Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism

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The African Union and the Institutionalisation of Pan-Africanism

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Introduction

This chapter will argue the African Union (AU) is the latest institutional incarnation of the idea of Pan-Africanism. However, it will also interrogate how the AU has only had a limited degree of success in forging a Pan-African consciousness and identity, both within the continent and among the Diaspora around the world. The effective activation of a Pan-African consciousness and identity is a necessary precursor towards consolidating the gains of the last century in advancing the pursuit of African unity and solidarity. The chapter will begin with an examination of whether Pan-Africanism can serve as a conceptual framework for understanding the international relations of African countries. It will then enumerate the four pillars integral to reviving a latent and emerging Pan-African School of Thought.

The chapter will then assess whether we can consider the establishment of the African Union and its predecessor the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), as sequential institutional incarnations of the spirit of Pan-Africanism. This chapter will then assess the pitfalls of forging a Pan-African consciousness and identity. The chapter will conclude by identifying pathways to enhancing and consolidating a sense of Pan-Africanism among citizens across the continent and Diaspora.

Towards the revival of a Pan-African school of thought

Africa’s place in the international system is emerging from one of relative obscurity and marginalisation to a status of increasing prominence. The emerging political prominence of the African continent on the world stage is predicated on an evolving internal process of continental integration. Specifically, the continent has undergone a significant trajectory in terms of its own Pan-African relations as well as it international relations, and is now emerging as a source, rather than a target, of analysis. In particular, there are normative and policy efforts to revive the spirit of Pan-Africanism. In normative terms, Pan-Africanism is the expression of this spirit of solidarity and cooperation among African countries and societies. The initial and primary aim of Pan-Africanism, encapsulated in the vision and mission of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was to end racial discrimination against people of African descent including those in the diaspora. In the twentieth century, Pan-Africanism was
postulated by African intellectuals, scholars, politicians and citizens as a necessary pre-
requisite for creating the conditions that are vital to protect their right of Africans to take
part and control their social, economic and political affairs and achieve peace and develop-
ment. Consequently, the twenty-first century is witnessing the evolution of Pan-Africanism,
notably through the constitution and establishment of the African Union (AU).

Pan-Africanism as a school of thought is not necessarily a unified or monolithic normative
conceptual framework. There are a wide range of sources which have underpinned and
informed notions of Pan-Africanism. There are a number of unifying themes which are evi-
dent in the diverse conceptual approaches that cohesively form the four pillars of the Pan-
African School of Thought, in particular, these include:

i) a normative emphasis on adopting a trans-continental approach to framing and analysing
political, economic and social processes in Africa;
ii) an analysis predicated on the historical realities of the African continent;
iii) a philosophical emphasis on the need for solidarity between Africans across the contin-
ent, as well as, descendants of the African heritage in other parts of the world;
iv) a commitment towards improving the socio-economic livelihood of all Africans, includ-
ing those in the diaspora, and confronting institutionalized forms of exploitation and
repression where ever they exist, including confronting racism.

While these four pillars are by no means exhaustive, they provide the core parameters of
academic Pan-Africanism, or what we can call the Pan-African School of Thought. Within
these pillars the wide-ranging Pan-African School draws from a broad range of different pol-
tical, social, historical, economic, geographical as well as cultural intellectual traditions and
philosophical frameworks, to analyse intra-continental and international relations. The four
pillars of the Pan-African School draw upon concepts and approaches emerging from African
contexts, that are valid locally and also applicable across the continent. For example, Tieku
assesses the prevalence of the “solidarity norm” in Africa’s international relations, which illu-
nimates our understanding of why, for example, African governments have a tendency to
stand united in the face of international criticism of one of their own peers. By referring to
the persistence of decades of crisis and mis-rule in Zimbabwe, Tieku points out that analysts will fall short
if they rely unduly on a “prism of individualism” to attempt to understand Africa’s statecraft
diplomatic brinkmanship. Tieku argues that international relations theory can benefit from adopting a “collectivist worldview of interstate politics” in order to enhance its analyt-
ical toolkit utilised by scholars to deepen their understanding of the African continent.

