

AFRICAN UNION IN THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND SECURITY OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The African Union by its declaration is committed to the total integration of all African states and unity of action based on shared values and common, development interests and goals. To this end, the challenges facing the African union include the problems of infrastructures and inadequate social services. The African states are plagued by political instability, ethnic conflicts, refugees/internally displaced persons and fragile civil institutions. These problems are compounded by globalization, New World Order and heavy burden of external debts that make life difficult and the future dim and gloomy. These challenges and struggles by the African leaders to face up to them have precipitated the writing of this research paper. In doing so, the study traced the historical concept, evolution and final emergence of the union. The research project carefully looked into the act establishing the AU and compared with the charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and appreciated the necessity of its establishment. The study has noted that AU was modelled after the European Union (EU) and therefore, efforts have been made to study the two unions so that the AU will benefit from the experience of the EU. In concluding the study, it is recommended inter alia that African Union make peace and security a priority and harmonize general policies and Infrastructural development. The hope that this study will contribute its widow's might to the development of AU is imperative. We cannot afford to fail this time, as the consequences are better imagined than experienced.

INTRODUCTION

The search for a union of African States stated as early as 1900s when a member of African American visionaries and their African counterparts gave expression to some dream about common African citizenship. The dream triggered off some proposals and activities aimed at the total liberation of Africa which would include the citizens to reap the dividends of a United African government, in terms of peace, stability, security, development integration and cooperation (Obasanjo, 2000). The end of the 1950s witnessed the emancipation of most African countries, earlier colonized by western countries. This de-colonization process resulted in the independence of Morocco and Tunisia.

In 1957, Ghana led by its first Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah obtained its independence from Britain, with promises by the colonialist that other African countries would soon follow. During the independence ceremony of Ghana in 1957, Kwame Nkrumah announced his intentions to summon a meeting of independent countries in Africa. As a result of this invitation, eight countries met in Accra, Ghana, from 15th to 22nd April, 1958. These countries were Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Morocco,

Sudan, and Tunisia, South Africa decline the initiation to attend (Kwesi Armah, 1965). At the meeting, wide ranges of issues were discussed and resolutions on political, economic, social and cultural matters were adopted. The Accra conference of 1958 was the first in which African cooperation was discussed at governmental level. It was equally the first time that African governments had, in concert, called on the colonial authorities to apply the principle of self-determination to other African countries. At the All African Peoples Conference held in Tunis, January 1960, two camps emerged (Kwesi Armah, 1965)

THE RADICAL AND THE GRADUALIST/CONSERVATIVES CAMPS

The former wanted a radical integration of Africa along Kwame Nkrumah's view point, while the latter was in favour of the gradual integration, perhaps due to fear of domination by the bigger independent African countries. The influence of the East - West ideological divide, between the superpowers, accentuated the divergence of opinions in the formation of a continental organization, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 (Vanguard Newspaper of July 25th, 2002)

It is pertinent to state that the search for an African Union (AU), with a strong continental political and economic direction by African states has been as old as the OAU. Indeed, several African statesmen, such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and a host of others had all wanted for a Union of African states. But, strong oppositions from other African leaders prevented the proposal from being actualized (Olukoshi, 2002) The continent's inability to make any meaningful economic progress due to the self-centered activities of the former imperial or colonial Monetary Fund (IMF) in the form of rigid and counter-productive conditionality, in particular the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) huge trade imbalances, ever-rising debt crises, the pressures from the major powers, especially the United States and European Union, to fashion Africa to their own ends, informed the need to reinvigorate the concept of African Union (Professor Agwu, 2002).

In addition, unstable economy, poverty, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), environmental degradation and illegal dumping of toxic waste threatened African countries. Social service, within some African states, had become overstretched by incessant large flow of refugees from war-torn areas. International crime level had been on the high side as criminals easily cross borders. Faced with these deluge of problems, African leaders felt that only a United Africa under a strong African Union can save the continent from marginalization and dependency. The current idea for a political union of African states was the outcome of the 36th OAU summit held in Lome, Togo, in the year 2000 (Constitutive Act of AU, 2000).

The African leaders resolved to form the African Union similar to European Union (EU). The need for AU became necessary with fear that Africa was becoming powerless in a tough global environment. In September 1999, during a mini summit at Sirte, Libyan Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi envisaged a Union Government with Institutions, such as parliament common defence policy, central bank and common currency. It was obvious that they would face a good deal of challenges (Ogbu 2002).

