

## The Role of African Union in African Developmental Process

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### ABSTRACT

The African Union was established for the purpose of promoting regional integration, and good governance among member states. This study therefore discovered that so far, the AU has played some key relevance in terms of roles and performance towards achieving the prime aim of its formulation. The study further made use of the Liberal Institutional Approach in making its justifications on “The Role of African Union in African Developmental Processes”. Development can only be achieved through integration and togetherness. As an intergovernmental organization, states are the major actors. Furthermore, the study appraised the AU’s role in African Developmental process going through some of its specialized agencies and programs such as; Peace and Security Council (PSC), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). These programs respectively are in the area of security as in peace building exercises, promotion of human rights activities, promotion of good governance and economic integration. Even with this, the African Union has been crippled with certain challenges in the areas of security, as conflicts are on the high increase, poverty, hunger.

**Keywords:** NEPAD; PSC; APRM; OAU; AU; Human rights

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, Africa has been a tale of struggle [1]. This struggle emanated from the evils deposited by colonialism, and the need for total liberation ushered in the decolonization process. To effectively achieve this height, several groups were amalgamated. The Monrovia, Brazzaville and Casablanca groups intensified together to form the first regional body which was the Organization of African Unity, (OAU) in 1963. As a uniting force, the OAU was tasked with a responsibility of combating against the remnants of colonialism, and racial discrimination in states like South Africa. In the wake for survival, the OAU survived under an alliance of cooperation between newly decolonized African states. The OAU could not stand the test of time due to issues emanating, ranging from constant violence such as the Genocide in Rwanda, Nigeria-Cameroon dispute over Bakassi Peninsular since the 1970<sup>s</sup>, Somalia-Ethiopia dispute in 1964 to 1978 over the Uganda desert region, Algeria-Morocco conflict over the Atlas mountains area in October 1963 [2]. Not too long, there emerged the presence of dictatorial leaders in some African states, who violated human rights, and economic depression due to constant mismanagement of

resources, led to the collapse of the OAU, and a shift towards the establishment of the African Union (AU). The founding fathers of the defunct OAU included; Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Gamal Abdel-Nasser of Egypt, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria.

The African Union came as the institutional manifestation of the desire for integration in Africa [3]. The African Union was established on the 26 May, 2001, as a reflection towards a more efficient Africa. In a way to reflect this efficiency, the AU has been focused on institutionalizing Africa by primarily legitimization regimes [4]. Its emergence has provided a full grown initiative by which the African people will effectively take the destiny of their continent in their own hands. This is in the area of promoting solidarity, cooperation and support among African states and people; so as to address the catalogue of problems they face [5]. So far, the African Union has been able to achieve some certain level of development and certainty against underdevelopment and uncertainty towards growth and progress. It has set up the blue print for African transformation and significance in the global stage. The issues bedeviling the

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continent since the transformation of OAU to AU have been the dilemma of insecurity, economic backwardness and political disorderliness. Even with this, there have been some levels of certainty and roles played by the union in the developmental process of Africa. These roles have been in the areas of peace building, restoration, and conflict management.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU was initiated to champion this course. Others includes promotion of an enabling environment for economic integration through; The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Under African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), performance and progress are measured in four thematic areas; Democracy and political governance, Economic and governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development [6]. Therefore, the roles of African Union, in African developmental process, shall be best appraised under the following areas; promotion of peace and stability within member states, promotion of social-political and economic well-being and the promotion of democratic practices, against tyranny and unfriendly regimes in Africa.

### Development: A conceptual clarification

The concept of development has many defining features such as; growth, economic buoyancy and total absent of underdevelopment. Developmental analysts have been placed with uncertainty to the exact meaning of development, this means no concise term to quantify development.

In the words of [7], development emerges as an adjunct of globalization which further has no universally acceptable definition cited in [7], development as a concept is multi-facial. It encompasses distinctive changes in social structures, attitudes, national institutions and a well accelerated economic growth. Furthermore, development traditionally interprets for economic growth [8].