Along similar lines Moe undertakes a case study of Somalia in which he provides
a critique of the liberal agenda and the “failed state” discourse that it advances. Specifically, Moe argues that the “dominant discourse on African statehood” has a “tendency to ignore or overlook the wider historical and global factors behind ‘state failure.’” The case of Somalia is particularly apt for demonstrating how a dogmatic approach to international relations and fundamentalist application of “conventional diplomatic procedures” to try to address what is a much more nuanced and complex conflict situation, can in fact undermine generating durable solutions. By examining how the reconciliation processes unfolded in Somalia, situated to the north of Somalia, Moe illustrates how peace was established through local cultural governance traditions and not the reliance on a “revival of state structures.” Given the United Nations (UN) insistence on continuing to deploy these “conventional dip-
plomatic procedures” in a blinkered and dogmatic fashion, the insights generated by Moe’s
analysis can in fact serve to educate the decision makers at the headquarters of the UN – in New York, Geneva and Nairobi – on how not to go about trying to project conceptually vacuous ideas and inappropriate models of statehood onto the African continent. Such intellectually mis-informed projects in these bastions of United Nations orthodoxy unfortunately have the effect of causing and perpetuating the death of African citizens, through their deployment of ineffective peace and stability strategies.

**African union and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as institutionalisation of the spirit of Pan-Africanism**

It is often assumed that the process of continental integration begun with an Extra-ordinary Summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) convened in Sirte, Libya, in 1999. In fact, the process begun with the Pan-African movement and its demand for greater solidarity among the peoples of Africa. To understand the emergence of the African Union we need to understand the evolution of the Pan-African movement. A review of the objectives and aspirations of Pan-Africanism provides a foundation to critically assess the creation of the AU and its prospects for promoting the principles and norms of peace and development.

Historically Pan-Africanism, the perception by Africans in the diaspora and on the continent that they share common goals, has been expressed in different forms by various actors. There is no single definition of Pan-Africanism and in fact we can say that there are as many ideas about Pan-Africanism as there are thinkers of Pan-Africanism. Rather than being a unified school of thought, Pan-Africanism is more a movement which has as its common underlying theme the struggle for social and political equality and the freedom from economic exploitation and racial discrimination.

It is interesting to note that it is the global dispersal of peoples of African descent that is partly responsible for the emergence of the Pan-African movement. As Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, observe in their book *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora Since 1787*, “Pan-Africanism has taken on different forms at different historical moments and geographical locations.” Adi and Sherwood note that, what underpins these different perspectives on Pan-Africanism is “the belief in some form of unity or of common purpose among the peoples of Africa and the African Diaspora.” One can also detect an emphasis on celebrating “Africaness,” resisting the exploitation and oppression of Africans and their kin in the Diaspora as well as a staunch opposition to the ideology of racial superiority in all its overt and covert guises.

Pan-Africanism is an invented notion. It is an invented notion with a purpose. We should therefore pose the question what is the purpose of Pan-Africanism? Essentially, Pan-Africanism is a recognition of the fragmented nature of the existence of Africans and their marginalization and alienation whether in their own continent or in the Diaspora. Pan-Africanism seeks to respond to Africa’s underdevelopment. Africa has been exploited and a culture of dependency on external assistance unfortunately still prevails on the continent. If people become too reliant on getting their support, their nourishment, their safety, from outside sources, then they do not strive to find the power within themselves to rely on their own capacities. Pan-Africanism calls upon Africans to draw from their own strength and capacities and become self-reliant.

Pan-Africanism is a recognition that Africans, and their descendants in the Diaspora, have been divided among themselves. They are constantly in competition among themselves, deprived of the true ownership of their own resources and inundated by paternalistic external actors with ideas about what is “good.” Modern day paternalism is more
sophisticated and dresses itself up as a kind and gentle helping hand with benign and benevolent intentions. In reality it seeks to maintain a “master-servant” relationship and does not really want to see the genuine empowerment and independence of thought in Africa. The net effect of this is to dis-empower Africans from deciding for themselves the best way to deal with the problems and issues they are facing. Pan-Africanism is a recognition that the only way out of this existential, social, political crisis is by promoting greater solidarity amongst Africans and the Diaspora. Genuine dialogue and debate in Africa will not always generate consensus, but at least it will be dialogue among Africans about how they might resolve their problems. If ideas are not designed by the Africans, then rarely can they be in the interests of Africans.

