

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION

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Abstract

The problem of socio-economic development, political stability and social cohesion in the African sub-region has necessitated the paradigm shift from the old order of doing things to a more dynamic approach aimed at correcting the wrongs bedeviling the black race. Africa, generally known as the ‘dark continent’ by most scholars with western orientation has suffered a plethora of social vices including high rate of poverty, crime, corruption in both low and high places; economic downturn, brain drain, political instability, armed robbery, indiscipline ,high rate of maternal and child mortality, child labour and human trafficking, to mention but a few. These problems as they are, have literally defied all acceptable solutions over time. Of particular importance is the issue of enhancing peace, stability and tranquility in the region going by the spate of war, violation of human fundamental rights, criminality, terrorism, threats of secession, etc. Thus, with the invention and/or formation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 and the subsequent transformation of the nomenclature to African Union in 2001, the African quagmire appears to be the same in both content and character. The paper is a theoretical explanation of the situation at stake aimed at bringing about a viable resolution to African socio-economic and political malaise devoid of personal or elite interests. The paper adopts analytical framework through relevant existing literatures by way of content analysis. The study sums up with policy recommendations for overall stability, progress and development of the African sub-region in its entirety in the 21st century and beyond.

Keywords: African Union, Economic Development, Politics, Regional Stability

Introduction

The African Union (AU) is practically an off-shoot of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which has a long standing history of existence in the African continent. The quest for a continental organization such as the AU is not without reasons. As a matter of fact, the African region has been found to be enmeshed in a litany of woes including, among other things, the travails of building a formidable regional government, war, environmental degradation, poor governance, military autocracy, desertification, trafficking in persons, political instability and mutual suspicion. Such a situation clearly spells doom for the smooth progress, growth, development and sustainability of the African sub-region at large. As a consequence, concerned African leaders decided to regenerate the continent thereby establishing political institutions capable of bringing about the much-cherished peace, progress and development in the ‘Dark Continent.’

From the Organization of African Unity to African Union

The literature is replete with facts about the establishment, developments and problems faced by the OAU. Established by a Charter in May 1963, the OAU was brought into existence following several decades of Pan-Africanist thoughts, aspirations and actions at such a time when most African States were just emerging into sovereign nation-states.¹ Thus, the Charter signed by thirty-one African Heads of States and Governments on May 25, 1963 in Addis Abba, the Ethiopian capital was a product of consensus between the perceived radicalism of the so-called Casablanca Bloc of African States and the more moderate and conservative group called the Monrovia Bloc which included the Brazzaville Bloc to which Nigeria belonged. While the Casablanca Bloc was identified by its strident and rigid advocacy for African Unity in the immediate term, the Monrovia Bloc was moved for its incremental and gradualist approval towards African integration and unity.² Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria who was described as the Golden Voice of Africa, reflected the group’s views in Addis Ababa on May 24, 1963 when he noted: “there had been quite a lot of views on what we mean by African Unity. Some of us have suggested that African Unity should be achieved by political fusion of the different states in Africa. Could it be achieved by taking practical steps in economic, educational, scientific and cultural cooperation and by trying to get Africans to understand themselves before embarking on the more complicated and more difficult arrangement of political union? My country stands for the practical approach to the unity of the African continent. We feel that if this unity is to last, we must start from the beginning.”³

The Addis Ababa meeting climaxed the efforts made by Africans and peoples of African descent in the Pan African Movement especially after the World War II. At last, Africa had arrived! It was hoped that African leaders had since realized that the continent was still at the mercies of colonialism and imperialism. The meeting was greeted with much very high enthusiasm to the extent that President John Fitzgerald Kennedy of the United States likened it to be an “African Philadelphia.” Subsequent events raised fundamental questions as many observers wondered whether the OAU had simply not degenerated into what Akinsanya called a ‘talking shop’ for some African leaders, and a pawn in the hands of former colonial powers which had vested interests.⁴ Although many African leaders agree that there is no alternative to inter-state cooperation if their countries are to make rapid economic progress, they tend to ignore the fact that there could not be African economic cooperation without a significant sacrifice of national sovereignties. Indeed, efforts aimed at African economic development have been hampered for reasons which include colonial experiences, psychological and ideological dispositions of African leaders, leadership tussles, the role of extra-African powers, the structure of the OAU and its Charter, perennial Arab-Israeli conflicts and the Congo Crises 1960-1965 (which further polarized Africa into three diametrically opposed groups).⁵

