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## ***The Diaspora and Domestic Insurgencies in Africa***

### **Abstract**

*This article engages the emerging discursive reconstruction in the West of the African diaspora, in particular, the debate that the African diaspora plays a prominent role in promoting domestic insurgencies and armed conflicts in their home countries, especially in the post-9/11 dispensation. Based on a taxonomy of the African diaspora vis-à-vis other significant diasporic populations, the article critically explores the views held by many Western Africanists and policy makers about the instrumentality of financial remittances and other logistical support from Africans in the diaspora in the instigation, aggravation and prolongation of political insurgencies and extremist activities in their home states. The author argues that the emerging reconstruction of the image and role of the African diaspora in political conflicts on the continent is essentially a consequence of the post-9/11 re-securitisation of Africa as a zone of error and anger by influential policy makers in the West.*

### **Introduction**

The term diaspora comes from the ancient Greek word for 'dispersal' or 'scattering' of things and people. The conventional meaning of the concept is scarcely different from its Greek origin. In contemporary parlance and usage, diaspora refers to a community of people that have been forced or compelled to move from their traditional homeland to a new settlement, without completely losing all the elements of their original identity. There are two key aspects to this definition. The first is forced, involuntary or induced migration of an extraction of people to a new settlement. Historically, various ecological and anthropogenic (human-instigated) factors have contributed to forced or induced movement of people into the diaspora. The ecological factors include famine, drought, aridity, flooding, and so on while the anthropogenic factors include war, persecution, inquisition, repression, as well as bad governance and prebendal corruption, which lead to impoverishment of many. The two factors are not mutually exclusive. In other words, there have been times in history when an interplay of ecological and man-made factors has provoked an outflow of people from their traditional homelands to seek refuge abroad as we have seen in some of the Complex Political Emergencies (CPEs)<sup>1</sup> that have occurred between the 1980s and 2000s in some of the Sahelian countries of Africa (for example, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Chad, Niger and Mali).

The second important aspect of the definition of diaspora is that the diasporic community usually retains and tends to perpetuate some element(s) of their original identity, which may include aspects of their culture, religion, history and perhaps ethno-racial homogeneity and solidarity. Because identity is a dynamic phenomenon, some of the elements of the original identity of a diaspora population undergo

significant transformation and change over the succeeding years and generations. The negotiation of the identity characteristics of the diaspora population with the dominant culture or population and their subsequent transformation usually depends on the peculiar histories and relational circumstances of the groups. Apart from the tendency to retain aspects of the original identity regardless of any practical transformations, many diasporic communities (but by no means all) do retain ancestral and social linkages with the homeland population or sections of the latter. The tendency to maintain ancestral connections is stronger among first and early generation of migrants, exiles and, to a lesser extent, conscripts and deportees.

Some of the classical and recent movements of populations into the diaspora include (cf. Wikipedia, 2007; Bridge & Fedorowich eds., 2003):

- The Jewish diaspora, referring to the several generations of Jews that resettled in different American, European and Middle Eastern countries beginning from 70 CE through the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Although the majority of them have returned to Israel since 1948, a significant number of Jews still remain in the diaspora from where they continue to champion the Israeli cause.
- The Korean diaspora: These are different generations of people that emigrated from the Korean peninsula to the Americas, Europe, China, Japan, and other South East Asian countries during the Japanese colonial occupation (1910-1945), and the peace treaty division of the peninsula into two republics, and the Korean War (1950-53). A relatively high wave of emigration of people has continued from Communist North Korea to South Korea and elsewhere as a result of the brutal dictatorship and economic crisis in the country.
- The Cuban diaspora: the exodus of over one million Cubans following the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the communist dictatorship that followed the revolution. The largest community of the Cuban diaspora is found in the state of Florida in the US.
- The Tamil diaspora: referring to people of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lankan Tamil origin who have settled in many parts of India, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, French Caribbean islands, Europe, Australia and North America. The majority of the Tamil diaspora are refugees and exiles fleeing the separatist civil war waged by the militant Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, popularly known as the Tamil Tigers) against the Sri Lankan government since 1983.
- The Somali diaspora: These are the millions of ethnic Somalis and refugees who live mostly in the neighbouring East African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti), as well as Europe, Australia, New Zealand, North America, and the Middle East. It is estimated that about half of the Somalis were forced into the diaspora following the dictatorship of Siad Barre (1969-1991) and breakdown of the state of Somalia and civil war since 1991.
- The Arab Maghreb diaspora consists of people from the North African countries, notably Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The largest Maghreb community outside of North Africa is in France, where it is estimated that North Africans make up the majority of the country's five million Muslim population.
- The South Asian diaspora includes millions of people from India and the Indian sub-continent (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) whose descendants