With some 53-member states, all having their own religions, ethnic, political and economic problems, the viability of the African Union is put to question. The post-colonial Africa suffers from the crippling effects of underdevelopment, economic marginalization, absence of basic infrastructure, trade imbalance and the debt crisis. The emerging African Union faces major difficulties, as most African economies are weak and fragile and, therefore, unable to compete under the current process of economic globalization. It is, therefore, necessary to mount the AU on a solid institutional foundation. The objective of this study therefore is to examine the challenges and prospects of the African Union.

According to Nwachukwu (1991), the foundation for the African Union (AU) was laid in May 1963 when the organization of African Unity (OAU) was established. Prior to that, the concept of AU was conceived from the early 1900s with the dream of the black intellectuals and political activists in North America and the Caribbean (OAU, 1973). While we cannot underestimate the vision and activities of the African Nationalists and people of African descent, there is no doubt that the African union receives a spur, particularly from the Africans in Diaspora. The like of Dr W. W. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Edward Blyden and Henry Sylvester Williams were on a crusade for the establishment of the Civil Right Movements; they were also on a campaign to sensitize and motivate Africans for freedom, equality, justice and progress all over the world (AEC, 1991).

The first gathering of the Africans was held in Manchester (UK) in 1945 under the banner of Pan-Africanism (OAU, 1983). The ideals of Pan-Africanism were articulated in a series of conferences that took place after the World War II. In the vanguard was Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the nationalist, such as H. O. Davis, Obafemi Awolowo, Jaja Wachukwu, Ladipo Solanke, all of Nigeria and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya intensified the self determination struggle for the dependent African countries (Collin Legun, 1962). The struggle coincided with the latter-day strategy of the colonialists to shed the colonial burden by granting them some measure of autonomy or independence. This received an impetus from the allied powers, under the Atlantic charter of 1941, which was accentuated by World War II, (Nwachulwu et' al 1991).

The increasing campaign for the nationalists stimulated the metropolitan powers to grant Ghana, its independence in 1957, under the leadership of Dr Kwame Nkrumah (Emmanuel Wallerstine, 1968). In his book entitled: "Africa must Unite", Kwame Nkrumah (1963), posits that there is an urgent need for political unification. That no single part of Africa can be safe, or free to develop fully and independently, while any part remain unliberated, or while Africa's vast economic resources continue to be exploited by imperialists and neo-colonialists interests. He stresses that unless Africans politically united under all-African Union Government, there can be no solution to our political and economic problems. In his concluding remark, he states thus:

We have seen in the example of the United States, how the dynamic elements with society understood the need for unity and fought their bitter civil war

to maintain the political union that was threatened by the reactionary forces... Also how the forging of continental unity along with the Federal states, has achieved a dynamism that has lifted a most backward society into a most powerful unit with a remarkable short pace of time.

He observed that our continent gave us the second largest land stretch in the world. The national wealth of Africa was estimated to be greater than almost any other continent in the world. To draw the most from our existing and potential abundance for a fine, social order, therefore, we need a unity, our efforts, our resources and intentions - for the sake of African greater glory and infinite well being, into a Union of African States. According to Ranulo (1956) citing in Bala Mohammed's (1982) "Africa and Non-alignment" (1982), the Bandung conference 1955 has paved the way, to the establishment of the Non-aligned movement. Ghana, too, the first black African country south of the Sahara to achieve independence from Britain in 1957, paved the African path as Bandung did. He added that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who led Ghana to Independence, had attended the Bandung conference as an observer.

He was also the leader of his country's delegation to the sixth conference of Pan-Africanism, which was held in Manchester, UK (Bala Mohammed et al 1982). The nucleus of the African union was formally introduced on 23rd November 1958, when Ghana and the Republic of Guinea merged their sovereignty to form a union of African states. They established an exchanged of resident ministers, who were recognized as members of both the governments of Ghana and Guinea. In July 1959, the Presidents of Liberia, Guinea and Ghana met at Sanniquellie to discuss the whole question of African emancipation and unity. At the end of the meeting, they issued a declaration of principles naming their organization community of Independent African states (Nkrumah, 1963) In April 1961, they agreed upon a Charter, namely, the Union of African States (UAS), this was to form the nucleus of the United States of Africa (Treaty, AEC, 1991). It was declared open to every state or federation of African states, which accepted its aims and objectives. Article 3 and 4 of the Charter contained the main aims and activities of the union. Article 3: The aims of the UAS are as follows:

- i To strengthen and develop ties of friendship cooperation between the member states politically, diplomatically, economically and culturally.
- ii To work jointly to achieve the complete liquidation of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa and the building of African unity.
- iii To pull their resources in order to consolidate their independence and safe guard their territorial integrity.
- iv To harmonize the domestic and foreign policy of its members so that their activities shall be exercised mainly in the following field- domestic policy, defense, economy and culture.