The Lagos Plan of Action as Panacea for Africa’s Development

Following a series of in-depth consideration of Africa’s economic problems by African Ministers and various groups of experts, African Heads of States and Governments adopted at their 16th Session held in Monrovia, Liberia in July 1979, the Monrovia Declaration of commitment on the guidelines and measures for national and collective self-reliance in socio-economic development within the framework of the North-South dialogue for a new international economic order. In October 1980, Nigeria hosted the first OAU Economic Summit which adopted the Lagos Plan of Action.⁶

Scholars of the Social Sciences have argued that African Heads of States and Governments at their second Extra-Ordinary Session held in Lagos from October 28-29, 1980, devoted exclusively to economic problems facing Africa, took many far-reaching decisions and adopted a Blueprint for regional approach to socio-economic development based primarily on collective self-reliance. Adebayo noted that the Lagos Plan of Action, which was adopted at the Summit, recognized, **inter-alia**, the need to take urgent action to facilitate the achievement of the goals of rapid self-reliance, self-sustained development and

economic growth, thus laying the foundation of regional socio-economic integration of Africa.⁷

Consequently, African leaders, in the Final Act of Lagos, affirmed their commitment, to set up, by the year 2000, on the basis of a Treaty to be concluded, an African Economic Community (AEC). The aim was to ensure rapid socio-economic and cultural integration of the African continent and promote collective, accelerated, self-reliant and self-sustaining development of member-States, as well as cooperation among these states and their integration in the economic, social and cultural fields. The Heads of State, at the Lagos Summit, also adopted a Resolution on Africa's participation in international negotiations and re-affirmed support for the draft agenda presented by the Group of 77 on global negotiations.

Understanding the Transition from OAU to AU

Yaqub and Akintenriwa have noted that African Heads of State and Government at their Fourth Extra-Ordinary Summit held in Sirte, Libya on September 9, 1999 deliberated extensively on the ways and means of strengthening the continental organization. The aim was to make it more effective, thus keeping the organization at the same level with best international practices, not only in Africa; but also with the outside world.⁸ Thus, following frank and extensive discussions on how to strengthen African Unity, the Summit decided to establish the African Union in conformity with the OAU Charter and the provisions of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty).⁸

In essence, it can be argued that the primary goal of African leaders is to accelerate the process of implementing the Abuja Treaty by shortening its implementation periods and ensuring the speedy establishment of all institutions provided for in the Treaty. The Heads of States and Government therefore mandated the Council of Ministers to prepare the constitutive legal text of the Union to be adopted in 2001 at the Extra-Ordinary Summit convened specifically for that purpose in Sirte, Libya.

Bashir and Ismael have noted that at the time the draft Constitutive Act was submitted to the Heads of States and Government at the Extra-Ordinary Summit in Sirte, the exact nature of the African Union remained largely unsettled.⁹ Thus, a few of the member-States believed that the Union should be a Federal or at least a Confederal Continental Government. This position was based on the notion that Africa is one entity and there is no difference between its component parts, hence, the "United States of Africa." There is also the view that Africa is a continent characterized by deeply divided political and economic levels of development and as such, an immediate political union was not feasible, principally, because

Africa is made up of independent States that desire to retain their political independence and sovereignty. What is significant is that the sharply divided opinions took the political statesmanship of President Obasanjo of Nigeria to strike a delicate balance between the two extreme opposing views to be able to adopt the Constitutive Act in Sirte in 2001. According to President Obasanjo and guided by the provisions of the Sirte Declaration of September 9, 1999, the nature of African Union should be understood to mean the pursuit of socio-economic integration of the continent as a first and necessary step towards the achievement of political union. Furthermore, while political union is desirable and should be the ultimate objective of the AU, the socio-economic conditions for its immediate implementation were not and are still not in place. It was noted however that closer socio-economic integration would, of necessity, require some degree of political cooperation. This arrangement may necessarily not be in form of a federation or ever a confederation at this stage but could be the ultimate goal in the future. Ultimately, this was the argument that persuaded the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the AU in its respect form. The majority of member-States thus agreed that the Union should be an arrangement that will accelerate the process of integration of the continent in all its ramifications.¹⁰