live in the Americas, Europe, East Africa, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Singapore and Japan. The majority of the diaspora migrated from the region to other countries in the colonial and post-colonial time in search of greener pastures, while others fled political instability at home. Over 80,000 South Asians (mostly Indian and Pakistani merchants) were expelled from Uganda by the repressive regime of Idi Amin in 1975 and the majority of them were offered asylum by the UK, US and Canadian governments. Migration from the South Asian region to the developed countries has continued in contemporary history.

- The Chilean diaspora: A fairly small but widely dispersed community, mostly political refugees, who fled the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1981) following the 1973 coup. Most of this diaspora population live in neighbouring South American countries (Argentina and Brazil), Spain, France, Great Britain, Italy, Mexico, Sweden and North America.
- The Chechnya diaspora: These are nationals of Chechnya that fled their homeland during the insurrection against Russia that started in the 1990s. The majority of the Chechen refugees live in the East European countries of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Republic of Georgia. Others can be found in the EU and North America.
- The Afghan and Iraqi diaspora: These are millions of people that have fled prolonged cycle of wars and political violence in Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and the first Gulf war in Iraqi, as well as the post-9/11 US-led invasion of the two countries. The majority of the Afghan and Iraqi diasporas are scattered in the oil-rich Gulf countries, Europe and North America.

### **The African Diaspora**

The African diaspora consists broadly of Africans and people of African origin domiciled outside the continent, who may or may not hold the nationality of an African state, but generally perceive themselves and are perceived by others as having an African ancestry. Pursuant to the goal of promoting the new Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) the African Union's (AU) panel of experts in April 2005 adopted a more utilitarian (albeit conceptually problematic) definition of the African diaspora, hitherto regarded as the AU's definition. According to this definition, the African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union. The AU definition is uncharitably utilitarian because of its emphasis on the contribution to the development of the continent and the AU as an essential criterion for anybody of African descent domiciled abroad to qualify for as an African diaspora. But it suffices to say that the logic behind this proviso is not defensible as it tends to strip the bulk of the Africans, struggling under difficult and hostile socio-legal conditions to eke out a living in different countries of the global North and thus have nothing to contribute to African and AU development, of their legitimate claims to an ancestral homeland. Many of the Africans in this category are languishing in various refugee detention camps and prisons in the US, Canada and Europe on charges relating to lack of valid immigration papers and desperate survival-induced crime usually committed because the accused is forced to resort to underground economy given of their inability to obtain legal work and resident permits. Are these new generation of African

immigrants in the West fleeing war, political repression and hopeless poverty (worsened by prebendal corruption and bad governance), and who the West is unwilling or at best reluctant to tolerate, not entitled to the dignity of an African diaspora identity? Consequently, how would the AU panel of experts on the Definition of the African Diaspora classify those Africans and people of African descent abroad who at one time have probably contributed to African development (what ever that might mean) but at other times have contributed to funding political insurgents and ethnic armies in their home countries? One could go on to critique of the AU definition. It simply does not make conceptual or even legal and political sense.

The operative concepts in the definition of the African diaspora should therefore not be the political agenda and utilitarian rationality of contribution to African development, but rather historical and genealogical root (real or fictive), self-perception and/or the perception and classification by the significant others in one's [new] place of settlement.

One can identify some three major categories of the African diaspora. The first category is the descendants of the generations transported into the Americas and Europe during the trans-Atlantic slave trade between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Walter Rodney (1972) estimates that over 16 million Africans were carted away to the western hemisphere in this deplorable history of human trafficking. The majority of descendants of this category of the African diaspora are presently found in Brazil, the US, Colombia, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Venezuela, Jamaica, France and the UK. Because of the violent manner in which they were conscripted, exported and treated in the diaspora, it was impossible for most of the African deportees and their descendants to retain or preserve their specific ancestral origin (i.e. where exactly they originated from in the African continent). As a result of this violent and violational history, contemporary descendants of this first generation (read: category) of African diaspora have little physical connection with the African homeland beyond the fictive and symbolic. In fact, in many western countries like the US and UK, the relationship between descendants of this first generation of the African diaspora and the late colonial and more recent post-independence generations of African immigrants is one of suspicion, distrust and tension. A much healthier relationship existed during the heydays of pan-Africanism when the educated elites of both sides forged a common front in the diaspora to fight the scourge of racism in the West and colonialism in the African continent.

