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and the Development Question**
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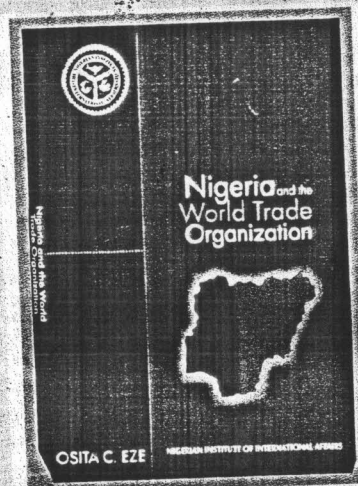
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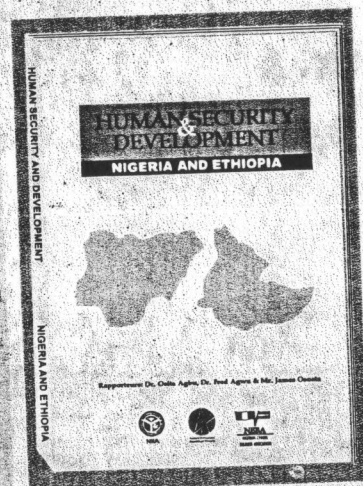
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ISSN
© Nigerian Institute of International Affairs,
2007

Printed by: **PrintServe Ltd.**
10, Makoko Road, Off Herbert Macaulay Road,
Yaba, Lagos.
Tel: 01- 7447777, 7453333, 7452222

Nigerian Journal of International Affairs **Volume 34, No. 2, 2008**

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A Steep Slippery Slope: African Union and the Development Question

Hassan A. Saliu* & Fatai A. Aremu*

Abstract

The search for an appropriate integration strategy has dominated African affairs since the independence era, and even before. However, the sharp division among post-colonial African elites on which integration model was most desirable and practicable counterbalanced and almost disrupted the unique consensus on the utility of continental international organization in African affairs. In the final analysis, the functionalist cum gradualist approach prevailed and culminated in the formation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 as a compromise between the contending blocs. Between the period of its establishment and the time it gave way to the 'new' continental body, the OAU encountered series of challenges and, on that basis, was the subject of several scathing criticisms the most common of which was its being likened to a "toothless bulldog". While such critique may not be completely unfounded and indeed was often substantiated with facts, it is important to factor in the inherent weaknesses of general international organizations of which the OAU was not different. International organization can not be more than the sum of its parts and can only be as efficient as its member states wants it to be. It is the constructivist rather than the exceedingly critical approach that provides the theoretical and conceptual foundation of this article. This work interrogates the previous attempts at integration with a view to draw some lessons that may be useful to current experiment.

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Introduction

International organization has a deep history in global affairs. Indeed, it is as old as organized society.¹ However, modern supranational institution-building² has gained tremendous currency in recent time to an extent unprecedented in human history. Evidence from the various regions of the world would suggest a phenomenal rise in regionalist impulses where states are engaged either in expanding, forming, reforming, transforming or strengthening international organizations.³ The value of international organization as a mechanism for managing inter-state relations, prevent conflict and ensure peace, while at the same time guaranteeing a conducive basis for wealth generation through economies of scale thereby engendering development, has never been so convincingly palpable in world affairs.

As far as regional institution-building is concerned, Africa cannot be said to be a late starter. Before and immediately after many African states gained sovereignty from colonial powers in the 1960s, post-colonial African elites were unanimous, based upon the convergence of Pan African zeal and nationalist ideals, on the desirability of African unity. That there was broad consensus on that subject was quite monumental especially when viewed against the backdrop that some other regions still contend with that basic foundation several decades later. Nevertheless, the nature of the continental body to be established, its powers, functions and responsibility was bitterly contested among post-colonial African leaders that the very consensus on African unity was almost lost.⁴ The harmonization of the various contending blocs of interest led to the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 as a compromise between the 'radical' unionists or federalists and the 'conservatives' or 'moderates' who favoured the gradualist (and perhaps functionalist) approach to regional integration. Because it was a

¹ Gerrard Mangone, *A Short History of International Organizations*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1954; Bennet Leroy, *International Organizations: Principles and Issues*, 4th ed. New Jersey, Simon & Schuster, 1988; Archer Clive, *International Organizations*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1983.

² Bilgrami S. J. R., *International Organization: A View from Within*, 1st ed. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1977.

³ Luk Van Langenhove, "Towards a Regional World Order", *The UN Chronicle*, Vol. XLI, Number 3 (September-November 2004), pp. 12-13&33.

⁴ Cervenka, L., *The Unfinished Quest for African Unity: Africa and the OAU*, London, J. Friedman 1979; Also Aremu F. A., 'Sailing Without Compass?: African Union and the Challenge of Integration in the Post-Cold War International System', Faculty Seminar Series, Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, 9th December, 2005.

product of compromise of some sort, the principles of the OAU emphasized and strengthened rather than gradually diminish the attachment of African states to the outmoded Westphalian conception of sovereignty.