The AU, among others has created an African Peace and Security Council, an African parliament, a common court of Justice, Central Bank and a single Currency (OAU et' al 1973). All these institutions that would enhance administrative and socio-political

relations among African countries are deeply applauded. More importantly, the power of African Union to intervene in the affairs of member state, particularly in case of genocide and war crimes must be hailed. It is hoped that the new union will banish the anachronisms that left Africa gruelled for decades. Of particular interest is the AU's peace security council, which empowers it to intervene in a member state pursuant to the decision for the assembly (of Heads of states and government) in respect of grave circumstances and crimes against humanity.

This principle of empowerment is a radical departure from the pretentious and self-serving non-interference principles, which OAU raised to the level of a high sort. Under the new arrangement, AU could intervene in the internal affairs of nations if such intervention will ensure good governance, respect for human rights and economic integration such a line of action is also expected to have the salutary effect of fostering good relations between members at the level of civil activities (OAU et al 1973). The key shift is that the principle of state sovereignty has been abandoned. It was a widely held view that a well-coordinated African union could be a veritable aegis through which respect for Africans and more investment opportunities could be brought to the continent (Aribisola Reme, 2001). All these are predicated on a more congenial socio-political atmosphere in member countries of AU. Moreover the AU is coming at a time when other countries of the world are speaking with one voice for their people, Africa should not be left behind (Vanguard, 25th July, 2002).

Although, observers argued that the AU is nothing more than a new wine in an old bottle. Professor Akinterinwa was of the opinion that, contrary to this view, AU is a necessary new framework of relationships in Africa, and interaction relations, specially designed to respond to the challenges of development at the African level, and also contain the emerging threats of new marginalization and re-colonization in global politics (Thisday 24th June 2002). The AU, as it is today, is a fusion of the former structures, assets and liabilities but reorganized and re-defined for the purpose of increased efficiency. Thus, the AU is the crescendo of all the efforts made to deliver Africa from the scourge of wars and wanton self-destruction.

The AU is a mechanism for self-realization, self-defense and self-preservation in the light of the new concept of globalization. A basic lesson to be learnt by enthusiasts of AU is that the euro-enthusiasts had a running battle with the legion of euro-skeptics and defenders of national interests (Romulo R. C. 1956, in Bala Mohammed, 1982). While the ultimate goal of integration was kept in mind, compromise was struck between the advocates of the contrasting schools of thoughts along the way. The aspiration of the enthusiasts remains unshakably an ever-closer union. But flexibility and accommodation also became the watchword. Those who dream of AU as outlined, in the constitutive act must, therefore, be prepared for long drawn out arguments with many afro-pessimists, who lack faith in the capacity of Africa to integrate politically and economically. The tension cannot be avoided in the African experiment.

THE PROSPECTS OF AFRICAN UNION IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The prospect of AU in terms of achievement should include free immigration process, concessionary trade and custom duties, common monetary policy, integrated systems of transportation, agriculture industry, telecommunications and culture. They include policy harmonization on peace and security, environment, drug control and information technology. Essentially, the AU is Africa's response to the blue print of the New World Order. We are in an age in which integration has become imperative, national boundaries and their attendant barriers are collapsing. Today, common currencies and common markets rule the New World Order. The idea behind all this is to open up the economies of the world; Africa cannot but partake in the global interdependence.

Under the AU, Africa is expected to experience improved economic and political integration. It is a custom union, which will compel member states to remove tariff barriers, open their markets and allow for free movement of goods and services. With the AU, barriers that hitherto hindered investment among African states are expected to give way. It was in the light of this bright that South African President and Chairman of AU, Thabo Mbeki counselled the AU at its inauguration that African countries should begin to export manufactured goods to raise living standards (NEPAD, 2001). This is one of the major tasks ahead of the union. Thus, one of its focal point is to work closely with the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) for the purpose of pulling Africa out of the pit of poverty. NEPAD from inception seems to have begun to encounter very serious problems, if not opposition, in terms of disparity in policy objectives.

The concept, its objectives, proposed agencies and all that are enumerated as making up the NEPAD document seem not to be in tandem with what many had expected and as such are said not to be for the people of Africa (NEPAD, 2001). According to Professor Fasanmi (2002), there exists, no doubt, a conflict of interest or even objectives in this rather unequal partnership labelled the New Partnership for Africa Development. No serious partnership can emanate from a position of weakness (Professor Fasanmi et al, 2002). Africa is not only indebted to these so called partners; its effective machinery for growth and development are still looking in the continent.