Clash and Accommodation of Interests of Major Actors in the Creation of the African Union

The rapid nature of the creation of the AU is of particular interest to scholars of international politics given the clash and accommodation of interests of the major actors who serve as arrow heads with respect to its creation. First, was Thabo Mbeki's enlightened self-interests, while the AU was conceived by the African National Congress and the need to place South Africa as a safe haven for direct foreign investments given South Africa's level of industrialization in Africa.

Amitai Etzioni has argued that the assumption of office by President Nelson Mandela of South Africa not only brought to the fore the instability created on the South African economy by the 'Cold War' saga, but also that his neo-liberal position rendered the populist and socialist ideology of ANC unattractive. His first major attempt to carve out a world view for South Africa was to move the ANC away from its traditional populist and socialist ideas through a series of in-house discussions. While the internal re-orientation was going on, President Mandela usually signalled through public speeches and policy documents that the new South Africa would be guided by liberal tradition. For instance, in 1996, the government made public that its policies would be informed by "Growth Employment and

Redistribution,” a neo-liberal strategy designed to make South Africa a destination for direct foreign investments and competitive global trade.¹¹

The foregoing state of affairs was further reiterated by Thabo Mbeki and hence, given priority to the development of a coherent foreign policy that revolved around liberal internationalism initiated by his predecessor. Thus, Mbeki’s prioritization of foreign policy in the early days of his leadership was intended to cow the opposition to the liberal doctrine within the ANC, and also to signal to the business community that he was committed to making South Africa a destination for direct foreign investments and international commerce.

According to Tiekou:

It was within this context that Mbeki decided to reform the OAU which had been referred to in the international media as a ‘dictator’s club; on his first appearance as President of South Africa at the OAU Summit in Algiers, in July, 1999... which Mbeki felt was not reflective of the democratic wave in Africa, he considered that the OAU could be strengthened, so that in its work, it focuses on the strategic objective of the realization of the African Renaissance.¹²

However, since South Africa is located in a continent whose international image as a protector of human rights, including property rights leaves much to be desired, the immediate challenge faced by ANC in its attempt to pursue these twin objectives was devising appropriate means to improve Africa’s image. Not surprisingly, South Africa’s first major foreign policy document showed that foreign policy perspectives in a democratic South Africa indicated that human rights and promotion of democracy would be at the core of its foreign policy.¹³

Alred Nzo as the first Foreign Minister of the New South Africa said “human rights are the cornerstone of our government policy and we shall not hesitate to carry the message to the far corners of the world. We have suffered too much ourselves not to do so.” However, the neo-liberal position of the South African Government created division within the ANC and undermined Mandela’s efforts to chart a coherent foreign policy. Thus, three broad changes with respect to South Africa’s world view could be discerned at the time Thabo Mbeki took over in 1999. First, are the populist remnants of the ANC who wanted South Africa to maintain its ties even with ‘rogue’ States. Second, are the liberal internationalists, who believed in the reinvention of South Africa as a global trading state with strong regional

and continental interests. And, third, are the pragmatists, who held the view that foreign policy should be driven by **national interests** rather than ethical values or ideological principles. The inability of President Mandela to assert his view over and above these three groups prompted some analysts to suggest that the new South Africa has “no foreign policy at all under him.”¹⁴