Three of the seven principles (indeed the first three) contained in Article III of the OAU Charter were those crafted to protect the sovereignty of member states. These are sovereign equality of states, non-interference in the internal affairs of states and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and for the inalienable rights to independent existence.⁵ The seeming repetition which these provisions symbolized was a reflection of how delicate the issue of state sovereignty was at that period for two separate but interconnected and mutually reinforcing factors. First, having just emerged from long and generally tenuous struggle against colonial rule to attain independence, it was inconceivable and quite difficult for most African leaders to trade-off the newly-won independence on the altar of an international organization the like of which never existed at least by African experience. Another significant factor was the extenuating cold war international political milieu into which the OAU was mid-wifed. Cold war politics complemented and/or complicated by neo-colonial appendages of 'sphere of influence' contributed to instituting cleavages among African elites thereby strengthening their nationalist appeals which strained but could not douse the triumph of African unity that the emergence of the OAU represented, its weaknesses notwithstanding. An objective assessment of the organization must therefore, take into consideration the constraining circumstances that greeted its formation *ab initio*.

In spite of that, and the inherent limitations of virtually all international organizations of its mould, the OAU weathered the storm of the turbulent African and indeed global politics to survive for almost four decades (thirty-nine years to be sure). Among its most outstanding achievements was the fact that as at the time of its transition to the African Union (AU), no state on the continent was under colonial rule and the apartheid regime had been dismantled. The organization served very well as the mechanism for combating the remnants of colonial rule and apartheid until they were both confined to the waste bin of history. Little wonder therefore that the Durban Declaration of the African Heads of State and Government issued at the 1st Ordinary Session of the African Union paid a deserving tribute to the OAU thus:

⁵ *OAU Charter and Rules of Procedure*, Press and Information Service, OAU General Secretariat, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

As we bid farewell to the OAU, we rededicate ourselves to its memory as a pioneer, a liberator, a unifier, an organizer, and the soul of our continent. We pledge to strive more resolutely in pursuing the ultimate goals of the OAU and in furthering the cause of Africa and its people under the African Union.⁶

Needless to say that the OAU was a necessary precursor to the African Union as the League of Nations was to the United Nations and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) or European Community (EC) to the now celebrated EU. This however does not suggest that the OAU was a resounding success all through. The various changes in the international system especially since the end of cold war coupled with the demise of colonial rule and Apartheid in Southern Africa the eradication of which had formed part of the core objectives of the OAU, justifies the reform of the organization because its *raison d'être* and the geopolitical contexts of its emergence have been drastically altered. Besides, the continent's abysmal record in development indices as the poorest region on earth lend further credence to the desirability and necessity of a stronger international institution that is better able to harmonize the abundant resource endowments of the respective member nations of the organization for the prosperity of the people of the continent. It is in this context that an analysis of the AU should be situated. This work is not just a critique⁷ of the of the OAU nor is it of the transition *per se*, but rather a modest contribution to the discourse on the appropriate trajectory for African integration and how it can help address the nuanced development question, allegorically akin to climbing a steep slippery slope, that this otherwise richly endowed continent has had to contend with.

⁶ African Union Durban Declaration adopted by the 1st Ordinary Session of the African Union on 10th July 2002, Durban, South Africa; Also, President Olusegun Obasanjo's speech, 'Farewell to the OAU', delivered to the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, Lusaka, Zambia, 9th July, 2001 and South Africa's Foreign Affairs Minister, Nkososana Dlamini Zuma's speech to the AU Summit in Durban, South Africa, 8th July 2002.

⁷ 'Africa: Two steps forward, three steps backward' *NewAge* (Nigeria) December 5, 2005, p.8; 'African Union: New Vision, Same Old Faces', *THISDAY* (Nigeria) July 13, 2002, p.49; 'African Union Leaders: Old Wine in New Bottle?' *THISDAY* February 10, 2002, p.46; and what appears like a rejoinder by Bola A. Akinterinwa, 'African Union: Not Old Wine in New Bottle' *THISDAY* July 15, 2002, p.14.

Theorizing the Emergence of the African Union: A Constructivist Perspective

In keeping with the ideals and aspirations of the Founding Fathers of the OAU, contemporary generation of African leaders were equally unanimous on the necessity for a more dynamic organization that would enable Africa respond to the emerging challenges of the 21st century. Hence, the chronology of events that would ultimately produce the African Union could be said to have begun at the 4th Extraordinary Summit of the OAU in Sirte (Sirte I), Libya in September 1999 with the now famous Sirte Declaration of 9.9.1999 which recommended a fast-track approach to the establishment of the Union. At the 36th Ordinary Summit of the OAU in Lome, Togo in July 2000, the Constitutive Act of the African Union was adopted and ready for ratification by member states. In less than a year, the 5th Extraordinary Summit of the OAU took place in Sirte, Libya (Sirte II) in March 2001 where some of the modalities for the proposed AU institutions (for instance, the Pan African Parliament, Court of Justice, etc) were deliberated upon. The process that led to the emergence of the Union effectively began when Nigeria deposited her instrument of ratification of the Constitutive Act on April 26 2001, and the required two-third of member states was met. Thus, the AU came into existence on the 26th of May, 2001. The 37th Ordinary Summit of the OAU, the last for the organization, was held in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2001. On 9 July 2002, the African Union was officially launched in Durban, South Africa at its 1st Ordinary Summit while President Thabo Mbeki became its first Chairman. The import of this brief historio-chronological exploration of the emergence of the Union is that the transformation took just about two years to materialize. It is also indicative of the constructivist postulation that the international system is not just 'something out there', but a human invention or creation, a body of ideas, system of norms organized by certain people at a particular time and place⁸.