The above conceptualization of development is from a narrower angle, for it centers on majorly economic improvement and living standards of people. But within the context of study, development is a state affair primarily because the rationale for setting up of any regional, sub-regional or any organization is for the purpose of growth, and the satisfaction of its members wants. AU was instituted as a body to drive the African continent into the pathway of development, against the constant issues of conflicts, economic meltdown and bad leadership. Through integration process, states are expected to share a common mindset particularly on issues pertaining member states which is possible via the formation of intergovernmental bodies and union. Development in this sense is championed by AU in the areas of collective security, unified security system and a common goal career. AU developmental process, comes through various programs such as; The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), it was initiated to monitor developmental growth, importance are placed on trade and investments through greater liberation for improved Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), [7] cited in [9].

## METHODOLOGY

This research relied on secondary data. The secondary data were sourced from online journal articles, and magazines.

### Theoretical framework

The theory of liberal institutionalism has been adopted as the basis for analyzing the roles of African union in African developmental process. Liberal institutionalism is a theory of international relations first outlined by Robert Keohane. Liberalism according to (Ghali, 2014:13) has championed the emergence of continental and regional political organizations. In international relations, liberalism champions that orderliness, laws and moral consciousness can undoubtedly provide basis for inter-state relations [10]. Liberal institutionalism discourages any form of pursuit of individual self-interest but encourages cooperation. Institutionalism connects that which is a crucial variable, contending that institutions matter and shape the interest of actors [11]. Against the realist positions that view the state as anarchical and rooted in power tussle and human nature of which to the realist, cooperation cannot occur. Richardson (2008:223) further adds that liberal institutionalism agrees to peace, regionalism and cooperation, and economic integration. The African Union is set up to consolidate the lost cause of integration, economic and national security. Within the context of this study, the African Union setup is that of liberal institutionalism.

Membership of the African Union is based on liberal institutional approach which has been characterized to be for economic gains, cooperation and continental identity against any form of power tussle and hegemonic show of superiority over other weaker states. As argued by (Ghali, 2014:14) multilateralism is simply the practice of coordinating the behavior of states interacting with one another. With these interactions, African states willingly have seen the need of an integrating body, saddled with a wide range of responsibilities. At this, certain institutions have be put in place, so as to facilitate AU's role for smooth running of the regional body, for the betterment of the continent at large.

### African union, peace and security

There cannot be peace and progress in a conflicting environment, no wonder AU major mandate is to restore peace in Africa, for through peace, there can be progress and growth. In examining the role of any international security institution is an essential but notoriously difficult exercise. The (PSC) which signifies the Peace and Security Council of the African Union was established by the (AU constitutive Act 4). It has been an effective tool in the restoration of continental security and settlement of conflicts, arising within African states. In one sense, the activities of the PSC have been cost effective as its funding has come from external actors, particularly states within the EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The PSC is composed of 15 members, it is to.

- Promotion of peace, security and stability;
- Anticipate and prevent conflicts;
- Combat terrorism on the continent;

- Develop a common defense policy for Africa;
- Promote democratic practices, good governance and respect for human rights (Vines, 2013).

Most African conflicts have been often related to issues connected to whom or which tribe, religious denomination emerged as head of government. With this trend, the AU in the early 2000<sup>s</sup> adopted a strategy of illegitimacy of unconstitutional changes of government as an approach to conflict management system. This made a major achievement against the OAU policy of non-interference in domestic affairs of member's states. In this view, the AU frowned at constant attempts by incumbent governments to retain political power by all cost even after losing a legitimate election. The AU has provided a platform, which limited constant military involvement in the internal political affairs of member's states. "Since 2003, the AU has continued to condemn every successful coup on the continent, namely those in the Central African Republic (2003), Guinea-Bissau (2003), São Tomé and Príncipe (2003), Togo (2005), Mauritania (2005 and 2008), Guinea (2008), Madagascar (2009), and Niger (2010)". In all this, the AU now makes public condemnation of military take-over, or attempted take-over in it member states. A case study was the demand by the AU in collaboration with the UN, EU, demanding that the military leaders released President of Mali Keita, and Prime Minister Boubou Cisse and other officials detained on the allegation of corruption, economic stagnation, and continuing Islamist insurgency [12]. Also, the PSC's received international commendation in its decision to suspend Togo from participating in AU activities and the eventual restoration of constitutional process.