The first and second phase of the institutionalisation of Pan-Africanism: the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)

The idea of Pan-Africanism, which had already been articulated in the nineteenth century, took an institutional form in the twentieth century. Initially, the first phase of the institutionalisation of this idea was embodied in the convening of the series of Pan-African Congress meetings, which were held early in the twentieth century, in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, under the leadership of activists like the African-American academic and thinker W.E.B. Du Bois; the Trinidadian Henry Sylvester Williams; and inspired often by the ideas of activist-leaders like the Jamaican-American Marcus Garvey. These ideas were adopted and reformed by continental African leaders in the middle of the twentieth century. Kwame Nkrumah who later became the first president of Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Banar Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Ali Ben Bella of Algeria, built upon the momentum and foundations laid by Du Bois and colleagues, and advanced the idea of Pan-Africanism into the second phase of its institutionalisation, when on 25 May 1963 they co-created the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The principles of the OAU kept the spirit of Pan-Africanism alive. The primary objective of this principle was to continue the tradition of solidarity and cooperation among Africans.

During the era of the OAU the key challenge was colonialism. Since 1885, in what was then known as the “Scramble for Africa” European colonial powers had colonized African peoples and communities across the entire continent. The Belgians were in the Congo, the British in East, South, West and North Africa. The French in West Africa, Somalia, Algeria and other parts of north Africa. The Italians in Somalia. The Germans, who later lost their colonies following their defeat in the Second World War, had to relinquish Namibia and modern day Tanzania. Africans had successfully fought on the side of the allies in the Second World War and after its conclusion they brought their struggle for independence back home to Africa.

The OAU embraced the principle of Pan-Africanism and undertook the challenge of liberating all African countries from the grip of settler colonialism. The main principle that it was trying to promote was to end racial discrimination upon which colonialism with its doctrine of racial superiority was based. In addition, the OAU sought to assert the right of Africans to control their social, economic and political affairs and achieve the freedom necessary to consolidate peace and development. The OAU succeeded in its primary mission, with the help of international actors, in liberating the continent on 27 April 1994, when a new government based on one-person-one-vote came into being in South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. The OAU however was not as effective in monitoring and policing the affairs of its own Member States when it came to the issues of violent conflict;
political corruption; economic mismanagement; poor governance; lack of human rights; lack of gender equality; and poverty eradication.

The preamble of the OAU Charter of 1963 outlined a commitment by member states to collectively establish, maintain and sustain the “human conditions for peace and security.” However, in parallel, the same OAU Charter contained the provision to “defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the member states.” This was later translated into the norm of non-intervention. The key organs of the OAU – the council of ministers and the Assembly of heads of state and government – could only intervene in a conflict situation if they were invited by the parties to a dispute. Many intra-state disputes were viewed, at the time, as internal matters and the exclusive preserve of governments.

The OAU created a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Cairo, in June 1993. This instrument was ineffective in resolving disputes on the continent. Tragically, the Rwandan genocide which was initiated in April 1994 happened while this mechanism was operational. It was also during this last decade of the twentieth century that the conflict in Somalia led to the collapse of the state and the violence in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan led to the death of millions of Africans. These devastating events illustrated the limitations of the OAU as an institution that could implement the norms and principles that it articulated. Despite the existence of the OAU’s mechanisms for conflict prevention and management, the Rwandan tragedy demonstrated the virtual impotence of the OAU in the face of violent conflict within its member states. The United Nations (UN) did not fare any better, as all of its troops, except the Ghanaian contingent, pulled out of the country leaving its people to the fate. Subsequently, both the OAU and the UN issued reports acknowledging their failures. The impetus for the adoption of a new paradigm in the promotion of peace and security in the African continent emerged following the Rwandan tragedy.

Regrettably due to the doctrine of non-intervention, the OAU became a silent observer to the atrocities being committed by some of its member states. Eventually, a culture of impunity and indifference became entrenched in the international relations of African countries during the era of the “proxy” wars of the Cold War. In effect, the OAU was a toothless talking shop. The OAU was perceived as a club of African Heads of States, most of whom were not legitimately elected representatives of their own citizens but self-appointed dictators and oligarchs. This negative perception informed people’s attitude towards the OAU. It was viewed as an Organization that existed without having a genuine impact on the daily lives of Africans.