Constructivism in International Relations theorizing is a fairly recent development dating back in contemporary sense to the works of

⁸ Weber Cynthia, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. London and New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 59-79; Jackson, Robert and Sorensen, Georg, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 2nd ed. Oxford, OUP, 2003, pp.253-9.

Kantzenstein,⁹ Kratochwil,¹⁰ Onuf¹¹ and Wendt.¹² The central thesis is that "anarchy is what states make of it" and that the social world is 'an inter-subjective domain meaningful to the people who made it and live in it'.¹³ Hence, the social world is constructed of not just physical entities but of ideas, conceptions, assumptions, norms and values that are widely shared by the people. Essentially, the concern of constructivism is not just with the differences among people and how they regulate those differences, its focus also covers the ways and means by which people manage to evolve and sustain social, economic and political interactions irrespective of those differences. Pertinent to the constructivist discourse therefore, are the concepts of identity and interests as the core ideational foundations of social relations. Coming back to the central assumption of constructivism that 'anarchy is what states make of it', suggests that in international relations, nothing is impossible, nothing is given and everything is uncertain.¹⁴ Since identities and interests are constructed, de-constructed and re-constructed, then it is plausible to contend that African Union is what Africans make of it. Although constructivists appear rather state-centric, they nonetheless emphasize the inclusive approach to the construction of social phenomena. As Agubuzu rightly puts it, 'the African Union is still essentially an intellectual construct, a lot of work has to be done to make it a reality'.¹⁵

Having briefly examined the origin of the African Union and having situated it within a theoretical context, it may be instructive to note that certain aspects of the organization already set it apart from its predecessor institution. In the first instance, the prevailing circumstance that surrounded the formation of the OAU was different from that of the AU. The cold war has given way to the triumph of liberal democratic ideals of governance and more than

⁹ Katzenstein, P. (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996.

¹⁰ Kratochwil, F., *Rules, Norms and Decisions*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

¹¹ Onuf G. N., *A World of Our Making*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1989.

¹² Wendt, A. *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Wendt, A., 'Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 1992, 46: 391-425.

¹³ Jackson, Robert and Sorensen, Georg, op cit. p.254.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.258.

¹⁵ Agubuzu, O. Lawrence, *From the OAU to AU: The Challenges of African Unity and Development in the Twenty-First Century*, NIIA Lecture Series No. 83, Lagos: NIIA, p.53.

anytime in Africa's political history, more states have embraced democratic norm and practices. Indeed, Article 3(g) and (h) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union states, *inter alia*, that the objective of the Union shall be to: 'promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance' and 'promote and protect human and people's rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and other relevant human rights instruments'.¹⁶ And while building on the Algiers Declaration, the AU has as one of its principles (unlike the OAU), 'the condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments'. In order to guarantee the above stated objectives as well as others, a number of agencies that were not in existence under the OAU were provided for in the Constitutive Act of the AU.¹⁷

Perhaps the most significant distinction between the OAU Charter and the Act of the African Union relates to the critical separation of the concept of 'non-interference' from 'non-intervention'. While the former only provided for 'non-interference in the internal affairs of member states' as noted earlier, the later retained that clause in Article 4(g) as:

Non-interference by any member state in the internal affairs of another.

But Article 4(h) went further to guarantee:
The right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely, war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

In the same vein, Article 4(j) of the Act provides:
The right of member states to request intervention from the Union, in order to restore peace and security.

And unlike the OAU Charter, the AU Act provides for sanctions for violation of its rules and principles in Article 23(2) which includes 'denial of transportation and communication links with other member states, and other measures of a political and economic nature to be determined by the Assembly'. In several respects, the AU promises to be a radical departure

¹⁶ *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, July 2001.

¹⁷ Eyinla, B., 'OAU Charter and the Constitutive Act of the AU: A Comparative Analysis' Akinterinwa, B. (ed.), *Nigeria and the Development of the African Union*, Ibadan, Vantage Press.

from the OAU. But as constructivists inform us, the ideas are important, however, it is the belief behind those entities that is more important: what those entities signify in the minds of the people.¹⁸ These shared beliefs, as constructivists note, should ultimately harmonize and express the common interest and identity of the people in their relations to each other as the AU era unfolds.

