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Africa's Regional Integration; from Organization of African Unity (OAU) to African Union (AU)

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Abstract

The transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to African Union (AU) was a historical landmark of African Leaders' intention towards integration, projecting Africa's continental interest in the international state system and seeks for African initiative in solving African problems. This paper seeks to outline the history of Africa's regional integration and suggest what would strengthen the operations of the African Union. The paper proceeds by examining the efforts of African Leaders towards African integration, obstacles confronting or militating against the integration, and seeking ways to strengthen the integration of the Union. This presentation is aimed at sharing ideas on protecting the continental interest of Africa in the International State System as well as seeking for ways on how to achieve African integration. Creating a philosophy that will drive the African integration concept, involve the private sectors and non-governmental organizations in the integration process, and create peace within the continent institute dispute settlement mechanisms. Internal insurgencies group need to be settled/arrested, and transparent democratic, electoral and leadership need to be strengthened. There should be a collective effort to combat terrorism, ensure stability in the political system; and use a collective effort to combat pervasive corruption among African Countries. Corruption kills economic growth and demeans political legitimacy. These factors inhibit investment process hence, trading among African countries is very low.

Keywords: African Union, Regionalization, Regionalism, African Integration, Regional Integration, Pan Africanism, African Agency, etc.

1. Introduction

The transformation of the Organization of African Unity to African Union is a progressive landmark in the protracted struggle for African integration; and a call for a new philosophy of African integration in the emerging challenge of globalization. The Organization of African Unity was guided by two major philosophies: Sovereignty of individual States and the non-interference principle. While the African Union is challenged to protect the security of the Continent, it is important to mention that, to a large extent, OAU was a success because it was able to achieve her primary aims of social existence such as: Acting as a collective voice for the African continent, eradication of all forms of colonialism and vouching remain neutral and non-aligned in the bi-polarization of nation states into Western and Eastern bloc (Thom-Otuya, 2011) [8].

Now that African States have been liberated (decolonized), bi-polarism fizzled out, and there is a strong inevitable wave of globalization, there is strong need for African leaders to re-strategize a new world view of African role in African affairs and in the International State system. A view that will take into consideration her emerging challenges such as: Threat to sustainable sovereignty, sustainable democracy, human right and development, Economy (creating an effective common market). African challenge to transform most of her raw materials to finished products. The great need to cope with the forces of globalization and her impact on national sovereignty and threat to local investors.

The integration of African States has been a lingering issue right the birth of OAU. During her initial formation, African States polarized into three different ideological groups: The Casablanca bloc made up of Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Egypt, Mali and Libya; Monrovia bloc made up of Nigeria, Senegal, Ethiopia, Liberia, Tunisia and Togo; and the Brazzaville bloc which were made up of the French speaking countries. These tripartite divisions were later reduced to two blocs: The Casablanca and

Monrovia blocs The Casablanca bloc (Olukoshi, 2010) [7] was led by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. They wanted a rapid movement by independent African countries towards a politically united and economically integrated framework. The Monrovia group was often times represented by Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria. They were for a much more gradualist approach by which unity and integration would be achieved through small and incremental steps.

The hope for African integration was rekindled by late Libyan leader Muammar el-Gaddafi during the transformation of OAU to AU in 2002. However, the death of Gaddafi will pose a challenge to the driver of the integration process in Africa. This theoretical paper will clarify the concept of African integration, discuss AU transformation efforts, African integration, obstacles to African integration; suggest ways that will strengthen the integration process of the African Union. This paper is aimed at facilitating African integration, unity, and enhancing her role in the International State system.

African integration is very necessary because it will consolidate democracy in Africa, strengthen peace and increase our military clout to secure African continent, speed up development process, and strengthen our survival in the world market. Therefore, every African and her leaders must be focused to work towards achieving African integration.

2. History of Africa's Regional Integration Efforts

From the time of independence, there have been failed attempts to industrialize efficiently using import-substitution, which gave rise to the notion of regional integration as a means to facilitate structural transformation in Africa. As a result, African countries have embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies primarily driven by the economic rational of overcoming the constraint of small and fractioned economies working in isolation. Several pan-African organizations have successively been working towards deepening economic, social and political cooperation and integration in Africa. A brief overview of regional integration proceedings on the continent is given below.