The second category of the African diaspora are the late colonial and early post-independence (mostly 1950s-1970s) emigrant populations and settlers in the West, as well as their descendants. They are mostly professionals and guest workers that voluntarily migrated to the West in search of further education and greener pastures. A much more limited proportion of them fled their countries because of political persecution at home. This category is relatively mixed in terms of demographic characteristics. But, by and large, they tend to be fairly well established and settled, especially in countries like the UK, US, and Canada. In France where the majority of this category of African immigrants are from the Arab Maghreb Islamic cultures and therefore represent a more radically antithetical civilisation, there tends to be more institutionalised segregation and hostility against the highly deprived populations of Africans. The vast majority of the over five million French Muslims are from the Arab

Maghreb North African countries. In all, the connection between this category of migrants and their homelands in Africa is mixed. The first generation of this category of migrants for understandable reasons have stronger attachment and connection to Africa than their relatively more westernised offspring and descendants. Among the latter, significant variations are still discernible in terms of affinity to Africa and the later generation of African immigrants depending on factors like the cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of the diasporic population.

The third category of the African diaspora embraces those fleeing socioeconomic decline (partly related to neo-liberal economic reforms), broken and breakable states, wars, hopeless poverty and political persecution that have characterised the majority of the African countries since the 1980s through the 2000s (AWEPA, 2004: 1). Like the second category, this cluster is extremely mixed and includes Africans of all hierarchies, occupations and age groups – professionals, politicians, working class, jobless school leavers and graduates, children and families of the political elites, prostitutes, refugees, asylum-seekers, students, guest workers, etc. This forced emigration has contributed, among other things, to Africa's brain-drain – the movement of highly skilled persons to seek a livelihood abroad (AWEPA, 2004, AU, 2006: 26). While the vast majority of these migrant populations are found in Western Europe and North America, a significant number of them are also scattered in other regions of the world – the oil-rich Arabian Gulf states, South East Asia, China, Australia, Eastern Europe, Russia, and Latin America. Hence, there is increasingly a noticeable 'diversification of destinations' (Adepoju, 2004a) away from the traditional developed Western economies. Being a highly variable cluster, this category comprises large numbers of lawful and illegal migrants, the majority of whom may not have any plans of returning to their home countries in the foreseeable future because of the deplorable conditions back home.

Emigration from Africa has become highly commercialised in recent years, involving a number of syndicates, pimps, and commission agents that use various vicious devices like trickery, kidnapping, deception, intimidation and blackmail to recruit and export young impressionable emigrants into the diaspora for income generation purposes (Adepoju, 2004a). A large number of young girls and women are recruited into this ungodly trafficking, making up a racket of 'feminization of migration' from sub-Saharan Africa (Adepoju, 2004b). Consequently, because a large number of these African emigrants are unsettled and face harsh economic, social and legal conditions, many of them tend to melt into underground economies or operate a transitional lifestyle, moving from one city or country to another in relatively short intervals in search of greener pastures. It is this category of African emigrants, part of what is branded 'the unwanted migrants', which has been on the increase since the mid-1990s, that most developed countries are reluctant to accept (Carling, 2007:1).

### **Intra-African Refugees, Exiles and Guest Workers**

Intra-African migration has been on the increase in recent years and decades, but this is an aspect significantly neglected by mainstream migration research. There are both 'traditional' and 'modern' patterns of intra-African migration. The 'traditional' is linked to historically enduring forms of mobility such as nomadism and movements across commercial trade routes. It is a process underpinned by the porosity and

artificiality of African international borders. The modern variant has to do with labour mobility, refugeeism and political asylum. The push and pull factors underlying the modern type of intra-African migration have to do with deteriorating political, socioeconomic and environmental conditions, as well as armed conflicts. These conditions are more or less similar to those responsible for the emigration of the third category of the African diaspora. It is estimated that there are over 16.3 million intra-African migrants, including voluntary labour, refugees and asylumees in the continent (AU, 2006: 3).