The third phase of the institutionalisation of Pan-Africanism: the African Union (AU)

The African Union came into existence in July 2002, in Durban, South Africa. It was supposed to usher Africa into a new era of continental integration leading to a deeper unity and a resolution of its problems. The evolution of the AU from the Organisation of African Unity was visionary and timely. The OAU had failed to live up to all of its norms and principles. Africa at the time of the demise of the OAU was a continent that was virtually imploding from within due to the pressures of conflict, poverty and underdevelopment and public health crisis like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The OAU effectively died of a cancer of inefficiency because it basically had not lived up to its original ideals of promoting peace, security and development in Africa. The African Union has emerged as
a homegrown initiative to effectively take the destiny of the continent into the hands of the African people. However, there is a long way to go before the AU’s vision and mission is realised.

The AU is composed of 55 member states. It is coordinated by the AU Commission based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Chairperson of the Commission is Moussa Faki Mahamat from Chad, and his Deputy Chairperson is Ambassador Kwesi Quartey from Ghana. The African Unions’ highest decision making organ is the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government, its executive decision-making organ is the Executive Council of Ministers, who work closely with the Permanent Representatives Committee of Ambassadors in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AU has also established a range of institutions which will be discussed further on.

If we know the “purpose” of Pan-Africanism, then the steps to achieve its goals become clearer to understand. It is in this context that we can begin to understand the emergence of the African Union.

It would be a mistake to view the African Union as an aberration that just emerged in the last few years. It would be more appropriate to view the AU as only the latest incarnation of the idea of Pan-Africanism. The first phase of the institutionalization of Pan-Africanism was the Pan-African Congress that were held from the end of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth century. The second phase of the institutionalization of Pan-Africanism was the inauguration of the Organization of African Unity. The third phase of the institutionalization of Pan-Africanism is in effect the creation of the African Union. It will not be the last phase. Subsequent phases and organizations will bring about ever closer political, economic and social ties among African peoples. African unity is an idea that can be traced back to the nineteenth century. The African Union is a twenty-first century expression of a nineteenth century idea. As such it is an imperfect expression, but nevertheless the best expression of Pan-Africanism that can be brought forth at this time.

The still-born agenda to forge a union government of Africa?

The agenda to establish a Union Government of Africa, or the so-called Union Government of Africa (UGA) gathered pace in the first decade of the twenty-first century. At the core of this debate is the desire to create a continental government and several ministerial portfolios for the African Union. During the 4th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, from 30 to 31 January 2005, in Abuja, Nigeria, the AU agreed to the proposals made by the Libyan Government to establish ministerial portfolios for the organisation. Specifically, in the 6th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of AU Ministers, Libya proposed the establishment of the posts of Minister of Transport and Communications to unify transportation in Member States to be under the competence of the AU which will include airports and main ports of African capital cities, highways, inter-State railways, State-owned airline companies which are to become the basis for a single African airline company. Ultimately, Libya proposed that this should lead to “the creation of a post of Minister of Transportation and Communications.” Similarly, Libya also proposed the creation of the post of Minister of Defence to oversee “a joint policy on defence and security of the Union and provide for the reinforcement of peace, security and stability on the continent.” This Libyan proposal noted that the provisions of the AU Constitutive Act, of 2000, and the Protocol on the Establishment of a Peace and Security Council of the African Union, of 2002, have effectively established a “Joint Defence Framework.” As a logical step in the implementation of the Protocols and establishment of the institutions of the AU the Libyan
proposal emphasized the importance of establishing this post to oversee and “defend the security of Member States against any foreign aggression and to achieve internal security and stability.”\(^\text{18}\) In addition, Libya also proposed the establishment of the post of an African Union Minister of Foreign Affairs. Central to its argument is that AU countries undermine their own influence when its 53 Foreign Ministers, each individually representing their own governments speak simultaneously and occasionally in contradiction with each other. The Libyan proposal notes that this post is necessary in order to expedite “the Continent’s political, economic and social integration and to reinforce and defend unified African positions on issues of mutual interest” in the international sphere.\(^\text{19}\)