In the area of peacekeeping operations, the UN is a special partner of the African union [13]. The AU has been instrumental in mobilizing troops, notably in peacekeeping missions to Burundi, Darfur, Somalia, and Comoros. Taking a case of the Darfur crisis, states have largely spent financial, diplomatic, and military resources. Going by the poor nature of funding, the AU has been laid on various setbacks in achieving this sort-for lasting peace. "A handful of Africa's wealthier states are left to bear the burden of paying for the AU's regular and peacekeeping budgets, complemented by often generous but ultimately inadequate foreign funding that makes planning difficult" [14]. When few states are always left to shoulder responsibilities, there is always the problem of efficiency and effectiveness in output mechanisms.

### **African union, NEPAD and economic integration**

The inability of the OAU to provide a positive framework for African development led to the eventual emergence of the AU. Saddled with many responsibilities such as; regional integration security restoration, and economic development, the OAU was eventually replaced by the AU. Certain programs have been drawn out for efficiency and restoration of the lost call towards sustainability and economic con social well-being of the continent, a need to therefore achieve this was to form a program now known as NEPAD. The birth of NEPAD was rooted in promoting peace and development in the continent [15]. The AU was patterned after the European Union (EU),

seeking to promote unity, eliminate conflicts and integrate a larger African market and NEPAD was the mechanism in which this call could be achieved. NEPAD was an amalgamation of three separate development programs initiated between 2000 and 2001 [15].

The first was the Millennium Partnership for African Recovery (MAP), developed by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and whose main objective was to address Africa's debt. MAP enjoyed the support of Presidents Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. The OMEGA Plan developed by the Senegalese President, Abdoulaye Wade, was the second. Enjoying the broad support of French African countries, OMEGA was concerned with building regional infrastructure and educational projects. The third was the Global Compact for Africa Recovery, which incorporated the idea of peer review and initiated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, through a mandate given by African Ministers of Finance in 2000. The merger of these programs in July 2001 at the AU Summit in Lusaka, Zambia, culminated in the New African Initiative (NAI). However, NAI was renamed NEPAD in October 2001. At the Lusaka summit, a 15-member Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC), representing all the regions of Africa and chaired by Nigeria, was appointed, and this had it first meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2001.

NEPAD is among series of programs, embarked the AU to promote meaningful development among member states, and also fulfilling the course of the emergence of AU in Africa. As a tool in promoting development, NEPAD emphasizes on the liberalization for more Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), so as to aid the boosting of most African states economies. Through NEPAD programs, several strategies have been employed such as; the comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), the Minimum Integration Program (MIP) in 2007, the Program for Infrastructural Development in Africa [16]. Even with these programs, the issues of malnourishments, poverty, lack of access to portable water supply, poor health care system is still sky rocketing. An estimated 186 million people are below the poverty line, Africa's per capital income is way lower than it was in the 1960<sup>s</sup>. Only with the exemption of South Africa, the average per capita income in 1997 was US\$315, meaning Africa is like the poverty capital of the world [17].

### **African union, good governance**

The APRM as a process has been designed to periodically review the progress of states in matters of governance. This is done to ensure states are in a compliance with certain principles of good governance, instituted by both NEPAD and AU [18-20]. The review process is supervised by the AU. The APRM was instituted in 2003 by the AU in the framework of the implementation of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) (AU, 2020). Member states within the APRM undertake self-monitoring in all aspects of their governance and socio-economic development.

#### **Objectives of APRM and good governance**

- Democracy and Political governance

- Economic governance and management
  - Corporate governance
  - Socio-economic development (APRM Reports, 2020).
- APRM for good governance in Africa has been through support and partnership of African Developmental Bank (AFDB), together with other strategic partnerships such as; United

Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission (UNEC), (AFDB Reports, 2020).

