedom of West Africans. In Togo, Mali, Benin, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, and Guinea, military regimes did not do better than civilian regimes in promoting democracy and good governance. The record of the absence of freedom for the press, the cases of incarceration of journalists and political opponents, corruption, and the wrong managements of international loans, the weak strategies against poverty, and the perpetual call for aid show that West Africa was a powder keg ready to set aflame. Evidently, military regimes were harsher and more destructive of human rights.

In 1980 Sergeant Samuel Doe eliminated President Tubman of Liberia in order to hold power. Many people in the entourage of the slain president were also executed. In 1987, in Burkina Faso, Captain Blaise Compaoré toppled his comrade Thomas Sankara to replace him at the head of the state. He went on to execute some pro-Sankara senior officers after he accused them of staging a coup d'état. In Ghana, flight lieutenant Jerry Rawlings executed numerous statesmen when he forcefully returned to power in 1981; the executed were accused of corruption and the mismanagement of national wealth.

At the regional level, political instability hindered the political and economic integration of West Africa. For instance, in 1980, following the overthrowing and the execution of President Tolbert of Liberia, the new regime of Doe announced the closure of Liberian borders in order to gain total control of the state. Thus, Liberia entered a period of autarky during which diplomatic and contacts with African countries were either frozen or simply severed. This period of autarky accounts for Liberia's delayed ratification of the ECOWAS' 1979 protocol on free circulation and movement of people within the ECOWAS member-states. The Liberian first coup met with the hostility of neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, and diplomatic relations between Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire turned unfriendly.

In 1981, after Rawlings returned to power in Ghana, his regime repeated the Liberian scenario of borders closure, which was a flagrant violation the ECOWAS' agreement to allow West Africans and West African goods and products to circulate within the region freely and without customs restrictions. In 1983, Nigeria followed the Liberian and Ghanaian routes after General I. Babangida overthrew elected president Shehu Shagari. Within the same year, pretending an overrepresentation of Ghanaian immigrants and nationals in Nigeria, and because of dramatic economic conditions, the Nigeria government expelled Ghanaians from their residencies in Nigeria, and repatriations convoys were organized in the most inhumane ways. Men, women, and children were packed in charter trucks with their luggage and transported, many lost their lives, and Ghanaian Nigerian diplomatic relations froze.

In Nigeria, the departure of General Gowon from power in 1975 after a coup slackened efforts towards the consolidation of the community because he worked with President Eyadema of Togo as the architects of the ECOWAS (Asante, 1986:145), and a year later, the assassination of General Mutarla caused the new authorities of Nigeria to once again resort to autarky by following the Liberia and Ghana routes.

While the 1980's were considered lost decades (Legum, 1999), the 1990's brought hopes that civilian and military dictatorship would yield to elected and democratic leadership. There was an increasing awareness that sane political environments were fertile lands for social and economic growth and development. Starting in the Republic of Benin in 1989, the wind of change blew all over West Africa and the rest of the continent, illustrating a renewed interest in democracy. The change includes the drafting of people oriented constitutions, the collapse of one-party systems and the arousal of multi-party systems.

By 1995, two thirds of the countries drafted and adopted new constitutions. Benin and Guinea in 1990, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone in 1991, Cape Verde and Niger in 1993, Ghana, Mali and Togo in 1992, held referenda to adopt more democratic constitutions. In 1999 and 2000, Nigeria, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire joined the group of countries with newly drafted constitutions, confirming the idea that constitutional reforms did not spare any country in West Africa after 1990.

The novelty of the above new constitutions was their dispositions, which granted political actors permission to create their respective political parties regardless of their ideological orientations, the creation of autonomous electoral commissions (statistically, West Africa, there were more elections from 1990 to 2000 than there were between 1960 and 1989), and also important the limit of president terms to a maximum of two which was meant to rid West Africa of life presidents or of those leaders who spent the rest of their lives as heads of states, and blocks the proliferation of personality rules . Like Africa, in general, West Africa was the region where force and death were the two major paths to regime change.

Hopes in the 1990's also came from the resurrection of civil society with NGOs as spearheads that became impressively important in number and in the types of social service they delivered to the masses, allowing non-partisan opinions to be heard. Through the fast growing influence of NGOs, civil society was more entrusted with the delivery of service to rural and urban populations, and became a potential challenger to governments.