In order to respond to these proposals the AU Assembly decided to “set up a Committee of Heads of State and Government chaired by the President of the Republic of Uganda and composed of Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia” to liaise with the Chairperson of the AU Commission to submit a report by the next summit in July 2005.\(^\text{20}\) The Committee convened in a conference under the theme “Desirability of a Union Government of Africa.” This meeting included members of the Committee, representatives of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), technical experts, academics, civil society and Diaspora representatives, as well as the media. The conference came up with three key conclusions including the:

i) recognition that the necessity of an AU Government is not in doubt;
ii) acceptance that such a Union must be of the African people and not merely a Union of States and governments and its creation must come about through the principle of gradual incrementalism; and
iii) recognition that the role of the RECs should be highlighted as building blocks for the continental framework.\(^\text{21}\)

Following the submission of this report the Assembly reaffirmed “that the ultimate goal of the African Union is full political and economic integration leading to a United States of Africa.”\(^\text{22}\) The Assembly further established a Committee of Heads of State and Government to be chaired by President Olusegun Obasanjo, Chairperson of the African Union, and composed of the Heads of State and Government of Algeria, Kenya, Senegal, Gabon, Lesotho and Uganda. More specifically, the Assembly requested the Committee to consider the steps that need to be taken for the realization of this objective, the structure, the process, the time frame required for its achievement as well as measures that should be undertaken, in the meantime, to strengthen the ability of the Commission to fulfil its mandate effectively.\(^\text{23}\) Ultimately, this initiative to forge a Union Government of Africa stagnated due to the fact that African leaders held competing visions of the end-goal of continental integration.

**AU reforms and the prospects for activating Pan-Africanism**

In January 2017, to mark the fifteenth year since the organisation was formally launched, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted a report entitled: *The Imperative to Strengthen our Union: Report on the Proposed Recommendations for the Institutional Reform of the African Union*.\(^\text{24}\) This report was compiled by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, with the collaboration of a panel of senior African states women and men, in response to a decision “on the need to conduct a study on the institutional reform of the African Union” the which emerged from a Retreat of Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Finance, which was held in Kigali, Rwanda, on 16 July 2017.\(^\text{25}\) The
Kagame Panel Report observed that “as unprecedented challenges multiply and spread across the globe at a dizzying pace, new vulnerabilities are increasingly laid bare, in rich and poor nations alike.”\textsuperscript{26} In particular, the Report identifies a number of issues including “climate change, violent extremist ideologies, disease pandemics, or mass migration” as among some of the key issues that urgently need to be addressed “by focused and effective regional organisations.”\textsuperscript{27} The Kagame Panel Report laments that “the unfortunate truth is that Africa today is ill-prepared to adequately respond to current events, because the African Union still has to be made fit for purpose.”\textsuperscript{28} This is a forthright and honest appraisal of the state of the African Union fifteen years after it was launched with much fanfare and great expectations in 2002, in Durban, South Africa.

Activating Pan-Africanism will require addressing AU’s internal challenges with a view to determining how it can enhance its governance processes, so that it can become “fit for purpose” in addressing the continent’s challenges, as well as in strengthening Africa’s assertiveness in the international sphere. In March 2017, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, and his team of Commissioner’s committed to approaching their historical mission at the AU with a degree of pragmatism about the constraints and possibilities that they face. Specifically, on 14th March 2017, during his first public address as the AU Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki, outlined six priorities including the need “to reform the structures” of the organisation to make it “a tool capable of translating into reality the vision of our leaders and aspirations of our peoples.”\textsuperscript{29} In addition, Moussa Faki emphasised the need to address the continent’s conflicts and enhance the participation of women and young people in promoting peace, development and the revival of the continent. Moussa Faki also identified the promotion of economic integration with a specific focus on “increasing inter-African trade and free movement of people so that Africans can finally cease to be foreigners in their own continent.” He argued for the revitalisation of the Africa’s private sector in order to enhance wealth and job creation and for strengthening Africa’s engagement in international relations.