Africa's Development Matrix: AU and the Catching-up Dilemma

The OAU obviously could not be said to have convincingly addressed many of Africa's development concerns. Some countries in Asia, for example, that were on similar (or worse) economic conditions in the 1960s and 1970s with most African states have since graduated from aid dependants, to industrializing or even developed economies. Ironically, some are now donors of ODA to Africa. The dynamics of this dramatic transformation and its impending implications for the erstwhile Afro-Asian solidarity on critical areas of international economic order could be a subject of further inquiry. Meanwhile, the point need not be stressed further that Africa parades the most appalling statistics in global development indicators.

Various studies on African development by different agencies reveal similar unenviable data. Twenty-two of the twenty-five countries in the UNDP's category of "low-human development" and thirty-three of the forty-seven Least Developed Countries are in Africa. More than fifty per cent of the population live on less than US\$1 per day and mortality rate of children under five years of age is 140 per 1000 while life expectancy at birth is only fifty-four years (and much lower in seven countries,¹⁹ the lowest in the world. Only fifty-eight per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water.²⁰ In a similar vein, statistics provided at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 revealed that while most people worldwide experienced some growth in consumption in recent years, the consumption expenditure of the average African household is 20 per cent less than it was 25 years ago. In the period of the 1990s, while most developing countries grew at a rate of 9.6 per cent a year, African exports grew at far slower rate and the region's share of world trade in real terms fell

¹⁸ Jackson, Robert and Sorensen, Georg, op cit. p.255.

¹⁹ Development Crisis: AIDS Slashes Life Expectancy in 23 African Countries', *UN Chronicle*, No. 3 2004, p.54.

²⁰ 'NEPAD Document, October 2001; *Africa Recovery* (now *Africa Renewal*), April, 2002 pp.6-8 & 11.

form 2.7 per cent in 1990 to 2.1 per cent in 2000. Within the same period, Official Development Assistance (ODA) fell by about 25 per cent and for some countries, ODA declined by more than 50 per cent while Africa attracted only 1.2 per cent of global FDI flows in 1997.²¹ Even the 2005 Millennium Development Goals Report indicates that African lags behind in most of the indicators.²²

All these have made the challenge of development, even the minimalist model provided in Grzegorz Kolodko's 'catching-up thesis',²³ no less than climbing a steep slippery slope with no spikes. This rather thorny subject has attracted a great deal of attention both at institutional and individual levels. While some studies have focused on the 'causes' and 'curses' of African development, others have devoted attention to identifying possible remedies.²⁴ George Ayittey's *Africa Unchained: The Blueprint for Africa's Future* and Lucie Phillips and Diery Seck's *Fixing African Economies: Policy Research for Development* are just a few of the generous interest that the 'quick-fix school' in African development literature has enjoyed.²⁵ In reality, the nature of the development question in African seems not to have lent itself to one-size-fit-all solution which characterizes the various attempts at grappling with the problem. Indeed, the nature, causes and intensity of the crises vary from one state to another and between one period and another even though they may appear quite superficially similar. The African Union would necessarily need to engage this issue and avoid this particular

²¹ World Summit on Sustainable Development, *Fact Sheets*, Johannesburg Summit 2002, 26th August-4th September; Also, President Olusegun Obasanjo's speech, 'Triumph of African Unity' delivered to the National Seminar on African Union, Abuja, 15th May, 2001 in Ad'Obe Obe (ed.) *A New Dawn: A Collection of Speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo*, (Vol. III) Ibadan, Spectrum, 2004, pp. 1-9.

²² *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2005*, New York, United Nations.

²³ Kolodko, W. Grzegorz, *Globalization and Catching up in the Emerging Market Economies*, Lagos, NIIA, 2004.

²⁴ David K. Leonard and Scott Straus, *Africa's Stalled Development: International Causes and Curses*, London: Lynne Rienner, 2003; Adedeji, A., Owodunni, T. and Bugembe, P. eds., *The Challenge of African Economic Recovery and Development*, London, Frankcass 1991; Sunmonu A. Hassan, *Strategies for Development in Africa: An African Worker's View*, NIIA Lecture Series No. 60, Lagos, NIIA, 1990; Desai, Meghnad, *The Debt of Development: Beyond the Question of Price*, NIIA Lecture Series No. 80, Lagos, NIIA, 2004.

²⁵ Ayittey, B. N. George, *Africa Unchained: The Blueprint for Africa's Future*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan 2005; Phillips, Lucie Colvin, and Secks, Diery eds., *Fixing African Economies: Policy Research for Development*, London, Lynne Rienner 2004.

slippery route which will ultimately end up in one step forward and two steps backward as it had always been. The common practice has been that such approaches to addressing Africa's development question focus on the symptoms rather than the causes.