He posits that no meaningful growth and development can be based on aids/grant oriented partnership. This manner of relationship can only sustain a situation, where Africa's development policies are dictated by globalization (Thisday June 24, 2002; 57 - 58). According to Professor Ogwu (2002), we cannot be unmindful of the enormity of the challenges of Africa development in a rapidly globalizing world. It is important to note the stark reality that we live in a world where power and might, wealth and technology continue to determine who gets what, when and how. What the situation demonstrates is that in this New World Order, Africa is at the cross-road, trying to survive in a world that is largely redefined by economic power and globalization but what is most significant is that NEPAD is hinged upon the development of African people and the progress and unity of the continent. The prerequisites for the success of the programme, according to Professor Olukoshi (2002) have been embedded into four broad areas. They are: the peace and security initiative, the regional approaches to development (Thisday July 18, 2002: 45).

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT AS MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR AFRICA

The greatest difficulties to the newly formed AU are on economic integration and development, and how to effectively reconcile and harmonize the different sub-regional integration, groupings throughout the various part of Africa. These are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the South African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market of East and Southern African States (CMESAS). For instance, the ECOWAS countries are working towards the adoption of a common currency that is expected to come on stream by the year 2012, and Nigeria is one of the countries championing this cause (African Development Bank 1999). How will this be factored into the AU? How far the African union is able to satisfactorily harmonize the often conflicting political, historical, social and economic interests and configuration on the continent, and achieve its noble objectives will determine its significance in the years ahead.

TRADE LINK WITH COLONIAL MASTERS: The biggest obstacle to the AU is that many African countries still conduct more trade with their former colonial masters than with other African state (Adebayo Adedeji, 2002). For instance, the Francophone countries like Senegal and The Republic of Benin are practically still tied to France's apron strings. The African union in an attempt to end this situation is making trade within Africa easier by reducing bureaucratic obstacles. The idea is to first build regional blocs in West, Central, East, North and Southern Africa and then ultimately merge these into one big economy together is easier than negotiating with 53 countries at the same time. In the long run, a common African currency is envisaged (Adebayo Adedeji, et' al, 2002). Most Francophone countries already have one, the CFA France, which is guaranteed by the French treasury, it would be an arduous task for the AU to break this French connection, although it must be broken if the AU is to achieve its set objectives.

INTER AND INTRA STATE CONFLICTS: One of the major challenges that the AU is likely to face is that of inter and intra-state conflicts. The end of the cold war era, which was regarded as reason for the persistence of conflicts in Africa, has not ushered in peace. Rather, conflicts in Africa have increased with the secessionist struggle in Sudan, genocide in Rwanda and Burundi. The recent upheavals in the two Congo Republics have accentuated the fact that all is not well in the continent. Similarly, confrontation is brewing in Liberia. These definitely are challenges that the AU will be facing among others. Hence, the need to work towards resolving the problem of indemnity for the stability of the continent as a foundation for further development.

INSTABILITY: The African states are always faced with the problem of Political instability arising from constant change of government by usurpers. This bad and endemic problem has always made Africa the ridicule of other people of the world, and it is on record that the OAU never applied sanctions against state members who were involved in such retarding steps. Today the AU will have its strengthen its mechanisms for sanctions to bring its members to comply with the rules for the union.

DEPLORABLE ECONOMY: African economy reveals the worst and most deplorable of all the continents. According to UNDP reports in (2001), only Libya and Mauritius were ranked as operating an economy that places the citizens above poverty level, and the 162 least developed countries of the world, Africa has about 75%. These issues beckon the attention and solution of the AU.

SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION: First among the challenges is that the most powerful African countries are wary of losing their own regional influence and concerned at any initiative that would weaken their sovereignty or ability to act independently. Nigeria, for example, enjoys its role as the dominant force in the existing West African grouping, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In recent years, ECOWAS has made significant progress in easing travel restrictions in West Africa, and has started the process of establishing a single West African currency (UNDP, 2001). In Southern African Development Community (SADC), although SADC's effectiveness has been diminished in recent years in part because of political differences between South Africa and Zimbabwe, many Southern Africans would prefer to work towards sub-regional integration first, before looking at Pan-African unity (Olukoshi, 2002). Likewise in East Africa where Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania have been working to revive the old East African Community, which collapsed in the mid-1970s because of political and ideological differences (Olukoshi, et' al, 2002). There are 53 African states and they trade far more with the rest of the world than they do with one another (African Development Bank, 1999).