The importance of NGO's came from the fact that international donors, the IMF, the World Bank and others blamed African governments and states for failing and suggested that other organizations would be promoted to channel funds and donations for social service and education. Thus UN Secretary General Kofi Annan once declared: *The United Nations once dealt with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnership involving governments, international organizations, the business community and the civil society. In today's world we depend on each other* (www.un.org). This declaration confirms the idea that since 1990, there has been a paradigm shift in identifying and tackling development issues in poor countries that took some power off the hands of governments and to the hands of civil society to create a balance of power and system of checks and balances to avoid state power concentration.

Another motive of hope was the qualitative and quantitative improvement of the media following the liberalization of the airwaves and the print media. Since 1990, the number of community radios and the numbers of radio receivers have doubled if not tripled in some countries. In Benin, radio receivers shifted from 415,000 in 1990 to 660,000 in 2000. In Burkina Faso, the number was 235,000 in 1990 against 394,000 in 2000. In Cape Verde there were 59,000 radio receivers in 1990 for 100,000 in 2002. Guinea-Bissau had 38,000 receivers in 1990 and 49,000 in 1997. Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria had the highest number of radio receivers in West Africa. In 1990, Ghana had 3,423,000 radio receivers. The 2001 UNESCO estimates put the number at 12,500,000. In Cote d'Ivoire the number of radio receivers moved from 1,700,000 in 1990 to 2,260,000 in 1997, and Nigeria had 18,700,000 radio receivers in 1990 against 23,500,000 in 1997 (UNESCO, 2001).

While radio receivers increased in number, radio stations and programs also increased significantly, translating to a greater opportunity for many more people to have to access information. In this arena, Mali appears the best example in terms of radio stations, in 2002, there were about 100 radio stations and programs throughout Mali. This media revolution was so primordial to support the new political infrastructures that former Malian head of state, Konaré said: "*in Mali, free and pluralistic media were essential elements of the democratic process*" (*Africa Media Forum*, 1999:2). Kane, publisher of *Senegal Info 7* agreed with president Konaré and said: "*without democracy, the press could not develop and without the press democracy could not be dynamic*" (*Africa Media Forum*, p. 6). Veteran historian Ki Zerbo of Burkina Faso did not state less about the press, during a conference on the press in French speaking Africa, he admitted that the press would have a great impact in accelerating and guaranteeing the liberties that were developing in Africa (Panos 1991:36).

Other forms of political changes include the holding of open debates about democracy, as the masses and politicians believed in democracy as a factor of growth and development. And this thirst for democracy was one on the major reasons for the transformation of the ECOWAS into an economic and political institution, meaning that ECOWAS leaders agreed to have strong says and collaboration in the field of peace and conflict resolutions. In fact, there was a growing consensus that political instability dislocates development strategies and integration. After the birth of the African Union and the adoption of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) as the road map for Africa's development in the 21st century, the heads of state of ECOWAS consensually accepted to use ECOWAS as vector of promotion and implementation of NEPAD in West Africa,

thus ECOWAS was the first regional group in Africa to adopt the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which would allow heads of states to comment and critique one another's governance.

I provide the above details to give a factual ground to the hopes and happiness that the early 1990's triggered in West African villages and cities. The discourses of political leaders and the perspectives they set for the future were almost akin to the promises independent leaders imparted their African fellows at the outset of the 1960's. Despite the structural and cultural changes, it is no exaggeration to assert that West African states are all potentially on the brink of instability and a collapse of institutions, a situation caused by the recurring phenomenon of trans-border conflicts. And interestingly enough, it is hard to understand that civil wars and civil unrests, election-related violence, and other types of political violence have gained ground in West Africa at the same time democracy is entrenching.

While conflicts are not new phenomena in West Africa, it is their nature and their root causes that need critical analysis. Since 1990, the very common denominator of West African conflicts is armed rebel groups, who seemed to make a life out of their rifles. In Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and more recently in Cote d'Ivoire, rebels started wars after failing to control state power or in search of it. While national military officers used to be the major sources of political instability, nowadays, political destabilization starts with rebellions. Rebel groups are usually made of regular army deserters, former prisoners, active military and security officers, unemployed people, and children. Rebels' demands and reasons for taking up arms are not as different as the reasons that motivated political coups in the past. In general, search for power, justice, and true democracy are advanced. However, a scrupulous analysis indicates that democracy has become a common trading commodity to engage the sympathy of the international community.