Aside from opening up the business space of South Africa to the international community, Mbeki’s rigorous defense of liberal norms and his open condemnation of undemocratic governments in Africa angered some African leaders many of whom had supported the ANC and given it sanctuary during the days of liberation struggles. The anger that President Mbeki’s position generated, and the resulting accusation that South Africa was “little more than the West’s lackey on the Southern tip of Africa,” compelled his government to adopt a new approach to the promotion of neo-liberalism in Africa. Mbeki’s new strategy entailed placing the neo-liberal message within a broader transformationalist agenda. Instead of open condemnation of illiberal governments in Africa, President Mbeki called for the restructuring of the African identity. It was therefore within the purview of his ‘African Renaissance’ that Mbeki demanded the reorganization of the OAU to diffuse dictatorial tendencies of the African elite class.¹⁵ First, was to reorient the OAU towards the promotion of strong and democratic institutions. Second, was to exclude seizure of power through unconstitutional means, particularly through **coup d’etats**. And, the third was to assist military regimes that may exist on the African continent to think about democratic options as an acceptable form of government. Now, to an examination of Obasanjo’s vision on the reform of the OAU. As part of his reform package to put the OAU on the path of progress and development, issues bordering on security, stability, development and cooperation in Africa were articulated in the Memorandum of Understanding. Obasanjo noted that the principles of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation (CSSDCA) were in each to redefine security and sovereignty demand certain standards of behavior from every government (in Africa) in the interest of common humanity.¹⁶ Similarly, the reform agenda urged African leaders to treat security as both a human security issue and an interdependent phenomenon. A security concern at human level includes transcending, among others, economic, political and social aspects of individuals and the society at large. The reform also laid greater emphasis on effective participation of civil society in cooperation and development programmes, thereby bringing or re-invigorating Pan-Africanism as an essential missing link among sovereign states in Africa. It is interesting however, to note that the reform encourages African leaders to develop common African

Agenda based on unity of purpose in order to confront headlong continental challenges. These lofty ideas of Chief Obasanjo, no doubt, manifest themselves clearly in both the institutional design and legal underpinnings of the AU. For instance, the Peace and Security Council and its Protocol as well as Article 4 (h) gives the AU the duty to intervene in the domestic affairs of African nations on humanitarian grounds. Other relevant sections of the Constitutive Act on economic, social and cultural domains also abound.¹⁷

On security, the Obasanjo reform package in line with the Kampala Declaration aimed at influencing African leaders to look at security concerns from a holistic perspective, the Declaration noted that the concept of security must embrace all aspects of society, and that the security of a nation must be based on the security of the life of individual citizens to live in peace, and to satisfy basic needs. As an interdependent phenomenon, the reform package urged African leaders to see the security of their States as inseparably linked to other African countries. This implies that the maintenance of security anywhere in Africa is a collective responsibility of all African States, and that sovereignty no longer offers the protection behind which African leaders can hide to violate the fundamental rights of their citizens.¹⁸ On stability, the reform Plan suggested that the criteria for judging the stability of African States should be grounded in liberal principles such as respect for the rule of law, human rights, good governance and the participation of African citizens in public affairs. On cooperation and development, the reform Plan did not contain anything distinctly different from previous proposals submitted to the OAU. A majority of issues discussed under cooperation and development essentially reiterated the traditional rhetorical ideals, such as African resolution of African problems and the importance of integration for Africa's development, among others. Indeed, the reform Plan suggested that African leaders should develop a common African agenda based on the unity of purpose to confront Africa's security, stability and developmental challenges. Since the OAU did not have the institutional mechanism necessary to provide a common African agenda, it was imperative to demand a restructuring of the Pan-African organization. Therefore, the Obasanjo reform Plan advocated the repositioning of the OAU so that it will become the central institution for dealing with Africa's security, stability and developmental challenges.

Nonetheless, the glaring opposition by the 'Old Guards' who included Libya's Muammar Ghaddafi, Sudan's el-Bashir and Kenya's Arap Moi practically militated against the implementation and realization of the Kampala Declaration on CSSDCA. Subsequent efforts by Chief Obasanjo to persuade African leaders to adopt the Declaration not only failed. Obasanjo's imprisonment in 1995 also led to the disappearance of the document from

the agenda of the OAU all together. According to Obasanjo, his attempt failed because “it threatened the **statusquo** and especially the power positions of a few African governments whose domestic hold on unscrupulous power rendered them vulnerable and insecure.” Therefore, the election of General Obasanjo as Nigeria’s President in May 1999 provided him with an opportunity to revive the CSSDCA process from where he left it in 1995. As a prelude to the revival of the CSSDCA process, President Obasanjo established a Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa whose primary role is to foster African peace, security, and stability. Meanwhile, Muammar Ghaddafi began to show interest in strengthening the OAU in spite of his opposition to the Kampala Declaration. First, he invited African leaders to an Extra-Ordinary Summit in Sirte, Libya on September 9, 1999 primarily to discuss ways and means of making the OAU an effective organization. Presidents Obasanjo and Mbeki saw this invitation as a huge opportunity to achieve their interests. Akinsanya has noted:

...by agreeing to host the Sirte Summit, Ghaddafi wanted to take credit for relaunching of Africa’s integration initiatives in Africa.¹⁹

Abegunrin and Tiekou added that his hosting the Summit was influenced

By much broader strategic and geopolitical imperatives... (and) use the platform... to cement his full return to the geopolitics of black Africa and... demonstrate his renewed commitment to the Pan Africanism project.²⁰

It was within this context that Ghaddafi’s announcement to the media, after the Summit that he had invited African leaders to an Extra-Ordinary Summit in Sirte in order to create a ‘United States of Africa’ acquires an analytical meaning. Since Ghaddafi’s had not, until this announcement, mentioned any ‘United States of Africa’ project, and more importantly, to the extent that his invitation did not create any impression that the Extra-Ordinary Summit had been planned before the Algier’s Summit, many observers and African leaders interpreted the media announcement as the usual Ghaddafi’s ‘public display.’²¹

Thus, Ghaddafi’s announcement of the ‘United States of Africa’ proposal meant that the African leaders had three main competing requests by three African arrow-heads. In order to accommodate the three rival demands and interests, the decision to replace OAU with a new nomenclature became clear and hence, the emergence of the new-born African Union. It is interesting to note that a majority of African leaders adopted this position because they saw

it as the best possible way, and indeed, an opportunity of avoiding division among them. However, Ghaddafi and his supporters presented the Sirte decision to the media as a victory for them. A careful reading of the Sirte Declaration shows that the positions adopted by the Summit favoured Nigeria and South Africa tactically more than Libya or any other countries. As subsequent events showed, the victory declared by Ghaddafi and his sympathizers was somewhat premature. Although many of the leaders who spoke during the Sirte Summit cautiously welcomed Ghaddafi's proposals, it was clear from their speeches that most of them saw it as too radical and excessively ambitious. It therefore did not take too long for those who disagreed with the whole idea to voice their opposition publicly. South Africa, for instance, had a firm hand in the drafting of the Constitutive Act of the AU, and indicated that it will not be part of any 'United States of Africa,' and consequently opposed the inclusion of Ghaddafi's plan in the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. However, the constitutive legal text which was approved at the Lome Summit in June 2000 contained none of the ideas of the 'United States of Africa' as proposed by Muammar Ghaddafi. South Africa's dominance in the drafting of the Constitutive Act shed light on the AU's strong focus on the advancement of human rights, democracy and good governance as well as African Renaissance.²²

Though loosely based on the European Union (EU), the AU model adopted in Durban in 2002 had the footprints of Nigeria and South Africa. Many of Africa's big men were not impressed. In fact, they resented the manner in which Nigeria and South Africa had usurped control of the organization. Muammar Ghaddafi, former Kenyan President, Daniel Arap Moi, and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe were the chief opponents of AU. For Ghaddafi, Arab leaders in Africa had fallen out with him in 1998, when they refused to endorse an OAU Resolution rejecting UN sanctions against Libya for refusing to hand over two Libyan suspects in the 1988 bombing of PANAM 103 aircraft over Lockerbie, Scotland. Having failed to unite the Arab world behind him, Ghaddafi turned to Africa as his new support base. Inaction by the continent's major players such as Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt left Ghaddafi with a free hand to try to dominate the politics of the AU. Ghaddafi had never hesitated to use his country's vast oil and gas riches to promote his foreign policy objectives in Africa and the Arab world. His most willing supporters have been countries that benefitted from Libya's bilateral assistance. For example, at the Sirte Summit in 1999, he paid the arrears of the membership fees of Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Lesotho, Madagasy Republic, Malawi, Mali and Niger to enable them to meet the OAU requirements for participation in the pre-AU proceedings and