The table below shows the programs embarked upon through the APRM in other to promote stability and enabling conducive atmosphere for member states.

**Table 1:** The table below shows the programs embarked upon through the APRM in other to promote stability.

Id	Project name	Country	Status	Date
P-21-DBO-202	Mutinational Nacala Road Corridor Development project, phase V	Malawi	Identification	19 <sup>th</sup> June, 2019
P-LS-E00-007	Climate change Adaptation for Sustainable Rural Water Supply in Lowlands	Lesotho	Pending	30 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019
P-NG-A20-001	Say no to Famine for Nigeria	Maiduguri, Nigeria	Approved	14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2018
P-NG-KAO-009	Nigeria-African Trade Insurance (ATI) Membership Program	Nigeria	Approved	14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2018

**Source:** AFDB Bank Reports on projects carried out and to be carried out, in collaboration with APRM program for sustainable development and good governance in Africa.

### African union, challenges

The prime aim of reforming OAU to AU was for the purpose of a more united African state, built on good governance and sustainability. With test of time, the Union has been saddled with uneven challenges such as terrorism, poverty, bad governance and intra-states disputes. The current rates of conflicts in the continent has increased drastically, disputes in Libya especially has stood the test of time. Even though the AU was successful in quelling conflicts in Burundi, reverse is the case. The conflict in Sudan, Somalia and even Libya has stayed too long. The inability of the AU to curtail the Libyan crisis, made it to be internationalized by NATO and other foreign powers. Subsequently, the PSC has been accused of take sides in carrying out decisions. In the assassination of Chadian President, Idriss Deby, the PSC initial refusal to suspend Chad from AU provided another picture of the Union.

Also, most African states are in a state of lack and want. Even though, most states are blessed with endless resources, conflicting interests of some foreign super powers have left these naturally empowered states to be internationally poor. A critical example is the current situation in Congo. The interest from Belgium, China, and USA will definitely limit internal progress of these states.

The issues of undemocratically imposed regimes have limited progress, and this has led to conflicts. A typical example is the post-election violence in Ivory Coast. Human rights abuses have been categorically associated with most African states. Disrespect of state institutions, political actors have now assumed a position of strength over the guiding compass of the state, which is; Judiciary, Constitution.

The inability of the AU to fulfill its promise of an inter African trade relation is also a major setback. Member states are unable to have a universal tariff system which will make economic relations, and the ease of doing business possible. With the proposed African Free Trade Area (AFTA), if it succeeds, a more formidable economic union will emerge just as that of European Union (EU).

### CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the AU since its inception has been able to perform necessary functions for the developmental process of Africa, so as to accelerate a well-structured developmental pattern built on the premise of peace, good governance and the fulfillment of the principle of growth.

This study therefore discovered that AU has been able to achieve some significant developments, owing to its short time of existence, through some of its specialized agencies and programs. The PSC, NEPAD, APRM respectively are programs and agencies functioning dependently for the purposeful achievement of the prime aim of reforming from the OAU to AU. Basically, the promotion of peace, socio-economic development is major areas the AU has played key roles in putting Africa on a tack to greatness.

This study subsequently has provided few areas in which the AU will achieve greatly if considered, they are

- The AU should focus more on ensuring the fulfilment of its agenda by avoiding the duplication of certain programs.
- The issues of economic integration should be given great attention such as; ensuring and promoting inter-state trade

with the elimination of tariffs, and custom duties just as the EU.

- The Peace and Security Council, should be given the power to enforce decisions without necessarily getting the nod from the United Nations Security Council, particularly in the case of emergency. Also, the PSC should have a standing army such as that of the EU in position of NATO for prompt deployment of contingents in conflict area.
- The AU should further ensure that Inter or Intra state conflicts should not be internationalized as in the case of the Libyan conflict, for such led to the escalation and long term and also spreading and abating free movement of arms within the African region and sub-regions.
- The Ubuntu philosophy emanating from the East and Southern African region which means 'I am because we are' teaches the relevance and importance of true brother hood. It is only when this is imbibed into the African system, the issues of xenophobic and xenophobia will hardly go into extinction.

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