The second denominator of the new conflicts is their mobility and their interconnection which cause current conflicts to travel faster than they used to and know no boundary restrictions. Because of the geography of West African borders, the easy and uncontrolled movement of fighters and weapons has accelerated war contamination throughout the region, thus a scrupulous analysis of the origins of some conflicts will attest to this truth.

For example, the Liberian crisis (1989-1997) sparked the conflicts in the Mano river area, which includes Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ghana. The actors of the Sierra Leone civil war received support from warlord Charles Taylor of Liberia. This support was meant to gain control of Sierra Leone and to assure fluidity of weapon traffic. The Liberia conflict also provided soldiers to rebel forces in Cote d'Ivoire in their bid to overthrow the government of President Gbagbo.

In 1989, Liberia sank into political violence following the assassination of President Doe. The war collapsed the state of Liberia and its institutions. For more than ten years, the Liberian war became the major problem of West Africa by affecting neighboring countries such as Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Ghana. In 1991 and 1998 Sierra Leone also sank into violence. Like the Liberian war, the Sierra Leone conflict also threatened the stability of other countries of the region because of the ease with which warlords moved from borders to borders. According to the UN reports, rebel leader and warlord Sam Bockarie of Sierra Leone supported rebel incursions in both Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Also the rebel troops of Fodah Sankho who started the war in Sierra Leone received support from Charles Taylor of Liberia. The Liberian and Sierra Leone conflicts also spilled in neighboring Guinea and endangered the Mano River Treaty Organization that includes Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. Another major crisis has taken place in Cote d'Ivoire since September 2002 involving a combination of rebel forces from Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali and Burkina Faso attempted to overthrow the government, which led to the partition of Cote d'Ivoire.

The Senegal Casamance problems and the Guinea-Bissau conflict of 1998 are other dimensions of the West African tragedy. The Senegal Casamance question is more than two-decade old wherein the MFDC has sought to create an autonomous state away from Senegal. This conflict had a link with the 1998 political stalemate in Guinea-Bissau because Guinea-Bissau rebel General A. Mane had the support of the Casamance separatists with whom he shared ethnic connections. When the conflict erupted, Senegal and Guinea sent in 2000 troops to support the government of embattled President Joao Viera. To those fighting, one can add election-related violence, which also weakened political institutions and caused population exodus. In Nigeria the 1993 annulled elections triggered violence, the same as the 1999 and 2003 consultations when clashes among supporters of competing parties often escalated to murderous battles. Before the opening of the 2003 general election campaign, the chairman of the INEC of Nigeria warned that violence was likely to erupt in 6 of the 36 states of the country. He based his warning on the difficulties the commission encountered while registering voters.

The *Nigerian Daily* revealed in March 2003 that the state of Benue “witnessed an orgy of politically motivated violence” before the May elections. Hence, in Togo, in 1998 and 2003, presidential elections occasioned clashes sometimes between the military and opposition parties’ militants. In June 2003, the presidential elections atmosphere was so deteriorated that the government requested 5000 troops to maintain order while populations fled to neighboring Ghana fearing fighting after the polls (www.allafrica.com, 2003), and in Cote d’Ivoire, the 1995 and 2000 elections took place in violent atmosphere, which caused deaths and destruction of properties. In Guinea, Ghana, Senegal, their latest elections also occasioned violence, which did not sap national cohesion.

Considering this quandary, we must ask does it justify French President Chirac’s 1990 assertion that democracy was a luxury for African people? Is democracy the root-cause of this political violence? Or is it the refusal and rejection of democracy that triggered this violence? Is war a mandatory path to democracy? I strongly contend that democracy is not a luxury for West Africans and that it has the potential to consolidate in the coming years. It suffices to measure the level of consciousness, which has been animating political actors, activists, and labor union leaders these past years to be convinced of this reality. It also suffices to acclaim the efforts that some countries are making to set in motion the wheels of true democratic orders. Although no one can cheer for Nigeria at this point, it is satisfactory that Nigerian political discourse was represented in terms of ballots. One can also note the relative success of Niger via their elections and return to constitutional order in 1999 after the death of Captain I. Mainassara, and finally, the Ghanaian, the Malian, and the Cape Verde examples of regime change that prove West Africa can move away from political instability, establishing examples for a “must be followed” theme for other West African nations.