The combined effects of hyper-inflation, economic collapse and political turbulence in Zimbabwe have triggered a mass influx of Zimbabweans to neighbouring South Africa and other parts of the world. An estimated 2-3 million Zimbabweans presently reside in South Africa, the majority of whom are believed to be illegal immigrants and the International Organisation for Migration estimates that the South African government deports an average of 3,900 Zimbabweans weekly (see Wines, 2007). Similarly, uncertain economic conditions at home have pressured a large number of skilled professionals from different African countries (Zambia, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda) to the booming economies of South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Gabon, leading to what Adepoju (2003; 2004a) depicted as 'the altering of brain drain to brain circulation within the African region'. Further, there is a growing migration from West Africa to the North African countries of Libya, Morocco, and to a lesser extent, Tunisia. Whereas a preponderant representation of these emigrants consists of casual labour, others are 'roving labour' using the Arab Maghreb countries as a transit to the European Union – mostly Spain, Italy, Portugal and Malta.

Following recent and contemporary wars and political violence there are tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Uganda; Sudanese-Darfur refugees in Chad, Chadian refugees in Nigeria, Somalian refugees in Kenya, Ivorian refugees in Burkina Faso and Ghana, Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea, Congolese refugees in Gabon, Burundian refugees in Uganda, and so forth. The vast majority of the refugees live under deplorable humanitarian conditions.

### **Diaspora Populations, Exile Communities and Political Insurgency in Africa**

A considerable number of publications on African civil wars that emerged since the late 1990s have tried to establish a strong connection between large number of diaspora, migrant and exile communities of African origin on the one hand, and the prevalence and promotion of insurgency on the continent. The various works of Paul Collier and his colleagues of Western Africanists in the World Bank and elsewhere on the economic agendas of civil wars, in particular the theory that most civil wars are instigated and driven by rebels' greed for strategic resources as opposed to legitimate grievances, have provided great impetus to the thesis that diaspora remittances are contributory to the instigation and sustaining of rebel insurgencies in fragile states (cf. Collier, 2000a; Kaldor, 2001: 7-9; Berdal, 2003). Collier (2000b) particularly argues that given the fact that rebels do not have the same capacities as constituted governments to generate the necessary revenues to finance insurgency activities, they are therefore inclined to indulge in illicit activities (for example, predation of natural

resources and drug trafficking) and informal fundraising from sympathetic diaspora communities. Collier (2000b: 13) further submits that 'diaporas are so dangerous' and this especially because:

Diasporas sometimes harbour rather romanticized attachments to their group of origin and may nurse grievances as a form of asserting continued belonging. They are much richer than the people in their country of origin and so can afford to finance vengeance. Above all, they do not have to suffer any of the awful consequences of renewed conflict because they are not living in the country. Hence, they are a ready market for rebel groups touting vengeance and so are a source of finance for renewed conflict. They are also a source of pressure for secession.

While not implying that diaspora activities and income are the major causes of political insurgencies and civil wars in Africa, exponents of war economies and predation theories are generally of the view that diasporas and external migration populations contribute to the promotion, aggravation and prolongation of wars (cf. Collier & Hoefler, 2000; Kaldor, 2001:7-9; Berdal, 2003; Sage, 2007), by activities such as:

- (a) Fund-raising among themselves and from external sympathisers to purchase ammunition and other military supplies for home-based insurgents and rebel factions. Examples of this occurred among diaspora populations during the Nigeria-Biafra civil war in the late 1960s, the Ugandan liberation war in the 1980s, the Eritrean separatist war against Ethiopia, and the recent civil wars in Liberia, Burundi and Somalia.
- (b) Colluding with rebels, warlords and some external business agents to loot strategic natural resources like diamond, coltan and timber in their home countries, helping to secure external black markets for looted resources and ultimately recycling part of the revenues to support the conflict agendas. Examples of this are found in the civil wars in Angola, the DRC, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- (c) Increasing the risk of return to violence among post-conflict societies through perpetuation and activation of animosities, inflammatory propaganda and mobilisation for violence, and continued provision of financial and logistical support to disaffected and recalcitrant persons or groups. There are multiple instances of this dimension in the political conflicts and wars in Burundi and Rwanda (pre- and post-genocide), Somalia, and Liberia.
- (d) Direct mobilisation and invasion of homeland as was the case by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) that mobilised from their exile base in Uganda to invade their home country and seize power in Kigali in the aftermath of the genocide in 1991.