voting. Although Ghaddafi had been at the forefront of the formation of the AU, President Obasanjo and Mbeki soon eclipsed him. In his reinvention of himself as a man of peace, Ghaddafi has emerged as Presidents' Obasanjo and Mbeki rivals in Africa, and internationally, in both the economic and political spheres. Western leaders, previously Libya's harshest critics, not only accepted to work with Ghaddafi since he had handed over to the British government the two Libyan suspects but were also charmed by the oil and gas largesse that Ghaddafi had offered them. European leaders and especially, their oil and gas (multinational corporations) business executives are now frequent visitors to Ghaddafi and "sipping tea with him in the former Pariah's desert tent, surrounded by throngs of Ghaddafi's trademark women guards." For example, in May 2004, Ghaddafi was enthusiastically received by the President of the European Commission, Romani Prodi in Brussels, when he proclaimed that Libya will be the new bridge between Europe and Africa. As part of the Western leaders' dramatic diplomatic moves to Muammar Ghaddafi, the French President, Jacques Chirac visited Libya in November 2004 after Libya agreed in January 2004 to pay compensation over the downing of a French airliner in 1989 over Niger even though Libya, which signed a compensation agreement for victims of the 1988 PANAM 103 aircraft bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, never publicly admitted responsibility for either incident.²³

Nevertheless, Ghaddafi had convinced many African leaders that he genuinely had the continent's best interests at heart. For instance, former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda warmly acknowledged this, and the former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Anan told the African Summit in Lusaka in 2001 that "I would like to pay tribute to leader Ghaddafi for spear-heading this development of formation of the African Union." It should however be noted that Libya was one of the supporters of controversial resolution by African Foreign Ministers on the eve of the AU's Lusaka Summit of 2001 that expressed support for President Mugabe's controversial land policies without a whimper about the ZANU-PF inspired violence in Zimbabwe. Both Presidents Obasanjo and Mbeki had to work hard to block that resolution and finally got it watered down to a fairly innocuous statement supporting continued talks on the issue between Great Britain and Zimbabwe.

The ultimate battle for control of the AU pitted Africa's 'Old Guards,' personified by Colonel Ghaddafi, against the 'Young Turks,' led by Presidents Obasanjo and Mbeki. While the 'Old Guards' were still bitter against colonialism and the need for Africa to carve out a future independent of the West, the 'Young Turks' maintained that the development discourse had undergone a fundamental shift, and that Africa needed to be integrated into the

global economic system and engage the West more directly. But Colonel Ghaddafi wanted a new organization to be called the ‘United States of Africa,’ headquartered in Tripoli, Libya. He offered a plush palace in the Libyan capital for this purpose and even hinted that Nkosazana Olamini-Zuma, South Africa’s Foreign Minister could be the AU’s first Foreign Minister, with himself as the leader of the new organization. Unfortunately, Ghaddafi’s effort failed dismally. The Young Turks saw the new organization as something more like the EU, with member-States retaining their own identities and the AU working closely with the West. The battle for leadership of AU extended to which countries would have seats in the proposed Peace and Security Council, modelled on the United Nations Security Council. This would be one of the AU’s most powerful organs, with the authority to intervene in the affairs of member-States and deploy a combined African military force to troubled spots or on peace-keeping missions. Ghaddafi saw the main purpose of the force as protecting the continent from external aggression, but President Mbeki’s allies won the day. Muammar Ghaddafi and the ‘Old Guards’ were vehemently opposed to the inclusion of a prescription for good governance in the AU Charter. However, last minute intervention by South Africa ensure that the draft Charter made good governance and a culture of human rights prerequisites for accrual of benefit from the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development. South Africa also proposed that the AU would have to act when human rights were trampled. The proposed Charter made provisions for the AU to “intervene in a member-State pursuant to the decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely, war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Any member-State failing to comply with the decisions and policies of the Union may be subjected to sanctions.”²⁴