DIFFERENCES IN COLONIAL EXPERIENCE (MILITARY INTEGRATION)

The difference in colonial experience could be serious impediments to a successful African Union (Nwachukuwu, 1991). Integration, regional military for African Union for instance, will require and integrated command, control, communication and logistical structures without which military operation would be ineffective and inefficient. The different organizational, rank and command structure and linguistic differences among the various armed forces could, therefore, severely constrain the functioning of the integrated armed forces (Nwachukuwu, et' al, 1991). There could be less coherence in field and other operations, as was demonstrated by ECOMOG in Liberia (Nwachukuwu, et' al, 1991). For African Union to survive, there must be a way to structure the military in Africa in all areas.

However, most of these differences could be reduced to insignificance if proper steps are taken towards the integration scheme. We have seen from history how regional military integration schemes have taken place in regions with diverse cultures (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001). The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for example, comprises linguistically different people like the French, British, Germans, Spanish, Portuguese and the Flemish yet NATO has endured through the years (Treaty on EU, 2002/C80/01). What we need in Africa is the political will on the part of regimes to break the neo-colonial constraints.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: The struggle for power by most African leaders is a great

challenge to African unity. Most of them come to power illegitimately and tend to prolong their stay in power even when popular view holds contrary. Examples, abound in Africa, from North to South, East to West even between the leaders that proposed the union of African states, leadership struggle continues to be the bane of the union. Who leads the union, where would the headquarters be located, what language to use are manifestations of the leadership struggle. Unification is a noble goal. However, if the African leaders' spiritual consciousness is not enlightened, liberated and united, no amount of political manipulation of the continent's diverse cultures will result in a cohesive union that constitutes a bright future for the Dark Continent.

POVERTY: Poverty is one of the greatest challenges facing most African countries. Today, two third of these countries depend on foreign aids. Poverty has resulted into war and impoverishment of most states in Africa. Until such situations are taken care of, the idea of union African states will become a mirage. Smaller countries jealously protect their sovereignty as a means of attracting investment or foreign aid.

ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS): The deadly disease, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is another challenge before the AU within the continent. Various heads of states have made effort to combat the disease without much success (WHO Report 2001). UN statistics show that 7 out of 10 members of a family in South Africa have AIDS virus (WHO Report 2001). Similarly, in Nigeria, it was reported that Benue State has the greatest number of AIDS victims (WHO Report 2001). In addition, countries like Zimbabwe, Kenya, Gambia, and Liberia and so on are recorded as having large number of AIDS victims (WHO Report 2001). It is pertinent to note that good governance is hampered when majority of the population is unhealthy. Similarly, the power of any nation is a measure of its population in terms of health standard and mortality rate. Recently, there were several reported cases of sexual rap of babies below 12 months in South Africa (WHO Report 2001).

This is because of a belief that sexual intercourse with babies could cure AIDS (WHO Report 2001). This could also account for the reason why so much emphasis on finding a solution to the problem. On 16 November 2001, pregnant mothers in South Africa won a court case, which allows them free AIDS treatment (WHO Report 2001). In many African countries, different methods have been employed to curb the disease. One of such methods is the anti-AIDS campaign to sensitize the populace about the deadly disease (WHO Report 2001). Furthermore, series of conference on AIDS were organized in Africa with Nigeria as the vanguard (WHO Report 2001). One of the conferences was held in Nigeria in 2000 during former President Clinton's visit (Punch, 13th August, 2001). Similar conference was held in South Africa in 2001, which attracted many world leaders (Olukoshi, et' al 2002). Early in December 2001, the Kenyan government introduced sex education in primary schools to increase AIDS awareness (WHO Report 2001). Similarly, the Federal government of Nigeria released funds to the health ministry, to find solution to AIDS problem (WHO Report 2001).

Many individuals have come forward with claim of having a cure for the disease, to no avail. Presently, the disease has reached an epidemic level, which could be worse considering the rate of promiscuity within the continent (WHO Report 2001). Consequently, the AU could present a joint effort towards ridding the continent of the disease (WHO Report 2001). In addition, the AU could make the drug affordable to victims and subsidize AIDS treatment. African predicament can therefore be described as the paradox of abject poverty in the midst of plenty (WHO Report 2001).