The success of the RPF was to inspire, first, the anti-Mobutu movement and later, the anti-Kabila movements in the DRC supported by Rwanda and Uganda (Nkandawire, 2002: 203). Similarly, the vanguard and backers of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) that invaded Sierra Leone in 1991 consisted of (sub)-elites that lost favour with the embedded patron-clientelist network of the corrupt All People's Congress (APC) regime, as well as outspoken critics forced into exile by the dictatorship (see Zack-Williams, 1999: 159; Richards, 1996). Nkandawire (2002: 202) describes this brand of insurgency that has characterised a few of the African civil wars as 'roving rebel movements returning from exile'.

The notion that diasporas, exiles and migrant communities play a significant role in backing insurgencies in their home countries has attracted considerable interest on the part of Western governments (especially that of the US) following the events of 11 September 2001 and the determination to target terrorist financing worldwide (Berdal, 2005: 694). It is this view that many policy makers among Western governments and key international organisations tend to accept as self evident truth and thus a guide to policy.

The viewpoint that financial and logistical support from diaspora communities forms a significant source of backing and incentive for political insurgencies in transitional societies, especially in the prosecution of ethnic and identity-related struggles for collective self-determination, is supported by a range of contemporary experiences in Africa and beyond. In some of the recent and present wars in Somalia, Kosovo, and Sri Lanka, diaspora finance has been mobilised by local warring factions through deliberate lobbying by the home groups and reciprocal solidarity from migrants and exiles. Also, the fungibility of financial flows from diaspora remittances has meant that part of the remittances intended for legitimate humanitarian assistance to war-affected relatives and family members back home has often been channelled by recipients into the war project. Perhaps the most prominent case in support of the relationship between diasporas remittances and political insurgency in the home country is that of the civil war waged by the Tamil Tiger against the government of Sri Lanka. As Berdal (2005: 694) articulated the discourse:

[the] elaborate overseas support structure set up and carefully nurtured by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) unquestionably provided vital economic support from diaspora communities for the movement military struggle. This overseas income by one estimate as much as 60 per cent of its overall income enabled the Tamil Tigers to pursue a more direct and high-intensity campaign against the Sri Lanka state security forces.

### **The Other Side of the Diaspora**

Significantly, the Sri Lankan example is not generalisable and therefore does not make the relationship between diaspora populations and political insurgencies as straightforward as many predation theorists contend. There is an element of context-specificity to the history of civil wars and the role of diasporas. While in a limited number of cases, diaspora remittances and support have contributed to the prosecution and prolongation of the war project, in many other instances, diaspora finances have proved a crucial source of humanitarian aid, and to a much lesser extent, some conflict circumstances have witnessed a complex articulation of both (i.e. insurgency support and humanitarian relief). In many conflict zones and at different stages of war when international aid has dried up and donor fatigue set in (for example, the later stages of war in Sierra Leone, Somalia, Liberia, and elsewhere in Kosovo, El Salvador, and so on), diaspora revenues have provided an essential source of sustenance to marginalised and dispossessed groups (cf. Berdal, 2005: 695; Nkandawire, 2002; Carment, 2007). In fact, both war-torn Somalia and the unrecognised *de facto* state of British Somaliland are two economies in Africa that have been hugely dependent on diaspora remittances to remain afloat in the face of the multiple international sanctions imposed on the countries (Menkhaus, 2004: 41). Furthermore, many recent studies have shown the immense contributions of various diaspora organisations in promoting post-war



recovering and peace-building through constructive political participation, engineering positive political and economic reforms, helping to attract direct foreign investments to their homelands, reconstruction of destroyed public and community buildings, and funding small and medium scale developmental projects (Gundel, 2002; Frost, 2002; Zack-Williams & Mohan, 2002). Social development networks of Sierra Leoneans, Somalis, Afghans and Bosnian at home and abroad tend to have some of the best practices of this positive model.

In its 'Draft Strategic Framework for a Policy on Migration in Africa', the African Union (2006) recognises the developmental importance of diaspora remittances in the following terms:

The total global volume of remittance transfers to developing countries far exceeds official development assistance (ODA) and has important macro-economic effects by increasing the total purchasing power of receiving economies. African countries receive significant amounts of remittances relative to size of GDP. Remittances are used by migrants' families to meet daily subsistence needs, health and education, but are also invested in improvements to land, homes, entrepreneurial activities, et cetera. Identifying ways to maximise the developmental effects of remittances, and improving remittance transfer mechanisms are therefore topics of growing importance to Africa.