Political Instability in West Africa: Understanding the Factors/Outcomes

While there is an agreement that the political landscape of West Africa presents contrasting faces, it is also commendable to discuss the reasons of these contrasts. The long-lasting argument which blamed the people and their leaders for the recurring conflict in Africa has always been a provincial argument. Today, the invalidity of this argument is more pronounced, because there is a tacit combination of factors which lucid analyst of Africa one should be aware of that can not elude that current political contradictions are correlated to globalization and liberalism that promote political freedom/democracy on the one side, and market liberalization on the other.

These two variables are antagonistic in the sense that they wield in the hands of different groups of interests. I agree with Chua (2003:7) when she says: “*the relationship between free market democracy and ethnic violence around the world is inextricably bound up with globalization.*” There are several reasons which account for this statement, first, as an offspring of capitalism, globalization has favored the world over the birth of richer minority groups, while at the same time, and it has given more political empowerment to economically unprivileged majorities who wish political empowerment would bring better living conditions to them and their families, yet they come to realize that economic power is controlled by tiny groups unwilling to relinquish their power. No wonder why during conflicts, angry mobs target the properties of these small minorities they hold responsible for their squalor. In Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria, and other countries, Lebanese and European business owners have often been the victims of protest groups because of their alleged connivance with government officials to safeguard of their economic interests.

This, instead of widening the basis of well-to-do people, globalization has accelerated the pauperization of the masses. High unemployment rates and the weak level of national gross products in West Africa attest to the truth that economic conditions have worsened for the many and improved for the few whom the market economy has been beneficial, as the high rate of unemployment account for the proliferation of war wagging as a financially rewarding job.

Often, the supporting forces of globalization and liberalism (rich and industrialized nations) fuel antagonism between different components of the same population and introduce the theory of the third person. In this case, they learn that to maintain their economic interests and assets, multinationals sponsor groups (sometimes against others), playing the politics of divide and rule.

Philosophers T. Serequeberhan (1997:143) and J. F. Llyotard defend that it is the proper nature of globalization to turn violent, viral, and radical before any anti-globalization ideas and actions. In other words, once globalization develops when the interests of the forces of globalization are threatened and they commit to stop the threat through war, as we can especially see in direct war like the case of Iraq, Rwanda, Liberia or in the case pf Cote d’Ivoire where the tremendous economic interests of France is accused in supporting and entreating the rebels in the north who have held Cote d’Ivoire captive for two years, giving life to the fact that globalization imposes through physical, psychological, cultural, linguistic, and religious violence.

The consequences of political instability in West Africa is many fold, and the question of refugees, displaced people, and the collapse of state/national institutions create greater stumbling blocks for democracy and political-economic integration in West Africa.

Since 1990, political instability has increased the number of refugees and displaced people in West Africa. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has estimated that in 2000, more than a third of Africa’s refugees and displaced people were in West Africa (2000:260). In 1994, there were 360,000 Liberian refugees in Cote d’Ivoire, 16,000 in Ghana, 16,000 others in Sierra Leone, and 398,000 in Guinea, while 1,100,000 people were internally displaced (UNHCR, 2000). In the same year, Sierra Leonean refugees were 155,000 in Guinea, 120,000 in Liberia with 700,000 internally displaced people, and the US committee for World Refugee show that in 2002, almost all the countries of West Africa had refugees, most of who came from neighboring countries.

The following table presents the refugee statistics by country at the end of 2001 [United States Committee for Refugees, 2002]

| Country | Refugee Origin | Number |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Benin | Togo, Congo & other | 5,000 |
| Burkina Faso | Cote d'Ivoire and 20 others | 1,000 |
| Cote d’Ivoire | Liberia, Sierra Leone, and other | 100,000 |
| Gambia | Sierra Leone, Senegal | 15,000 |
| Guinea | Sierra Leone, Liberia | 190,000 |
| Guinea-Bissau | Senegal and Sierra Leone | 7,000 |
| Liberia | Sierra Leone | 60,000 |
| Mali | Mauritania, Sierra Leone and others | 9,000 |
| Niger | Mali, and other 15 countries | 1,000 |
| Nigeria | Chad, Sierra leone, Liberia, & other | 7,000 |
| Senegal | Mauritania and other | 40,000 |
| Sierra Leone | Liberia | 15,000 |
| Togo | Ghana | 10,000 |

As the table shows, there are impressive movements of people between neighboring countries in times of conflicts. In most of the cases it is defenseless civilian populations fleeing combat zones for safer havens, and this impressive movement of population across borders confirms the idea that national conflicts are no longer national. The refugee question triggers further complications such as the increase of population for host countries and the obligations to design new social policies to cope with new inhabitants, and the risks of violence erupting in refugee zones.