A number of colonial cross-border arrangements have continued to exist post-independence and serve the regional integration agenda thus far. Prime examples are related to the previous African Financial Community (CFA) zone, comprising the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc. The West African CFA franc was ultimately integrated to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in the territory of ECOWAS, while the Central African CFA franc is set to join the envisioned Economic and Monetary Union of Central Africa (CEMAC) in the ECCAS region. Likewise in Southern Africa, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) with its associated monetary union – the Common Monetary Area – is set to be integrated to the SADC constituency.

Various pan-African organizations are, through different mechanisms, promoting sustainable economic growth and development, where the key component of regional integration is present in their workings. ECA was established by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 1958 as one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations that, together with partners and member States, consecutively work towards sustainable development in Africa. ECA focuses on providing technical assistance by undertaking research and policy analysis to strengthen the capacity of institutions driving the regional integration agenda, including the African Union, regional economic communities and member States.

Moreover, a key priority of ECA has been to target Africa's development challenges, particularly in the context of poverty eradication, to ensure sustainable growth and good governance on the continent and thus promote international cooperation for Africa's development. In this regard, ECA had, in the 1960s, recommended the creation of subregional groupings in Africa to serve that purpose. Around the same time, the Heads of State and Government of 30 of the 32 independent African nations gathered to establish the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at the Conference of Independent African States on 25 May 1963. Apart from the liberalization efforts of colonization and apartheid, the main objectives of OAU were: To promote unity and solidarity among African States; to organize and strengthen cooperation for development on the continent; to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member States; and to encourage international cooperation as outlined by the United Nations. Parallel to the creation of OAU was the establishment of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB). It was formed after an agreement signed by 23 founding member States on 14 August 1963 in Khartoum, Sudan. The Group includes two other entities, with AfDB as the parent institution – the African Development Fund, which was established on 29 November 1972 by AfDB and 13 non-African countries; and the Nigeria Trust Fund, which was set up in 1976 by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The AfDB Group, as a financial institution, was created as a response to a need for deeper cooperation in investments of public and private capital in projects that are likely to contribute to the economic and social development of the continent. The main objectives of the Group have been to mobilize and allocate resources for investments in member States, and provide policy advice and technical assistance that supports the development efforts on the continent.

The work of the above mentioned pan-African organizations are founded on treaties, protocols, conventions and other formal agreements entered into by sovereign States and international organizations (pan-African organizations and regional economic communities included) and are thus, binding under international law. Regional integration arrangements were either created under the framework of the Lagos Plan of Action, or arrangements that pre-existed it. The Lagos Plan of Action was a critical agreement in the history of regional integration in Africa. It was prominently supported by ECA and was adopted in 1980 at the OAU Extraordinary Summit in Lagos, Nigeria, where it was launched as a special initiative of the Organization. The Lagos Plan of Action itself, followed by the Final Act of Lagos, was borne out of the necessity for continental and national self-sufficiency and the creation of a self-reliant continental economy.

Among the decisions was the establishment of an African Economic Community in the foreseeable future, the strengthening of existing regional economic communities and the creation of others to cover the continent as a whole. ECOWAS already existed among the West African countries. Southern Africa also had a socioeconomic cooperation arrangement, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference created in the 1980s,

which was later replaced by SADC in 1992. Similarly, Southern and Eastern Africa had established a Preferential Trade Area in 1981, which eventually became COMESA in 1993. Conversely, in Central Africa, ECCAS was created in 1983 by the leaders of the pre-existing Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa. The abovementioned arrangements were expected to function under the framework of the Lagos Plan of Action. The commitments in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos were translated into a specific agreement in Abuja, Nigeria in June 1991, when the OAU Heads of State and Government signed the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (the Abuja Treaty). The remaining regional economic communities – IGAD (formed in 1986), AMU (formed in 1989), CEN-SAD (formed in 1998), and EAC (formed in 1999) – were all recognized as regional economic communities after the Abuja Treaty.

The Abuja Treaty is arguably the most important agreement as regards economic, social and political collaboration, coordination and convergence in Africa as it lays out the future of the continent with the establishment of an African Economic Community. The integration process is set to cover a period of 34 years from 1994 to 2028. Following the signing of the Abuja Treaty, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government directed the Committee on the Review of the Charter (established in 1979) to meet and re-examine the OAU Charter with a view to aligning it with the Abuja Treaty. Notwithstanding numerous attempts since 1979, OAU member States could not agree on amendments to the 1963 Charter.

Eventually, at the fourth Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of African Unity held in Sirté, Libya on 9 September 1999, the Heads of State and Government called for the establishment of an African Union (the Sirté Declaration) in conformity with the ultimate objectives of the OAU Charter and the provisions of the Abuja Treaty. This gave rise to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, in Lome, Togo on 11 July 2000. At the thirty-seventh session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia, a transition period of one year was agreed, while member States and the General Secretariat embarked on intensive consultations before the inaugural launch of the African Union in Durban, South Africa on 9 July 2002.