### The pitfalls of forging a Pan-African consciousness and identity

The African continent is afflicted by a crisis of identity and is still plagued by deep seated euro-centric civilizational agendas, which infiltrated and were un-critically adopted by a sector of Africa’s political and economic elite to frame the governance and socio-economic systems of their countries. In fact, the majority of African countries are more aptly defined by the degree of colonial continuity. This persistence of the colonial logic particularly evident in the state-centric systems of governance that dominate the African landscape, as well as in the adoption of neo-liberal economic models which have fed the external extractive agenda, and singularly failed to ensure a distributive processes that can improve the livelihood of the majority of people on the continent. This trend was presciently predicted by the Martinique author and Pan-Africanist, Frantz Fanon, in a chapter entitled: *The Pitfalls of National Consciousness*, which featured in his pioneering book *The Wretched of the Earth* (Les Damnés de la Terre), which was published at the onset of the process of de-colonisation in the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{30} This phenomenon of colonial continuity is a hindrance, but not an insurmountable obstacle, to forging a Pan-African consciousness and identity. In fact, as the AU approaches two decades of its existence, and as the US-designed liberal international order undergoes a period of existential crisis and fragmentation, there is a significant window of opportunity for the African continent to assume the responsibilities of its self-determination and self-actualization, by redefining its governance and economic models to
ensure that it creates functional polities across the continent, which will respond to the basic needs of their people in terms of peace, security, accountability and improved livelihood.

**Africa’s leadership deficit**

To a large extent, efforts to ensure sustainable peace, security, governance and development in Africa have always been undermined by the dominant international and geo-political agendas of the day. After colonialism, it was the Cold War; and in the post-Cold War world the pressures of globalisation are impacting on Africa’s peace and development efforts. However, the continent’s ability and capacity to promote peace have also been undermined by Africa’s leaders and their failure to find ways to address their differences and hold one another accountable. Africa’s leadership deficit leaves the continent extremely vulnerable to internal fissures and external penetration and exploitation. For example, the fuel that adds to the flame of conflict in Africa is the role that globalisation plays in perpetuating and sustaining wars. The biggest challenge in trying to resolve disputes in Africa is to effectively deal with the role of international actors in fuelling conflict. Africa’s experience with misrule is evident in the willingness of the continent’s so-called leaders to collude with foreign governments and trans-national corporations to extract mineral resources, and these resources are being used to finance endless wars and withhold health, educational and infrastructural services to the continent’s citizens. Examples of this include multi-national oil companies extracting oil and gas from South Sudan, Angola and Mozambique; global diamond cartels excavating in Zimbabwe and Congo-Brazzaville; timber conglomerates culling and extracting trees in Sierra Leone and Liberia; and industrial giants extracting copper, chromium and coltan from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR). Africa’s leadership deficit is evident in this continued collusion with these global predators. The issue of whether these natural resources are exploited by a corrupt government that is often not legitimate, or by a militarized group, adds fuel to the fire of autocracy and conflict and feeds into illegal trading of small arms and drug-dealing networks that make the situation difficult for one country to control or manage by itself. This reality has been made possible or easier by the emerging global networks of trade and instant financial transactions that allow the ability to shift huge amounts of capital at the click of a button to offshore accounts beyond the investigative reach of unsuspecting citizens and civil society organisations, as has now been revealed by the infamous Panama Papers. Private military companies, or what were once called “mercenaries,” flourish in this new environment and can operate undetected and unidentified. The first order of protection of the interests of African citizens has to be its leaders. The inverse remains the case across the continent as leaders connive with insidious external actors.

**Pathways to forging a Pan-African consciousness among citizens and the diaspora**

The point is that the promotion of peace, security and development in Africa is no longer the task of an individual leader or nation-state, in the context of globalisation. This is at the very least a continent-wide challenge which will require forging a Pan-African consciousness among its citizens as well as the Diaspora. At the very most, it is a global responsibility that implicates the citizens and governments where these multi-national companies are registered, specifically in Europe, America, China, Russia and India, which make profits from the exploitation and misery of people in war-affected and under-developed parts of Africa. This
continental responsibility also invokes the need for active Pan-African citizenship in confronting these corrupt practices where they persist, and for holding Africa’s so-called leaders to account through the self-ascribed promotion of “Civic Pan-Africanism” as a vehicle to mobilize continent-wide leadership across the continent, which will build solidarity networks with other societal actors from around the world.