For instance, unlike in most of the approaches that emphasize more ODA and FDI, just as AU and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) too seem to have done, the view here is different. ODA and FDI may be necessary but not immediate priority for reasons that can only be tangentially but not fully accommodated in the current article. However, the debates on the international aid enterprise and the real net impact of foreign investment have been fairly explored in some other studies.²⁶ The concern should be to enhance productivity in Africa particularly in the agricultural sector, stimulate domestic market within each country and within the region before we begin to direct attention to the global market in which Africa's capacity to compete is, for the time being, grossly circumscribed. Let us examine the case between Nigeria and Thailand to illustrate further this point. Nigeria has a total land area of 923,768 sq km all of which are rich and cultivable and also has a population of over 150 million people which, by demographic indices is active, while Thailand has a total land area of 514,000 sq km with a population of about 65 million people. In land mass, Nigeria is almost twice as big as Thailand while in population, the former is almost thrice larger. But for productivity, Nigeria has no reason to depend on Thailand for food imports. In addressing this highly sensitive issue of food security as a component of the development discourse, harping on ODA or FDI amounts to begging the question. No better factor could explain why it would take Sierra Leone or most other African economies two years to produce what Luxembourg yields (in terms of value) within a week (Kolodko, 2004: 32).

The point raised above equally connects to the issue of global trade and competition for out-sourcing or foreign investment which under the wave of globalization represents massive flow of resources from 'over-saturated' developed economies to the so-called emerging markets. In the realm of

²⁶ Dichter, W. Thomas, *Despite Good Intentions: Why Development Assistance to the Third World has Failed*, Amherst & Boston, University of Massachusetts Press 2003; Dollar, David and Easterly William, "The Search for the Key: Aid, Investment and Policies in Africa", *Journal of African Economies*, Vol.8 No.4, 1999, pp.546-577; Elbadawi A. Ibrahim, "External Aid: Help or Hindrance to Export Orientation in Africa?", *Journal of African Economies*, Vol.8 No.4, 1999, pp.578-616; Omoruyi, O. Leslie, *Contending Theories on Development Aid: Post Cold War Evidence from Africa*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001.

trade, evidence have since shown that African products (and there are quite a few anyway) are not competitive in the global markets. Even if the trade rounds of the WTO eventually succeeds in opening-up the tight developed markets (and that is doubtful anytime soon), quite a few African states many of which equally depend on importation for the most mundane of products, would be able to take advantage of the opportunity. The bulk of the benefits may end-up in Latin America and Asian countries. A case in point is the US sponsored AGOA initiative which several African states have yet to adequately exploit to the maximum benefits of their economies. Most African economies depend on the extractive sector without any value-added for exports, and they seem quite contented with it or at least unable to change the equation. There may be many resources in Africa, but as experience have shown over the years, natural resources in themselves have little intrinsic value. The African Union should provide a regional framework to engage the issue of productivity as one of the vital spikes with which to hike the slippery slope to development in the 21st century.

After addressing the question of productivity, which is very significant, how do we add value to African products to make them competitive in the global market? As we have noted earlier, concentric approach to international trade appear more feasible under the prevailing condition. A situation whereby, as in Burundi, exports have quadrupled since 1996 while average private consumption dropped by almost 25 per cent²⁷ would ultimately produce a situation by which total GDP would be increasing with poverty level rising simultaneously. That cannot amount to development in every sense of the word. A sound economy must develop inside-out and not vice versa.

Adding value to African products require a revival of the continent's deep sense of creativity and aesthetics. African products, from agricultural to minerals or even arts are of high quality by any international standard. However, taking additional step in its packaging for example, is as important (if not more) as the quality. A bee farmer must be able to package the honey produced in such a manner as to enhance its aesthetic value and brighten its market prospects. But this requires knowledge and expertise of the current trend in global marketing strategies which, for now, may not be in adequate supply in Africa. Herein lies the indispensable value of sound education and this leads us to another critical issue that may enhance Africa's probability of 'catching-up'.

²⁷ Andreas Gibbon, 'On the Margins: Poor LDCs in a Global Trade Era', *The UN Chronicle*, Vol. XLI Number 3, September- November 2004, pp.35-7.

Education in Africa has generated quite a frenzied discourse as an integral part of the development equation. The general impression has always been that the standard of education has fallen which often times, in reality, appear to be exaggerated. In this article, we present a slightly different opinion on Africa's education. The point being that if Africa's education standard is as weak as it is often presented, how come that no sooner than African-trained personnel leave the shores of the continent that they suddenly become intellectual superstars and 'experts' elsewhere? Brain drain and Africa's Diaspora constitute another critical area which was omitted in the whole discourse of the AU as well as the Act. From medicine, nursing, science to engineering and higher education, no fewer than 10 million Africans are in Europe, America and elsewhere plying their trade as global experts in various countries around the world. This clearly not only challenges the thinking that Africa's education is sub-standard, but also represents a huge loss of skilled human capital in many African states. It has produced a situation whereby, Zambia for example, had 1,600 a few years ago but has a little over 400 today, Kenya only manages to retain only 10 per cent of its nurses,²⁸ and the same goes for many other African states. The trend has to be halted and if possible reversed for Africa to improve on its development indices.