During the thirty-seventh session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, African leaders adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It was ratified by the African Union in 2002 in Durban, to deal with Africa's development problems in a new paradigm. The main objectives of NEPAD have been to reduce poverty, put Africa on a sustainable development path, halt the marginalization of Africa, and empower women. The Partnership provides a comprehensive, integrated development plan that tackles key social, economic and political principles for the continent. A practical example is the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, which is an initiative that comprises several cross-border infrastructure projects in the sectors of: Transport, energy, water, and information and communications technology. Moreover, the Durban Summit also approved the creation of the NEPAD African Peer Review Mechanism, which became operational in 2003, for further promotion and monitoring of good governance practices in and among member States in Africa.

After a number of years with lagging regional integration initiatives, the fourth Conference of African Ministers of Integration adopted the Minimum Integration Programme in 9 May 2009. The programme contains an action plan to accelerate coordination, convergence and collaboration among the regional economic communities so as to achieve the ultimate objective of the African Economic Community. It also identifies financing and structural impediments hindering the implementation of the Abuja Treaty and offers a roadmap for how to overcome the challenges. In parallel, COMESA, EAC and SADC agreed to negotiate a Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA) as a building block of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) on 22 October 2008. Concurrent to the TFTA negotiations was the eighteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union held in January 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was organized under the theme: "Boosting Intra-African Trade". The Assembly of the African Union endorsed the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and the fast-tracking of the Continental Free Trade Area. Following the successful first negotiation forum held in Addis Ababa from 22 to 27 February 2016, and the second forum planned for May 2016, CFTA is arguably the most comprehensive regional trade arrangement in the process of negotiation at the moment.

3. Obstacle to African integration

Africa been a continent whose manpower was used to till and stabilize Agriculture in Europe, America and the Caribbean to lay foundation for industrial revolution in Europe and America, was a hub of European scramble in the world. Africa was shared among various European countries and great adventurers. This act has indoctrinated the African countries into different European cultures and languages, which is an inhibition for their understanding, unity and integration. In his study on the challenges of regime integration in Southern Africa, Chingono and Nakana (2009) [4] enumerated the following as major challenges of regional integration in Southern Africa: Nationalist rivalry, incompatible political and economic systems, mono-cultural agro based economies, unjust international economic structures, debt and dependency of the west, lack of infrastructural, financial and technical resources, the uneven distribution of the benefits of integration, multiple membership to regional organization, poor economic and political governance, institutional incapacity, lack of grassroots support, rapid population growth and socio-economic growth and lack of commitment and political will.

The following reasons have been adduced for lack of success of African Regional Grouping:[1] The dependence of a few countries on their colonial powers tended to work against viable regional grouping because it distracts commitment from intra African groupings. Regionalism has been driven from above by public sector organization and has lacked the support and involvement of the private sector and the general public. Cooperation has been seen as involving expensive bureaucracies rather than opportunities for growth and development. Institutional weakness,

[1] HYPERLINK –http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/y4793e/y4793e0a.html‖_www.fao.org

including the existence of too many regional organizations, a tendency towards regional top-heavy structures with too many political appointments, failures by government to meet their financial obligation to regional organization, poor preparations before meetings and lack of follow up by sectorial ministries on decisions taken at regional meetings by Heads of states. Integration is hampered by the existence of weak states and political opposition.

Integration arrangements are not characterized by strong supranational bodies and virtually all integration institutions are intergovernmental. Intra-regional trade in Africa as a share of total foreign trade has traditionally been low compared to other regions. Most African states have suffered from severe macro-economic disequilibria, foreign debt service burden, over- valued currencies, lack of trade finance and a narrow tax base, with custom duties a substantial source of revenue.

The obstacles to African Integration are rooted in her subordination of sovereignty to different European countries. Colonialism indoctrinated many African countries to be loyal to their colonial master for their rapid, development and protection in the international state system. It has distracted Africans from looking inwards. African burden is not only internal but external debt burden which they service with huge amount. She lacks home grown industries that will expedite internal trading among them.

4. Strengthening African union for integration

Despite the challenges of African integration, Africa has a bright prospect for an economic union. African governments since 2011 are implementing policies that are changing the continent‘s investment climate for the better. Citizens are more informed about their rights and are demanding more accountability from their governments and the African private sectors is starting to look beyond national borders noted Kimenyi and Karingi (2012). Regional integration must be pursued because it is very essential to generating high rates of economic growth and development in Africa.