Aside from the refugee question, political instability collapse national institutions, making states unable to deliver basic services, thus acute political instability fails states and creates anarchism, thwarting coordinated plans of decentralization and development as was witnessed in the collapse of Liberia, Sierra Leone (1991-1995) during the civil war, the partition of Cote d'Ivoire into two territories that dissolved national cohesion and central political, economic and social authority, wherein the rule of the law, good governance, the respect of human and property rights, and economic development plans disappear, setting a stage for economic regression.

Presumably, the most serious damage of political instability is that it freezes relations among the West African countries due to mutual accusations of destabilization countries raise against one another. This process unfolded in Liberia, when the Liberian crisis started, Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberation (NPFL) had the support of Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, from where it received munitions and other logistical support which explained why they did not send troops for the Peace-Keeping mission of the ECOWAS (Adeshina, 2002; Alao, 1998), and thus point to evidence that the rebels of Sierra Leone received support from Charles Taylor.

Political instability arose, as indicated earlier, in 1998 when the government of Senegal accused Guinea-Bissau of providing troops and logistical supports to the Casamance Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC), as it sought secession from Senegal, hence in 1998 Senegal, Gambia, and Ghana were involved in the Guinea-

Bissau internal conflict with Senegal sending troops to support the elected regime of President Vieira, and the Gambia backed the rebel forces, which ended when the Peace Accords asked all foreign troops to withdraw from Guinea-Bissau. And notwithstanding, in 1993, the government of Togo accused Ghana of destabilization after a Accra, Ghana staged attack against President Eyadema failed, worsening the already difficult diplomatic relations between Togo and Ghana.

And again in September 2002 political trouble surfaced when the war started in Cote d'Ivoire, the government accused Burkina Faso of harboring its attackers which proved true when evidence appeared in 2003 and 2004 through a United Nations report, leading to frozen diplomatic and commercial relations. And in 2003, Presidents Charles Taylor of Liberia and L. Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire mutually accused each other of destabilization, and for the Taylor administration, President Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire provided military support to the Liberian Movement for Democracy and Liberation (MODEL), and inversely the Gbagbo administration accused Liberian soldiers of involvement in the massacre of people in the Ivorian far west.

These mutual accusations obviously put a strain on the relations between ECOWAS nations, concluding that political instability impedes democracy, and the lack of democracy has impeded the integration and cooperation among West African nations positioning an axiom of democracy, integration, and cooperation thriving only when political order, stability, peace and territorial integrity are maintained; and indeed, without these factors there can be no hope for West Africa to grow as a strong community. However, hopes are permitted, and the revitalization of Pan Africanism can prove valuable for the 21st century.

The Inevitability of Pan West Africanism and Its Practical Aspects

While it is true to assert that political instability and collapse has been threatening West African nations, it is not true to contend that nothing has been done to jugulate that threat. For example, in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and Burkina Faso (just to mention a few), leadership has always undertaken actions (military and/or diplomatic) to end and/ or prevent a stalemate. However, the intricacies of current conflicts have mitigated results of solitary actions against political instability that prove, individually, West African nations are not strong enough to maintain security and peace. Thus, what is needed today is a collective effort involving all West African countries, a frame of collective effort I call *Pan West Africanism*.

Hence, Pan West Africanism (not distinct from Pan Africanism because both concepts rest and reassert the unity of thought and actions among Africans) is a philosophy that recaptures the concept of the African personality that Edward Blyden, Casely Hayford,

and James Africanus Horton (*West Africans in Europe 1900-1960*), and A. Diop (*Pan Africanism Reconsidered*, pp. 339-340) talked about which implies a distinct and respectable African culture, a distinct African independent state, and a distinct African controlled economy.