But this loss of human capital has its flip side. It holds immense benefits for Africa if it can be properly harnessed for three main reasons. First, migrant worker remittance is increasingly becoming a vital source of resource flow to developing countries and this fact has been acknowledged by the IMF and World Bank. Based on data from the World Bank and Global Development Finance in 2005, *Africa Renewal* reports that at a US\$126 billion in 2004, remittances were developing countries' second most important source of foreign exchange.²⁹

The report further notes that for the same year, foreign direct investment inflows amounted to US\$165 billion while total official development assistance was US\$79 billion. Basically, remittances have doubled in the last decade and form a significant proportion of the GDP in some poor countries. Lesotho, for instance, is said to receive the equivalent of between 30 to 40 per cent of its GDP from workers abroad. In sub-

²⁸ Keynote Speech by Phillip Emeagwali at the Pan African Conference on Brain Drain, Elsah, Illinois on October 24, 2003. Prof. Emeagwali, a super computer scientist and internet pioneer, was described by President Bill Clinton of the United States as "one of the greatest minds of the Information Age" and by Cable News Network (CNN) as "a Father of the Internet". He emigrated from Nigeria to the United States in the early 1970s.

²⁹ *Africa Renewal*, October 2005, pp.10-13.

Saharan Africa, Nigeria is reported to be the largest recipient of between 30 to 60 per cent of the region's total receipts. Although there is no official figure, the total amount of remittances by Nigerians abroad is estimated to exceed US\$1.3 billion annually, ranking second only to oil exports as the source of foreign exchange.³⁰ The import of this analysis in relation to the strategic value of the African émigrés and the Diaspora was, no doubt, extended further by an observer who notes that:

Ten million Africans now constitute an invisible nation that resides outside Africa. Although invisible, it is a nation as populous as Angola, Malawi, Zambia or Zimbabwe. If it were to be a nation with distinct borders, it would have an income roughly equivalent to Africa's gross domestic product.³¹

It goes without saying that this crop of Africans can no longer be ignored and would therefore need to be integrated into the new development equation to strengthen the region's capacity in the process of catching up. Apart from remittances, this crop of 'invisible nation' of Africans can be a source of technical support, endowment in educational institutions or even engagements in African institutions, even if on part-time basis, to boost their pool of world class human capital base. Reverse brain drain, which is now termed 'brain gain' or 'brain circulation' is possible as experiences of other societies have shown. Like the overseas Chinese and Indians abroad, African Diaspora can equally be a source of foreign investment or, through their experience and expertise, assist in improving Africa's competitiveness as a worthwhile investment destination while at the same time, increasing the value of African exports, perhaps in the long run. For the meantime, India and China may retain their competitive edge with their huge population as potential market within a single nation coupled with a reasonable degree of political stability and a pool of relatively well-trained and cheap labour. This explains why the African Union must explore options beyond the regular calls for FDI and ODA in addressing the development question. For a start, the African Diaspora should be given well-defined role within the AU system, and they should enjoy, through their various organizations, consultative status at AU Summits. This would provide a continental framework by which the potentials

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Quoted from Phillip Emeagwali's speech, op cit.

of the African Diaspora could be channeled towards the development of their motherland.³²

Avoiding the Pitfalls: AU and the Future of African Unity and Development

Africa's development challenge is, to say the least, daunting. The OAU could not grapple with it. Why did OAU fail and how can the AU avoid, or at least, ameliorate the drawbacks that beset its predecessor? This, like the previous section, is a very complex and complicated question that may not lend itself to quick one-stop answer. But as it is often said, good judgment comes from experience, but experience comes from bad judgment. We intend to engage this issue within three broad interconnected domains which include the political, economic and the cultural while drawing upon Africa's recent history. But, before we set-off, we must continuously bear in mind that international organizations, even if supranational, have their inherent limitations and that the African Union is not just 'out there' with the magic wand to leverage the development deficits of the continent.

One major challenge in the political realm has been, and will continue to be the sovereignty factor. In ordinary sense, sovereignty connotes the right and power of the state to make and enforce laws and implement policies and decisions within its jurisdictional frontiers. It is also the power by virtue of which a state is not bound by any other authority both from within or without. Membership of international organization obviously set limits to the degree of independence and freedom of action a state enjoys. The question of state sovereignty, beyond mere rhetoric in official declarations, is likely to present a major challenge, as it did to the OAU, especially in treaty implementation and conflict management which may require some form of peace-keeping or enforcement operations by the AU. It is perhaps a little early to assess the capacity and resilience of the Union in the face of such scenario with the Darfur or Ivorian crises. Nevertheless, the test of sovereignty as a natural phenomenon for international organizations should be anticipated by the drivers of the AU project and contingency mechanisms should be devised in advance. Studies can be commissioned to identify possible survivalist options if and when they occur.