Kimenyi and Karingi (20l2) are optimistic that the regional integration agenda will make crucial progress and bring a substantial boost to intra-African trade. This was based on three recent decisions such as; the tripartite free trade agreement (FTA) of the common market for East and Southern African (COMESA), the South African, Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC) each of which has entered its negotiation phase. This agreement lead to the creation of a common regional market covering 27 African countries, which include more than half of Africa‘s population and GDP. Second, in November 2010 AU trade Minister agreed to fast track the creation of a continental FTA demonstrating their seriousness towards creating an African common market. The Ministers in Dec. 2011 endorsed a framework, roadmap and architecture of the continental free trade area (CFTA).

Lastly, the decision by African Union Leaders to dedicate their January/February 2012 summit to the theme of boosting Intra- African trade will bring additional focus to the issue. During this meeting, A.U leaders considered and adopted an action plan for increasing intra- regional trade. Adoption of these proposals will be one of the most important events in determining the course of African development in 2012 and beyond noted Kimenyi and Karingi (2012).

4.1 Additional Options for Strengthening African Union for Integration

In addition, strengthen African Union for integration the following options should be explored: **Creating a philosophy that will drive the African integration concept:** For instance, Pan Africanism. This concept will counter our colonial influences and loyalty to other regional and international organizations. It will be the pillar and rallying point of African integration.

Involving the private sectors and non-governmental organizations in the integration process: Create peace within the continent. The wars and conflict in a number of African regions like: Darfur, Democratic Republic of Congo, tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ethiopia internal crisis and the failed state of Somalia have devastating transport networks, communication and other basic infrastructures need to be peacefully resolved.

Dispute settlement mechanisms and internal insurgencies group need to be settled/arrested, and transparent democratic, electoral and leadership need to be strengthened. There should be a collective effort to combat terrorism, ensure stability in the political system. This will allow foreign and local investors to find a conducive environment for investment. Pervasive corruption among African Countries should be collectively looked into. Corruption kills economic growth and political legitimacy. These factors inhibit investment process hence, trading among African countries is very low.

Promotion of Peace: Peace building should be a deliberate security and peace option by every member of A.U. Early warning signs of conflict should be sufficient for continental intervention into a member territory in other to prevent conflagration. Instability of member states deligitimizes the Union and costs the AU, these conflicts greatly endanger African citizens. African Union mechanisms for the promotion of peace, security and political stability should embrace timely intervention in situation of emerging conflicts. In other words, conflicts should not be allowed to mature and consume human beings – before mediation or intervention, early warning conflict signs should be sufficient for intervention. Peace promotion will strengthen the integration of African Union, Consequently, Article 4 (g) of the Constitutive Acts which provides for the principle of non-interference should be amended to accommodate timely international intervention in the event of an early warning conflict trigger signals.

Good Governance: Promotion of good governance by African Countries and African Union will strengthen the integration of African Union. Bad governance is instrumental to weak governance structure, corruption, poverty, civil wars, human right violation and most of the parameters which define a failed state. African Union cannot integrate when member states are not stable, at war, when they cannot contribute to the financial sustainability of the African Union and her activities. No African leader should be constitutionally allowed to remain in office for over eight years of two tenures. African Union should devise a mechanism that can identity governance failures and systematically address them. There should be genuine framework of brotherhood among African Countries, irrespective of their colonial experiences or religion.

A Common Monetary Union: Development of the use of a common currency among African Countries will go a long

way to promote African integration. The use of common currency will bound together African States in an irreversible way. Though, this can be achieved by stimulating and boosting members‘ economy.

5. Conclusion

African Union (AU) metamorphosed from the Organization of African Union (OAU). It is a new vision of Africa after achieving her OAU objectives of decolonizing Africa and dismantling apartheid in South Africa, to rise to her 21st Century challenges. The African Union is a new vision of transforming most African raw materials to consumable products; seek for African solutions to African problems sustainable economy and asserting herself as a continent in the comity of nations. Her vision is challenged by the forces of globalization and neo-colonialism, and bad governance, internal conflicts and political instability. Her quest for African integration is faced with the obstacles of: Dependence of few countries on their colonial power, lack of private sector involvement, institutional weakness and existence of many regional organization, poor intra-regional trade, and severe macro-economic disequilibrium – foreign debt service burden, over-valued currencies etc. The paper also presented measures that will strengthen African integration.

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