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: The position of infrastructure in Africa has been correctly described by Aribisola (2001) who says that the poor infrastructure access and services leave the whole of Africa at a greater disadvantage by hampering efforts of the region to attract new foreign investment and by limiting domestic investment owing to high costs of doing business. While Abubakar (2001) acknowledges that the development of physical infrastructure requires huge financial investments. The poor situation is further exacerbated by the poverty level of most African countries that have been bedeviled by the consideration of national sovereignty and egoism. In the main, the system of physical infrastructure includes transportation, roads, railways, navigation, aviation, energy, water supply, irrigation and telecommunication.

TRANSPORTATION: Prior to the colonial administration in Africa, contacts and transportation were from the Mediterranean through the open Sudan to the North (Abubakar A. Jauro, 2001). As a result, strong economic and cultural heritage existed more with North Africa than with the farthest regions in the South. In most cases roads were used. However, with the colonial administrations, contacts and transportation were diversified to include the use of inland waterways, railways so that economic domination could be achieved. Jauro (2001) states that the introduction of colonialization at the beginning of the 20th century, shifted, the centers of political and economic activities to the coastal areas, which provided major outlets for most agricultural and far east products as well as from the Sudan. Infrastructural development was then centred on railways and roads to link the coast with the hinterland which produced crops and minerals for the metropolitan European markets.

ROADS: Aribisola Reme (2001) states that the World Bank assessment confirmed that road transport is by far the dominant mode in Africa, accounting for 80 - 90% of all passengers and freight transport. The vehicle density varies within and among the sub-regions. In Africa, between 80 - 90% of commercial vehicles are operated by the private sector in which small operators dominate (Aribisola Reme, et al, 2001). The assessment continued to state that much of the fleet of vehicles is poorly maintained and in poor conditions with about 50% of vehicles more than 10 years old (African Development Bank 1999). Most of the countries in the continent region imported used vehicles from Europe. The combination of aged vehicles, and poor conditions and low level of road maintenance lead to high transport cost and higher number of accidents (African Development Bank 1999). Each sub-region has put in place various policies, measures and programmes to facilitate road transportation (African

Development Bank 1999). In this regard, the AU will be challenged to harmonize the existing policies, measures, programmes and develop on them. Development of roads is a major integration facility. Because of the importance of road as an integration factor, the United Nation declared 1980s as the decade of transportation with greater attention drawn to road construction since the declaration; a trans-African highway programme was embarked upon with the head quarters in Bangui, Central African Republic (African Development Bank 1999). Under the programme, each country expected to develop its own road from the border to border. Some countries like Nigeria were able to complete theirs, while many could not. The project eventually folded up due to paucity of funds (African Development Bank 1999). The coordinating office was moved to the headquarters of Economic Community of Africa as Addis Ababa. The programme was initially planned as follows:

- Lagos to Mombassa, connecting Atlantic to Indian Ocean
- Trans to Saharan connection to Mediterranean
- Nouakchott to Lagos
- Dakar to N'djamena

The possibilities of constructing these roads across Africa still exist. What is required is the re-engineering and facilitating the regional economic integration. This is one of the challenges faced by the AU.

RAILWAYS: In most African countries, railways development came before the roads. Most of the railways were developed before the world war one. Railways were built to support general economic development and to facilitate political control by the colonial administration (Emmanuel Wallenstein 1968). The French had an overall plan to link all the territories particularly in the West coast of Africa to the sea. Similarly, the British colonial administration tried to link their West African hinterland to the seaports to evacuate crops and mineral resources from most African cities. The railways development in West Africa was limited to or within individual countries. Railways, facilitated some degree of integration, connected East African countries mostly. According to John Clarke citing in Abubakar (2001), the rail lines in West Africa covered a distance of about 8,160km which consisted of narrow simple tracks and capable of carrying only light loads at very slow speed.

In Nigeria, the rail network consists of Western and Eastern lines totaling about 3,500km (Claude Ake, 1981). In East African the rail lines are meant to link the ports in the same manner as in the West Africa. They assist to stimulate agricultural production such as coffee, tea, cotton, and sisal and ease conveyance to the ports leading eventually to the European markets (Ake, et'al, 1981). The existing railway infrastructure in Africa being a colonial heritage that was just maintained and not developed further is certainly inadequate for the integration of Africa as it was meant to serve the colonial needs only. Already ECOWAS has realized but for it to achieve the objective of sub-regional integration, the development of infrastructure for improved productively at the regional markets was very necessary. As a result in 1992, decision was taken to undertake a feasibility study on the interconnection of