This African personality also implies, as Blyden advocated a unification of West Africa when he visited Sierra Leone in 1884, saying that the future of Sierra Leone resided in the creation of a larger West African state (Lynch 1967:214), pioneering ideas obviously influenced by the works and political thoughts of his contemporaries: J.B Danquah, K. Nkrumah, N. Azikiwe, Y. Gowon, A. Diop, and others. Therefore in this context, Pan West Africanism refers to the inter-continental social, political, and cultural movement that has marked the history of African descended people throughout the world, and replicates Pan Africanism that Esedebe says is: *a political and cultural phenomenon that regards Africa, Africans and African-descendants abroad as a unit. It seeks to regenerate and unify Africa and promote a feeling of oneness among the people of the African world. It glorifies the African past and inculcates pride in African values. Any adequate definition of the phenomenon must include its political and cultural aspects* (1995:5).

Hence, Pan West African confines Pan Africanism to West Africa; designates West Africans' efforts and/or obligations to transcend geographic, cultural, and religious boundaries to engage into cooperation and collaboration; manifests the West African personality and nationality and identifies with Attah-Agyemang Pouku's visions that Pan Africanism has different forms, i.e., continental, national, or regional (2000:13); and is the regionalization of Pan Africanism or the expression of African unity at a regional level that calls for the end to the linguistic and geographical barriers of colonialism, and the ideological and philosophical levels notions of English-speaking West Africa, French Speaking West Africa, and Portuguese Speaking West Africa which become meaningless and unproductive.

In practical terms, Pan West Africanism advocates the immediate integration, total unity, faithful collaboration and cooperation among West African states as sine qua non conditions of development, and that the rapid transformations of the world and the progressive destructions of protection barriers make it impossible for a country to enjoy a viable social, political, and economic status, while another is experiencing political and economic turmoil. Thus, the stability of a West African country is meaningless if other West African states are unstable.

Two arguments justify why West African political leaders, statesmen, and civil societies should prioritize Pan West Africanism. The first, the future of Africa in general rests in regional integration. E. Kodjo (1987:277), former secretary of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), blamed the demise of Africa on the partition it suffered during the colonial era. He believed, *“Africa’s best hope for the future required that Africans fight against the preservation of the artificial boundaries that divide them, and favor Africa unity within, broad sub-regional economic frameworks”*. Martin (2002:271) expressed the same idea, by saying that the failure of post-independent African states imposed the challenges to move beyond the current nation-states to create sub-regional and federal structures, within which national cultures would have the right to self-determination and sovereignty. In 1974, Senegalese scholar and Egyptologist Cheikh Anta Diop asserted that only the creation of a federal state would allow West Africa to improve its social, political, and economic status. Diop believed that a federated West Africa would spearhead the federation of the whole Africa.

The second argument in favor of Pan West Africanism is the linguistic /cultural “unity” of West Africa. Most of the countries share similar ethnic groups. The Akan, the Yoruba, the Hausa, the Mandingo, just to mention few, although scattered in different West African countries, but nevertheless, this linguistic and cultural similarity facilitates the relationships among the populations. And aside this lingo-cultural factor, West African countries also share common traits of history, including slavery, colonization, nationalism, and the current political instability.

Third, Pan West Africanism offers better guaranties against political instabilities and for an advancement of West African-centered democratic orders. However it can not operate without a philosophy or an ideology focus, because without these two variables, there could not be a reorientation of West African integration and cooperation, thus the two axes of Pan West Africanism must be socialism (a socialism does not allude to African socialism, Marxism, and communism) and democracy that brings more humanism in inter-African relations, and focuses on the lives and the needs of the people, and dispels thoroughly the trade and economic barriers among West African states to promote joint plans of cultural, sportive, and educational development. Hence, Pan West Africanism does not exclude categorically market economy, but instead, it integrates with new terms to move West African states from the periphery to the center of world’s economic systems which inform us that K. Mengisteab (2000) is right when he contends that without socialism, the small countries of world, and especially those of Africa would never recover from their social and political demise.

At the political level, Pan West Africanism preaches an African-centered democratic philosophy in order to create authentic political institutions that reconsiders West African pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial political organizations without rebuking the decentralization of political powers, or the strict respect of the law, human rights and property rights.

Although an ideological redefinition of Pan West Africanism is important, the notion can meet its expected objectives only through pragmatism. In the perspectives of today, Pan West Africanism should present three practical aspects, which are the consolidation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) into a political and economic institution, the institutionalization of a permanent West African army, and the conjoint diplomatic role of the four most prominent countries in West Africa.