Thus, the total rejection of the “United States of Africa” proposal and the strong emphasis placed by the constitute legal text on liberal norms were a big blow to the Plan by the Libyan leader. Ghaddafi’s disappointment with the whole process was evident in his pronouncements. In response to a question posed by a journalist trying to solicit his opinion on the Assembly’s approval of the Constitutive Act during the Lome Summit in June, 2000, Ghaddafi remarked: “it is a victory for Africa. I am proud because I still have a grand ambition for the African continent and I have a fixed date with the Heads of State in March 2001.” Ghaddafi’s dissatisfaction with the turn of events explains why he came to the inauguration ceremony of the AU in Durban in 2002 with a range of proposed amendments to the Constitutive Act. His proposed amendments included a single army for Africa, an AU Chairman with presidential status and greater powers of intervention in member-States. However, the Chairperson of the Summit, who incidentally happened to be President Mbeki,

exploited Rule Eight of the new rules of procedure stipulating that item proposed by a member-State must be presented sixty days before a meeting with supporting documents and draft decisions sent to the Chairperson of the Commission thirty days ahead of the session to prevent Libya from tabling the amendments. Therefore, the launching of the AU went ahead on July 9, 2002 without any consideration of Libya's proposal. Immediately after the inaugural ceremony, Ghaddafi tabled a motion requesting African Heads of State and Government (AHSG) to convene another Extraordinary Summit as soon as possible to amend the Constitutive Act. The Assembly accepted Libya's invitation, and referred the proposal for the consideration of the Executive Council, pursuant to the rules of the procedure of the AHSG. While the Assembly's acceptance of Libya's invitation seems to indicate Ghaddafi's influence over the African leaders, the support for the Extraordinary Summit from the great majority of them had nothing to do with Ghaddafi's proposal. There were certainly few African leaders who genuinely felt that Libya had a case, and these were those who caved into Libya's request to keep "a potential trouble some member (State)" as Ghaddafi within the African Union.

Problems and Prospects of the African Union

For every obvious reason, no institution is without its challenges. President Obasanjo in his speech titled "Peace, Security and Development" at the 36th Ordinary Session of the OAU Summit in Lome, Togo on September 25, 2000, graphically captured the predicaments of Africa thus:

Of all the most visible manifestations of the problems facing the continent, perhaps the most invidious and intractable has been and continued to be the proliferation of conflict.²⁵

To be sure, Africa's conflict situations have raised serious concerns among governments, scholars of international politics and the international communities at large. Gruelsome conflicts and blood-letting are common place phenomena in countries like Sudan (Darfur), Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi (at least in the 1990s), Nigeria (Jos, Kaduna, Kano, Maiduguri), Kenya (during the political tustle between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga), to mention but a few. These conflicts have practically propelled huge human and material losses. Among other things, African predicaments also fired expressions in high levels of poverty, disease pandemic, children mortality, trafficking in persons and advance fee fraud. The problems of Africa are basically spelt out in all manners and colours. There is therefore

the likelihood of persistence of such problems given that very many gospels of reforms are being propagated only at the level of the breach rather than observance, a situation tantamount to plummeting good democratic governance to its lowest ebb.

For Africa to get out of the woods, there is a need for mutual cooperation and support by member-States. Given the complexity of the problems of instability, insecurity and the current new wave of military autocracy in the countries like Guinea and Niger, there is need for effective mobilization of time, personnel, institutional resource to roll out the drums of democracy and democratization in Africa. Again, there is the dire need to empower AU peace making outfits in warring States in Africa to avoid loss of human capital as being witnessed in the Sudan (Darfur). The AU should as a matter of experience be representative enough so much so that civil society and community participation is encouraged. Finally, the AU should be fully decentralized and the so-called ‘Club of African Presidents and Head of Government’ be diffused to reflect the general interests of the African people at large. This model, will no doubt, entrench the tradition of popular sovereignty and thereby ensure socio-political autonomy for persons, groups and societies in the 21st century Africa in all its ramifications.

Conclusion

The responsibility of developing a virile Africa is a task that must be done. The AU as a child of necessity is timely in its content and organization. It becomes imperative therefore for African leaders and nation-States to operate a continent that will be an envy of the outside world. Africa and its people deserve the best of all internationally accepted standard of behavior to help her grow to greater heights. African nations therefore here a responsibility to make the continent work so that its people can find a pride of place in the continent called ‘their own.’ This onerous task must be done here and now so that our collective aspirations and expectations will be realized in this millennium against all contrary misdemeanours.

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