It will therefore be preposterous to dismiss diaspora remittances and their overall developmental significance on account of either the role played by some diaspora populations in promoting political extremism in their home states or the post-9/11 international suspicion and apprehension over transfers by Africans in the diaspora to families, friends, groups, organisations and agencies back home. What many Western pundits and policy makers incensed against diaspora remittances do not seem to recognise is that there is an element of cultural obligation to transfers from the perceptibly more privileged Africans in the diaspora to their less privileged counterparts at home and this cultural practice goes back to colonial and, in some instances, pre-colonial history. In virtually all African cultures, the idiom that migrant relatives are better exposed and more well-to-do than those at home, and that wealth is meaningless unless the more privileged use it in uplifting the less privileged around them is well embedded in the peoples' world view. It is an element of world view further strengthened by the fact that many African states are poor, corrupt and insensitive to the wellbeing of their citizens. It therefore becomes obligatory on the relatively more well-to-do to make sacrifices to provide welfare support – benefits that the state ordinarily provides in Western countries – to their less-privileged relatives and clients. Many postcolonial theorists in fact argue that this cultural imperative, believed to be intrinsic to patrimonialism, partly explains why the African governing elites are lured to use their offices to steal public funds and amass spoils for the benefit of their large number of dependants and immediate constituencies (extended families, clans and so on) (see Grugel, 2002; Young, 2004).

### **Post-9/11 Construction of Terror in Africa and the African Diaspora: Some Concluding Remarks**

It is not a historical accident that in the post-9/11 international climate, the African diaspora is perceived differently from most other diasporic populations. Images of 'evil', 'danger', 'criminality', 'disease', 'disorder', 'anarchy', and 'mindless violence'

have characterised the perception of Africa in the West since pre-colonial history – a characterisation that historically resonates with the discourse of Africa as the ‘the dark continent’ (cf. Helman & Ratner, 1993; Kaplan, 1994; Linklater, 1996). Whereas the Chinese diaspora, Indian diaspora, Korean diaspora, Jewish diaspora, Chilean diaspora (to mention a few) are, in Western constructions, perceived as promoting development in their home countries (cf. Marienstras, 1989; McKeown, 2000; Butler, 2001), the perception of the African diaspora has been radically changed since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Prior to this time, the African diaspora was nothing more than unwanted guest workers and hassles in the West, taking advantage of economic opportunities in the developed western countries to advance their wellbeing and those of their relatives back home (AWEPA, 2004). The events of 9/11 and American-led global war on terror have radically altered this ‘greener pasture-seeking, survivalist’ perception. The new reconstruction has meant that the image of ‘terror’ and ‘danger’ now supersedes the idiom of ‘greener pasture-seeking survivalism’. Either way, the reality is that the African immigrants are increasingly not welcome in the West and, evidently, they have become more unwelcome in the post-9/11 dispensation than previously.

Africa is increasingly securitised as a zone of terror in the US and, to a lesser extent, EU foreign policies, and the African diaspora is perceived as partly bankrolling terror and insurgency in the beleaguered continent. The new realisation that there are large Muslim population in Africa north of the equator (West Africa, Sahel-Arab Maghreb and the Horn of Africa) has suddenly fuelled disquieting discourses of anger and error in the West since the commencement of the global war on terror (Mazrui, 2005: 15; Keenan, 2004a).

Senior officials of US European Command (EUCOM), senior US government officials, CIA counter-intelligence reports and western media have played a big part in the redefinition of Africa as a potential breeding ground for Islamist militancy and a safe haven for terrorists, including the perception of the African diaspora as willing accomplices and champions of political violence (Keenan, 2004b; Diallo, 2005). EUCOM has been chiefly instrumental in sensitising the Washington administration to the huge security gaps in Africa, emphasising the vulnerability of US interests to terror, criminality and instability in the region (CSIS, 2005: vii). EUCOM and other protagonists have spoken in increasingly exaggerated language of terrorists fleeing the war in Afghanistan and the crackdown in Pakistan, swarming across the vast, ungoverned and desolate regions of the Sahara desert through Chad, Niger, Mali and Mauritania (Keenan, 2004a: 477).