The ECOWAS: Accruing the Organization's Political Role

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created in 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria to facilitate economic exchanges among the member-states and to reduce dependency on developed and industrialized countries. In recent events and by passing its original economic mission, ECOWAS has immersed itself in the internal politics of respective members in order to help sustain security, peace, and stability for the sake of development. This immersion has been somewhat salutary inasmuch as none of the West African countries can battle against political instability by standing alone. And conscious of the necessity to be at peace with one another, ECOWAS member states ratified the "Protocol of Non Aggression" in 1978 to prevented countries from attacking one another which in the 1980's became the *Protocol on Mutual Assistance and Defense* and stipulated that any form of aggression or hostility against a member state was considered aggression or hostility against the rest of the community. More than a simple ratified text, the *Protocol of Mutual Assistance and Defense* must be thoroughly implemented and respected by the signatory states. Disciplinary measures of exclusion should weigh on contraveners, while the institution should extend its political nature further. In other words, the current involvements of ECOWAS into national conflicts are laudable. They mean that the institution must accrue its role as the first international body to be directly concerned with West African political issues. While a few years ago, the institution was regarded primarily as an economic body, today it has become an integral and influential part of West Africa's international relations.

Thus, ECOWAS has systematically become involved in electoral competitions in each state by sending well acquainted observers and helping with logistics, when necessary. Because most of the current West African conflicts are election-related, ECOWAS must be deeply involved in electoral processes in order to preserve credibility, and minimize the risks of violence.

There is evident that ECOWAS has put into practice some of the above prescriptions, for example, the establishment of the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the first African peace-keeping force independent of the United Nations to prevent violence from escalating to wider proportions, in the wake of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars, as case in point. Other situations include the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat's decision to arrest the military junta, which overthrew President Tejan Kabbah in Sierra Leone in 1998 if they attended the meeting held that same year. Similar condemnations of coup d'etats also occurred in the Sao Tome in 2003, in Guinea Bissau in 2004 and in Togo in 2005. In each case, ECOWAS voiced its opposition to unconstitutional regime changes, and although the ECOWAS failed to resolve the Cote d'Ivoire violence, it did intervene in the search for political solutions to the stalemate.

The Economic Community Monitoring Group as Pillar of West African Stability

The Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is the peace-keeping force of ECOWAS, and thus, it's most innovative achievement. ECOMOG came into existence in August 1990 in order to stop the war in Liberia. As the first African military force (Adebajo 2002:2), ECOMOG since its inception has maintained political and constitutional orders in West Africa, despite its shortcomings and the numerous critics levied against its troops in Liberia (1991-1997), Sierra Leone (1991 -1994), and in the Cote d'Ivoire (2002-2005), nevertheless, it can be credited with excellent results. For instance, the 1997 elections in Liberia and the return to power of President Kabbaj of Sierra Leone resulted from the intervention of ECOMOG forces, and how it sent troops in the Mano River area (Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia) to dissipate any threat of conflict between the three nations.

Consequently, ECOMOG has become a pillar of political stability in West Africa based on three reasons. First any hegemonic power in the world today needs a strong a reliable military (as demonstrated in world history), hence any international organization without a coercive force fails to achieve its goals and enforce its resolutions.

The example of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) attests to this truth, it failed to be a strong organization because it did not have the logistics or manpower to punish any country which violated its code.

Second, the end of the Cold War did not end the role or location force/military in national and international politics, nor did it consecrate the supremacy of diplomacy over force. On the contrary, the expansion of neo-liberalism shows that force and diplomacy work concomitantly in international relations. In the case of West Africa, ECOMOG must act as the regional force to balance the diplomatic mission of ECOWAS' Executive Secretariat. And because of these reasons, the now non-standing army ECOMOG must become a standing army, equipped with logistic means.

And last, in order to build a strong standing army, the West African armies should recruit and train troops to intervene under the wing of ECOWAS that can be remunerated by their respective countries while the provision of equipment and weaponry would be the onus of ECOWAS, and in the wake of terrorist ramifications, and the search for democracy, ECOMOG has to also target the different rebel movements hawking West Africa to preserve the autonomy and the integrity of West African nations.

Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire and Pan West Africanism

Aside from ECOMOG, Pan West Africanism also needs the presence of the four prominent countries in West Africa, i.e., Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire, because successful diplomacy requires the presence and the support of strong countries, and I believe that West Africa needs a four-headed hegemony to speak that can spearhead West Africa's fight for security, peace, and stability. Thus, I support the idea that West Africa needs a four-head leadership instead of the sole leadership of Nigeria as E. Kodjo suggested (1987:279) hence, a quadripartite hegemony has a better chance to save ECOWAS from being co-opted and diverted from its leadership role as represented in the divergence of views among the heads of these respective countries on international and West Africans questions, indicative of the balance of power among them. And contrary to the United States, which dominates the neo liberal world and global capitalism, the role of the four prominent countries is not to override ECOWAS' laws, but rather to pressure West African governments, when their policies threaten political stability for their state and for West Africa.

This quadripartite hegemony does not silence other West African states, but instead give them more opportunities to have a stronger voice in the international arena.

This is the reason why the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) adopted at the Durban African Union conference in 2002 should immediately come into play. ECOWAS endorsed the APRM and acts as its operator in West Africa. The review mechanism consists in critiquing the governance of different African government according to the social, political, economic, and technological orientations contained in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Many reasons militate in favor of Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire as the hegemony of ECOWAS. Nigeria has a valuable military, an economic strength, and a growing democracy, and after three decades of military rule, Nigeria reemerged on the road of democracy in 1999 with the election of President Obasanjo (his re-election in May 2003 is another landmark in Nigeria homecoming to democratic and civilian rule). Hence Nigeria play a central role in the process for several reasons, at the economic level via its oil production; it's a regional military leader, it spearheaded the creation of ECOMOG by supplying more than half of its troops, it was first to intervene in Liberia and Sierra Leone with the commandment of ECOMOG troops, and its commitment to an articulated African policy which I. Bambagida expressed by stating: *Nigeria has evolved to the point of acceptance of the fact and reality that the conduct of our international relations and foreign policy may at times involve certain contractual military and other obligations beyond our borders* (Alao 1998:58).

Second, Ghana's leadership rests on its political maturity and preeminent role in the advancement of Pan Africanism in Africa, and although it experienced years of military dictatorship it did not erode Ghana's Pan African foreign policy. Thus Ghana reemerged since 1992 as one of the most politically stable countries of West Africa by abandoning the repetitive coup d'etats that marked the first decades of its independence, and after two presidential terms from 1992 to 1996 and from 1996 to 2000, President Rawlings refrained from mingling with the electoral processes as many other African presidents would to keep power, and last the serenity in which Ghana changed its political regime attests to the vitality of its democracy.

Without being a strong military and economic power, Senegal enjoys a durable political stability and has deployed impressive diplomatic efforts in African affairs. Under the sway of President Wade, Senegal marked its presence in African affairs by mediating the

Malagasy 2002 post- electoral conflict and the on-going crisis in Cote d'Ivoire; the first French speaking West African country to commit troops to the ECOMOG when the group intervened in the Liberian war; intervened in Guinea-Bissau in 1998 in order to protect embattled President Joao Vieira, when rebel troops attempted to oust him from power, and unlike other nations in the region, it has stable history with no history of military coups.

Despite the current instability it has experienced since 1999, Cote d'Ivoire remains one of the pillar countries of West Africa. Cote d'Ivoire is the second economic power after Nigeria and holds 40% of the assets of the West African Monetary and Economic Union (WAMU). Second, Cote d'Ivoire's leadership is the size of its foreign population with latest estimates showing that 26% of the 16,000,000 people living in Cote d'Ivoire are of foreign origins, especially from West Africa, and at the diplomatic level, Cote d'Ivoire contributed significantly to the resolution many conflicts in the West African sub-region. Provided that Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, and Nigeria work together to respect the laws of ECOWAS and respect each other's sovereignty, they will provide a leap forward in curbing political instability in West Africa.

In conclusion, Pan West Africanism epitomizes regional Pan Africanism and makes the best alternative for sound cooperation and collaboration among African states since it does no longer suffice to design and rely on ideological lines only, and in a final analysis it must be a plan of action rather than the mere lip services that West Africans have heard in the past two decades. And to the affirmative, current perspectives and events indicate that the implementation of a common agreement among West Africa nations will give new strength to previously weak regional development plans.

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