Closely related to the above is the personality of the leaders of member states. Leaders vary in their perception of and commitment to

³² Gumisai Mutume, 'Reversing Africa's Brain Drain: New Initiatives to Tap Skills of African Expatriates' *Africa Recovery*, July 2003, pp. 1&18-20.

integration projects. President de Gaulle of France rocked the European integration project to its foundation at some point while the once thriving East African Community in the 1970s was destabilized primarily by personality differences of the leaders of the key member states. Competition between leaders may rear its head in various forms. It may either pitch the big states against each other in the struggle for prominence, control and prestige or the small states against the big for fear of marginalization. Such competition, if unchecked, may even polarize the Union in sub-regional groupings of say, Southern Africa against West or East Africa and so on. It may equally manifest in the form of the usual colonial ties of Anglophone versus *La Francophonie* or the *Lusophone*. These are possibilities which may threaten the African Union especially when combined with external intervention in and manipulation of African issues. The 2005 election of the president of the African Development Bank which shook the continent to its base and polarized the region, with the prompting of extra-African forces,³³ is indicative of the enormity of the challenge the Union may encounter in the future.

Apart from refraining from unnecessary rivalry and minimizing external meddling in African affairs, the leaders must also demonstrate their resolve to be guided by democratic norms by way of embracing the best practices of good governance that is founded on popular participation, transparency and accountability. Emasculation of the civil populace and out-muscling the opposition to gain endless terms in office has not yielded any positive result both in terms of peace, stability and development as well as the continent's image in the world.³⁴ It is primarily on this premise that some Afro-pessimists view the African Union as nothing short of 'old wine in new bottle'. African leaders should be made to realize that there is as much prestige in office as out of office if the experiences of the late *Mwalimu* of blessed memory and Nelson Mandela are anything to go by.

Entrenching democratic practices would also need to be extended to the AU system itself if it is to avoid the pitfalls of the former continental body. The creation and inauguration of the Pan African Parliament could be viewed as a right step in taking the new organization beyond merely being a club of African rulers to that which is owned and managed by the African

³³ 'US, Others Stalemate ADB Presidency', *THISDAY*, (Nigeria) May 19, 2005; 'Power play for ADB Presidency' *Vanguard*, (Nigeria) June 15, 2005.

³⁴ Joseph, Richard (ed.), *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, Boulder Co. & London: Lynne Rienner, 1999; Also *New Age*, December 5, 2005, p. 8 and *Weekly Spectator* December 4, 2005, p.37.

people. However, the process by which members of the Parliament are selected or nominated randomly rather than being elected by the people negates the principle behind the project. Popular election should be organized to produce the members of the Pan African Parliament and the body should be granted a status that is more than being merely 'consultative' as the Act currently stipulates. It is equally necessary to take into consideration the respective population of each member state in order to ensure that the Parliament is truly representative of the almost 800 million African people, not just of African states as it was with OAU, and as it appears to be presently constituted. By so doing, the Union would be markedly different from the past experiment in its approach to integration and community building by guaranteeing for each African, a sense of worth and collective ownership of the integration process.

Sustainable regional community-building requires a sound economic base that is built on production, trade and exchange. The creation of larger economic entity and the prospect of greater markets are, in the first instance, a major motivation for integration. In this respect, another popular view that this study seeks to challenge is that which relates to the thinking that Africa has a monocultural economy and that, by implication, there is no basis for intra-African trade. Contrary to this shared belief, to the extent that Africa, from Cape Town to Cairo and from Dakar to Djibouti, resonates in diverse socio-cultural, climatic and natural resource endowments, the argument that there is no basis for trade is somewhat exaggerated. What has been lacking has been the conducive environment for intra-regional trade which, compounded by the absence of the political will to address the obstacles to trade, conditioned the African nations to depend on extra-African trade that to a large extent accounted for the continent's abysmal poverty and backwardness. Herein lie the utility of, and at the same time a critical challenge to, the Union if it is to succeed where the OAU failed. The international trade regime is unlikely to change drastically anytime soon and even if it does, it is uncertain if African economies as they are presently constituted possess the capacity to maximize the potential benefits therefrom. Adequate attention must therefore be paid to addressing the obstacles to intra-African trade which could then leapfrog the continent in concentric pattern, perhaps in the long run, into mainstream global trade and investment network.

The obstacles to continental trade include non-convertibility of currencies, insufficient commercial banking networks, poor or lack of transport and communication infrastructure, multiple and overlapping sub-regional