rail lines in the ECOWAS sub-region (NEPAD, 2001). A master plan for railway development was prepared (NEPAD, 2001). In February 2000, a meeting was held at its Abuja headquarters to consider the implementation of the ECOWAS railways interconnection master plan (African Development Bank, 1999). Member countries and their development partners considered the possibilities of strengthening the network cooperation, the pooling and joint use of material and human resources available within the region (African Development Bank, 1999). During the meeting, the African Development Bank (ADB) informed the ECOWAS of the existence of multinational grants in several financial institutions for funding of such a project (African Development Bank, 1999). The secretariat was asked to submit requests to ADB, the World Bank, and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and International Development Bank (IDB) for funding (African Development Bank, 1999). The ECOWAS approach is a clear demonstration and indeed a realization of the necessity for infrastructure development to accelerate integration in West Africa. The approach could easily be adopted by Central, East and Southern Africa Economic group. It is in the process that the relevance of the African union will be challenged (African Development Bank, 1999).

NAVIGATION: Navigation in Africa follows a similar pattern nationally except in Congo Basin. For example, in Nigeria, navigation has since 1982 been limited to between Baro and the Delta (Thisday, 24th June 2002). Before then, boat could convey goods to Yola and beyond Garuoa in Cameroun. Similarly, on the Nile, navigation activities are limited within countries especially in Egypt and Sudan and also the countries that share the Victoria Lake (Treaty, AEC, 1991). As identified by the Economic Community of Africa (ECA), the most important navigation potential that could integrate Africa is the Congo basin in Central Africa (Treaty, AEC, 1991). By virtue of the location in the Tropical region of Africa the Congo basin has more than 56% of African water resources (Constitutive Act AU, 2000). The efforts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Angola, Central African Republic and Cameroun to establish a basin-wide organization are still on the drawing board. This should challenge the AU to facilitate the required infrastructure for the development of navigation waterways.

AVIATION: The development of aviation infrastructure for integration in Africa cannot be overemphasized. It is in fact difficult to explain the decline in air services in Africa. Most of the airlines, except those of Ethiopia and South Africa, have declined or totally collapsed. As a result, air travel within the continent is highly unreliable and tedious. In 1999, the African Ministers of Civil Aviation met at Yamoussouko Cote d'Ivoire and decided that Africa should liberalize the space, free up the air tight to Africans and create a new institutional framework (Constitutive Act AU, 2000). The World Bank has accorded a grant of 3,000,000 Us Dollars to ECOWAS and CEMAC to strengthen the institutional capacity of the two sub-regions (Aribisola, 2001), the grants will also help to build consensus on the action plan for achieving full liberalization of the domestic and regional market by the year 2000. This is another area that the AU has to take a quick look and address very urgently.

ENERGY: This is another major and indeed a basic economic infrastructure that could provide a good base for integration in Africa (Constitutive Act AU, 2000). On the Volta River, when shared between Ghana and Burkina Faso, the Akosombo dam was constructed with the largest artificial lake in the world with a surface area of 1,500km (Treaty, African Economic Community, 1991). This huge infrastructure is used for power generation, irrigation and navigation. On bilateral arrangements, it supplies electricity to Togo and Benin Republics (Treaty, African Economic Community, 1991). On the same basin, there are three tributaries of the Volta, dammed by the Burkina Faso for irrigation and water supply without reference to Ghana (Treaty, African Economic Community, 1991). On the Senegal basin, the Manantali dam supplies electricity to Mali, Senegal and Mauritania (Treaty, African Economic Community, 1991). This is a good example of regional integration through basin wide cooperation.

It is important to note that the Manantali dam provides 53% of Mali's electricity requirement and the rest is shared between Senegal and Mauritania (Treaty, African Economic Community, 1991). Also, because the project is a multi-purpose one and covers the entire basin, the affected countries are able to jointly identify their needs and priorities. Mali, in whose territory the dam is constructed, opted for electricity, while Senegal and Mauritania chose irrigation. Navigation automatically followed as a by product (Treaty, African Economic Community, 1991). On the Niger, both Selenge and Sotuba dams supply hydropower to Mali, while Makala dam is for irrigation (Aribisola Reme, 2001). Jebba and Shiroro dam supply electricity to Nigeria, while Kanji dam supplies Nigeria and Niger. Similarly, on major tributary of the Benue River, the Lagdo dam was built by Cameroun to supply electricity to its northern provinces (Aribisola Reme, et al, 2001). That has four turbines.