General James L. Jones, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and the Commander of EUCOM, posits that:

We are seeing evidence that terrorism is moving into Africa, especially the radical, fundamentalist type. The countries on the rim of the Mediterranean Sea – Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Morocco – are the most pressing concern for the Command, but failed states further south also pose problems. Terrorists see the continent as a place to hide, a place to train and a place to organize new attacks. While terrorism based in Africa is a long-term threat to the United States, it is a more immediate one to Europe. The Mediterranean that separates Africa from Europe is no longer a physical barrier; it’s a pond that people can step over.<sup>2</sup>

With no central government for over 15 years, the failed state of Somalia has been hyped as a safe haven for terrorists uprooted from the Middle East and the various warlords and militia groups in the country are said to be funded by a Middle Eastern terrorist mafia. Nearly all Islamist fundamentalist groups in North Africa and the Sahel, including those waging political struggles prior to 9/11, have been branded ‘Al Qaeda subsidiaries’, ‘surrogates’, ‘sympathisers’, ‘subcontractors’ and ‘beneficiaries of international Jihadist funding’ (Keenan, 2004a). The proximity of North Africa to Europe and the Middle East has also been exaggerated to allege that terrorist organisations and Al Qaeda cells from the Sahara are infiltrating Europe through the backdoor (Diallo, 2005: 25-30). Subsequent incidents of terrorist bombings in many parts of North Africa and the Horn have been high-profiled by the US and its allies to declare Africa north of the equator a zone of terror.

One of the most striking attempts to draw a connection between post-9/11 terrorist tendencies, geo-political situations in Africa and the African diaspora populations is found in the recent study by Andre Le Sage (2007). Sage (2007: 8-10) argues that African countries have multiple vulnerabilities to terrorism, which are associated a variety of ‘permissive factors’, including inter alia:

- Physical safe havens: availability of diverse ‘ungoverned spaces’ that include ‘dense urban areas (particularly “slums”), rural desert areas, maritime zones, and sections of “weak” or “failing” states that fall outside governments’ controls’.
- Legal Safe Havens: ‘Lack a suitable legal framework to outlaw terrorism, the provision of material and financial support to terrorists, and incitement to commit terrorist acts’ in various African countries.
- Financial Safe Havens: ‘African countries are also vulnerable to terrorist efforts to mobilize and transfer funds for their operational purposes. An estimated \$125 billion moves through the remittance, or hawala, economy each year, and many countries are highly dependent on remittances for their financial well-being. Remittance systems are largely unregulated arrangements for money transfers based on trust. They are particularly popular among diaspora communities to send relatively small amounts of money to family abroad in a way that helps avoid taxes and fees and reaches locations where traditional banks are not present. International pressure has induced larger remittance companies to adopt some minimum standards of information collection regarding customers. However, efforts that over-regulate or close remittance companies do not stop the practice of hawala, but rather they push it further underground and out of sight. There is also the special case of South Africa, ... which has sophisticated financial systems that are not yet adequately monitored or regulated and may be subject to abuse.’

It suffices to say that the arguments of Sage, who is an employee of the US National Defence University – an ideological think tank of the Pentagon – as well as many other similar proponents of ‘terror’ and ‘danger’ in Africa are exaggerated half-truths that tend to exploit African vulnerabilities to serve America’s present global governance agenda. The widely publicised connection between diaspora finance/populations and terrorism in Africa is largely speculative and groundless, with very tenuous empirical details. Clearly, it is against the backdrop of the post-9/11 re-securitisation of Africa as a zone of ‘terror’ and ‘danger’ that one can begin to understanding the changing

reconstruction of the image of the African diaspora as a community inclined to promote and finance political extremism, including terrorism, insurgencies and subversion, especially, against African states aligned with the West in the global war on terror.

## Notes

1. CPEs is a concept enunciated by the UN in the 1990s to describe the proliferation of major crises in transitional societies, the majority of which were intra-state conflicts, characterised by multi-causality, and requiring multi-dimensional international responses, including a combination of military intervention, peace support operations, humanitarian relief programmes, high level political intervention and diplomacy (see Francis, 2005:14-15).
2. See, Noticias.info, 'European Command Combating Terror Threats in Africa', 8 October 2004. [http://www.noticias.info/Archivo/2004/200410/20041009/20041009\\_35557.shtm](http://www.noticias.info/Archivo/2004/200410/20041009/20041009_35557.shtm). Website accessed on 1 September 2005.

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