The AU inherited a cumbersome bureaucracy from its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which it has struggled to transcend. Consequently, there are remnants of the “OAU way” of doing things that continue to hamper the AU in its daily management and administrative processes. These archaic management practices that foster attitudes of territoriality in the control and distribution of service provision goods across the AU, which undermines its ability to be effective and to win the hearts and minds of citizens across the continent and forge a sense of Pan-African identity. Consequently, improving the AU’s internal systems is a necessary pathway to achieving the objectives of Pan-Africanism.

The AU has a central role in promoting and advancing the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which was formally established in 2019. This development will be vital in increasing intra-African trade and opening up the continent to the free movement of people through the issuing of a continent-wide African Union Passport, which has only been granted to heads of state, ministers and ambassadors. It is vital for African citizens to also obtain their AU Passports in the shortest time possible, so that the cross-border interactions can increase and contribute towards fostering a sense of Pan-Africanism. In addition, the private sector in Africa can take advantage of the AU Passport to foster entrepreneurship and development of businesses in order to draw more Africans, particularly the youth, into the workforce. Consequently, the AU is in a unique position to act as a catalyst for supporting the processes geared towards enhancing Pan-African entrepreneurship by establishing coherent policy frameworks and holding its member states to account for upholding the principles of integrity in guiding their societies towards improved livelihoods.

The state-centric approach to dealing with crisis in Africa is short-sighted, anachronistic and self-defeating. Political violence has real spill-over effects to neighbouring countries, and armed militia that are resisting the authority of a particular state are inevitably camped out in neighbouring countries, illustrating the ineffectiveness of dealing with “national” crises. There is a need to adopt a regional lens when promoting peace, security and governance, whether it be in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, the Mano River Union, or the Sahel. On this basis, the notion of “regional reconciliation” is an important framework through which the nexus between security, governance and development can be enhanced and further elaborated. The idea is that crises are addressed through regional forums that bring together the leaders of neighbouring states to address a particular crisis in a formal setting, this will also contribute towards forging a Pan-African consciousness and identity. By extension this calls for government-to-government collaboration at a regional level, to complement the people-to-people interventions that are already common in situations such as the one in the eastern DRC. The African Union can provide the overall framework through which its departments and agencies can co-jointly pursue early warning, early intervention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, reconciliation and development to ensure that the phenomenon of cyclical violence is once and for all expunged from the continent of Africa, as a pathway to fostering the spirit of Pan-African unity.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the African Union is the latest incarnation of the phenomenon of Pan-Africanism, which can be traced to ideas articulated in the nineteenth century and
before. However, African continental integration is not yet a concrete reality and remains a promise to be fulfilled. As the AU approaches two decades of its existence, the key challenge will be to sustain the momentum for constant change and improvement.

In terms of security and governance, the interventionist stance adopted by the African Union in its past two decades is an appropriate posture for the continent going forward. African conflict situations cannot be allowed to escalate, because they will continue to have a much more destructive effect on their people and citizens of neighbouring states. Consequently, there is a need for the notion of regional reconciliation to gain currency, anchored by deepening collaboration between the AU, its institutions, and its partners, if these cyclical conflicts are to be extinguished permanently. The advent of a more pronounced synergy in effect serves to re-define the processes of peace, security, governance and trade in Africa. The security and governance of one can only be achieved by ensuring the security and governance of all. Every African is every other African’s keeper, which reaffirms the notion of Pan-African solidarity. Without a genuine commitment across the entire AU system to facilitate and enable synergy, the pursuit of the Pan-African vision of a peaceful and prosperous continent will remain an elusive aspiration.

Historically, the continental ability and capacity to advance its interests has also been undermined by the lack of political will among African leaders to find ways to address their differences and collectively solve their problems. However, increasingly the African continent is emerging as a vocal, and in some respects an influential, actor in international relations and in addressing global challenges. This chapter has demonstrated how the African Union is the latest institutional incarnation of the idea of Pan-Africanism. However, the challenge going forward will be the need to activate a Pan-African consciousness and forge a Pan-African identity which is a requisite to fulfilling the hope and aspirations of Africans across the continent and in the Diaspora around the world.

Notes