If there were cooperation and integration basin-wide, Nigeria could have bought the power to be generated from the remaining three turbines and fed it to the national grid. Also the controlled water could be systematically released to facilitate the irrigable land from Doyin Hausa in Adamawa State and Ibbi area in Taraba State. The water release would also facilitate navigation from Lokoja to Gareya in Cameroun through Yola, a process that had been stopped since 1982 when the Cameroun Authority built the Lagdo dam. In southern Africa Rivers, Zambezi, Limpopo, Nafi and Okakango have hydropower dams built for use by individual countries or through bilateral arrangements (Aribisola Reme, et al, 2001). From the analysis of the energy development if and when properly harmonized and interpreted, Africa might even export energy to other continents (Treaty, African Economic Community, 1991). This energy issue is no small challenge to the AU.

IRRIGATION: Article 46 of the treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) provides to promote the integration of the production structures; member states shall cooperate among others for:

- The development of river and lake basins
- The harmonization of agricultural development strategies and policies and regional aid at community level.

- The harmonization of food security policies to ensure the conclusion of agreements on food security at the regional and continental levels.

It should be noted that article 33(2) of the AU has provided that this act shall take precedence over and supercedes any consistent or contrary provisions of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (Constitutive Act AU, 2000). By this provision, therefore article 46 of AEC has become part and parcel of the act of AU. From time immemorial the Nile valley/basin has been the only means of irrigation particularly to Egypt and Sudan (Constitutive Act AU, 2000). Various infrastructural developments, such as canals and ultimately dams were undertaken.

According to FAD export (1995) theseven dams and reservoirs have been built on the Nile and its tributaries. The study further indicated that by 1995, the total irrigated land on the African continent were, 12.2 million hectares. It was equally projected that by 2010, irrigation development was put at 14.5 million hectares (FAD Report, 1995). Nigeria has over 200 dams of various sizes for irrigation in central Africa (FAD Report, 1995). There are irrigation schemes such as Semry 1, 2 and 3 in Cameroun, in South Africa, 147 irrigation schemes are identified and majority of the irrigation projects in Africa are national (FAD Report, 1995). Harmonization and integration as claimed in the provision of article 46 of the Treaty have not been applied (Constitutive Act AU, 2000).As the imperative of agriculture cannot be overemphasized, the need for regional policies on irrigation should be at the top agenda of the AU.

TELECOMMUNICATION: The World Banks' project database shows growth in private participation in telecommunication (Aribisola, 2001). Legal barriers to entry continue to hinder competition in telecommunication sector. African governments are overcoming these barriers by expanding mobile phone services (Aribisola, 2001). In sub-Saharan Africa, telecommunication appears to be getting more attention with the recent revolution in information technology. The introduction of mobile phone has brought in private sector participation. It is estimated that at least 12 countries are set to liberalize their telecommunication markets (Professor Agwu, 2002). In Nigeria, two private mobile phone companies started operation in 2001 (Agwu, 2002). By the one-year anniversary of their operation, they had provided more lines than the government's National Telecommunication (NITEL) has supplied since its inception (Agwu, et al 2002). At the regional level, harmonization of policies should be a major priority. This is particularly so in view of the fact that some national policies are inimical to regional integration because they are still tied to their colonial past. These have change for better. There are conscious efforts to improve national service, at the same time emphasis, should be put on regional linkages by involving private sector.

CONCLUSION

It has become inherent to note that the journey so far for the African Union is prospective and equally a challenging one. The integration is expected to move the

continent to a greater height in a world that is fast globalizing. Today, globalization is one of the greatest challenges facing the African states. Its consequences if not collectively confronted will be devastating. The African position should not be as an aid seeker, but as a regional force, which deserve respect, understanding from and cooperation with the rest of the world. The union has been seen as an essential instrument for faster collective growth and prosperity for the countries and peoples of the continent it is the hope and indeed the shared aspiration of the African leaders to create a larger economic entity and market place. The union will make it possible for African countries to collectively build integrative infrastructure, which would otherwise be too costly for individuals, small and fragmented countries. In addition, the union offers the African countries the chance to be relevant and to speak with one voice in international negotiations.

The study depicted a graphic picture of the poverty of Africa. The scenario of the physical endowment of Africa portrays the continent as one blessed with abundant resources include climatic variations, landforms, rivers vegetation, soil and minerals. When, however, a searchlight is turned on the harmonization and utilization of these resources, underdevelopment seems to be the obvious. Against these two contrasting backgrounds, the African predicament can therefore be described as being in abject poverty in the midst of plenty. In view of this paradoxical reality of the African circumstances, the recommendation offered should assist the AU, to facilitate the continental development by turning around its dwindling fortunes.

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