commitment to the financing of the integration process both at the sub-regional and continental levels. In its 2002 *Annual Report on Integration in Africa*, the UN Economic Commission for Africa notes that internal trade with each of the sub-regional groupings hovers around 6 per cent in COMESA, 10.2 per cent in ECOWAS, 12.8 per cent in SADC and 18.1 per cent in EAC.³⁵ The 2004 report by ECA, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, shows that there was little or no improvement on the 2002 figures. It stressed that trade among African countries increased marginally from 8.0 per cent in 1994 to 8.8 per cent in 2000.³⁶ Eliminating barriers to trade has been quite difficult for many African states that depend on revenue from tariff and customs duties in their annual budgets. The Union must therefore initiate a process by which the numerous sub-regional groupings would be harmonized into fewer, stronger and more efficient organizations if they are to serve as the building blocks for the new supranational project. The Union could be engaged in the various groups to stimulate the emergence of a customs union and common currency within those sub-regional groups that would eventually converge into the continental structure in the long run. Meanwhile, there should be adequate guarantee for compensatory mechanisms for states that may lose from the elimination of trade barriers as well as sufficient security precautions that can mitigate the potential crises that such liberalizations may generate. Building an economic community as enunciated above would appear rather illusory but it is the path that must be towed at some point in the process of regionalism. It will depend largely on the cultural dynamics on the continent which, for the mean time tend to accentuate rather than narrow the diversity of the region. The degree of Africa's diversity needs no further clarification from the North to South and East to West. This is probably one aspect that, though very sensitive to the integration project the AU seem not to have factored its essence by way of according it appropriate and sufficient attention both in the Act and its agencies. As transactionalist school of integration tells us, regional community cannot exist unless its members are interdependent and interdependence can only be established by a network of mutual transactions. Transactions can only develop as a result of sustained interactions among the people of the integrating units over a period of time.³⁷ Nothing in

³⁵ 'How to Boost Trade within Africa', *Africa Recovery*, September 2002, pp20-22.

³⁶ 'Mixed Results for Regional Economic Blocs', *Africa Renewal*, October 2004, pp.23-24.

³⁷ Hodges, Michael, 'Integration Theory', Taylor, Trevor (ed.), *Approaches and Theory in International Relations*, London, Longman, 1979, pp.237-56; Aremu Fatai A., 'Integration Theory Revisited', Saliu A. Hassan (ed.), *Theories and Approaches in International Relations*, (Forthcoming).

the current experiment suggest a substantially pragmatic desire to enhance the interaction between ordinary Africans for whom the proposed community is meant.

The African Union could distinguish itself by designing specific programmes and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that member states encourage intra-African cultural exchanges. Student exchange at all levels from the high schools to the universities should be encouraged by the Union. Within that framework, member states should be enjoined, at the insistence of the Union through its monitoring mechanisms, to adopt a more pro-active language policy that would enable future generation of Africans and their leaders to communicate without the help of interpreters. This particular point is very crucial in eliminating the usual feeling of colonially inherited suspicion by building bonds of mutual confidence and relevance from which a true African identity can evolve in the various parts of the continent. Even in the European Union which has been viewed as a remarkable case in integration experiments, cross-cultural interaction by the people within the region has been taken as a priority objective. The political, economic and the cultural domains of the regional community building are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, but the managers of the African Union project would do well by taking advantage of the enthusiasm that the transformation has generated to lay solid foundation for the new attempt at integration by learning from the experiences not only of the former organization but from other regions of the world.

Conclusion

Africa is addressing two critical issues at once: integration and development, which can be no less than 'climbing a steep slippery slope'. In this article, an attempt was made to analyze some of the critical issues concerning the subject without laying claim to offering quick one-size-fits-all remedy to the problem of simultaneous transition that the continent has had to grapple with. However, there is need to draw attention to some widely held propositions that FDI or ODA hold the key to resolving Africa's development crises. Evidence has shown that neither of these has really served Africa's interest. This is not to deprecate their relevance to the development process but in reality, the AU would fair better to explore to the fullest other possible and realistic endogenous options, some of which was identified, to resolving the continent's development question without excessive reliance on both as the NEPAD framework seem to have done. Related to this point

is the fact that, contrary to popular thinking, there is strong basis for intra-African trade both within and between the respective units within the Union. What is rather lacking is the conducive environment that would allow intra-regional trade to grow and flourish. Addressing the multiple challenges to intra-African trade would determine whether the Union would be markedly different from the previous organization. The various diverse and often conflicting identities in the region could be minimized and harmonized if the Union and its member states design and aggressively pursue programmes that would encourage cultural interaction across the continent. This would generate a feeling of interdependence and a sense of mutual relevance not only between states but equally between ordinary Africans. The African Union will face series of tests some of which, like the fiercely contested 2005 ADB presidential election and perhaps later, arriving at the region's candidates for the proposed UN-security council reform, may rock the Union to its foundation. How the organization navigates such issues would depend on its resilience and will in turn determine the probability of its uniqueness as an integration experiment. But, like most other Africans, it is the view of this work that indeed, "another Africa is possible"³⁸ and that integration, by extension the African Union, may be the tool with which the region could climb the steep slope to development in the 21st century.

³⁸ Mbeki, Thabo, *Democracy and Renaissance in Africa: In Search of an Enduring Pax Africana*, NIIA Lecture Series No. 81, Lagos, NIIA; Nujoma Sam, *The African Union and the Challenges of Development: Towards a New Africa*, 2002/03, Annual Distinguished Lecture, Jos, Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR); Olusegun Obasanjo, 'Frontier of African Unity' delivered at the 5th OAU Extraordinary Summit (Sirte II), Sirte, Libya, 2-3 March 2001; Ad'Obe Obe (ed.), *A New Dawn: A Collection of Speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo*, Vol. II, Ibadan, Spectrum, 2004, pp. 278-81.