

From O.A.U to A.U: The Politics, Problems and Prospects of a Continental Union

Charles Ogheneruonah, EGHWEREE

Lecturer, University of Benin, Nigeria

Email: reeonas@uniben.edu

ABSTRACT

The African continent presents a peculiar picture in world political cum economic discourse. From been largely seen as underdeveloped and politically unstable, there is a perceived consideration of the continent as the 'sick child' of the world by the West. Consequently, there is inadvertent intervention in African political affairs by the West. The colonial experience that left Africa vulnerably exposed to exploitation at both the political and economic sphere in world affairs in the past, outlived the decade of independence. Manifest colonial interference in African political affairs in the post-independence era, manifests in lopsided engagement of the continent in global political affairs. The Organization of African Unity created to champion the political course of colonial Africa achieved little as criticism and leadership squabbles among African leaders led to its collapse and transformation into African Union in 2002. This paper considered the high-wire politics preceded its formation and eventual transformation as well as how Africa can achieve a formidable political platform to engage the West and by extension, create a political future for itself.

KEY WORDS: *Political Integration; Pan-Africanism; Leadership Squabbles; Regionalism,*

African Union, Global Africa, Africans in Diaspora, paradigm shift.

INTRODUCTION:

Political history of Africa is one of struggle. From struggle against colonialism to that of achieving continental unity, the continent has had to struggle to make impact in global politics with no sign of that abating soon in sight. Effort made at addressing these struggles in the past, saw to the formation of a continental group such as the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U) in 1963. The group saddled with the responsibilities of combating colonialism and racial discrimination in Southern Africa, was also to bring about political development of the continent. However, years on and plagued by institutional frailties, the O.A.U before its demise, was seen by many to have failed to provide Africa the needed political platform to chart the course of unity needed for continental development. With varied reasons adduced for the failure among scholars, the erstwhile continental body is seen as a failure, (Ajala, 1998:39). Others leaning on Ajala's conclusion hold that the failure of the continental body, birth vices such as wars and poverty that became dominant across the continent. Failure of the OAU to effectively represent the interests of the common people on the continent leads to such conclusion. It did not stand for peace, unity and people-centered development as wars and poverty became dominant across continent and as such, the O.A.U was seen an old boys' club where the so-called leaders met annually to showcase their ill-gotten wealth and rival each other for the control of African continental political body. Their main focus seemed to be protecting each other, no matter the circumstances in line with the so-called 'principle of state sovereignty' (Hodge 2002). This retarded rather than promoted the quest for African development (Abutudu, 2005).

As earlier mentioned, the O.A.U swam the troubled waters of criticism from inception to its eventual transfiguration into AU in 2002. While some are of the view that the body prior to its change into the AU formally in 2002 failed to live up to expectation, Eregha (2007:209) however holds a contrary view. To him, OAU was able to achieve enviable results such as the decolonization in most African countries and the liberation struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The shackles of apartheid Eregha held, was broken due to the relentless effort of the continental body. As far as he is concerned, that achievement by the OAU was in tandem with the dream of its founding fathers which he argued, was to see to the emancipation of colonial Africa from all forms of political subjugation that colonialism came to represent. Using the lens provided by this scholar and others that lean toward his line of thinking, one may be tempted to conclude that the OAU was a success since it

accomplished its goal because it aided in putting a stop to colonial domination. What happens to the political relevance of Africa after this and position of the continent in the scheme of things in global politics, leave much to be desired. This can be gleaned from events that shape post-colonial Africa that dwarfs the argument that OAU completely emancipated political Africa. As Olufemi (2007:3) noted, "...had the OAU lived up to its 1963 billings, it probably would not have been replaced with a new pan-African edifice in 2002". Putting this in scale with insight into the post-colonial Africa as a guide, one can say that condition of the continent vis-a-vis political relevance in global political permutation; still remain debatable whether Africa is really free or not. The continent's political future appears tied to the apron-string of the West; contrary to the spirit that fuelled the formation of the OAU. Can we then say the erstwhile continental body was a success?

With that rhetorical question above as pondering point and drawing strength from elite theory as tool of analysis to explain the concept of power and the quest for same among African leaders that shape the formation of OAU and its eventual transformation to AU after failed attempt to form a United State of Africa (USA), effort would be made in this paper to examine the objectives and organizational framework of the former African regional body as well as account for the circumstances that possibly led to its change of name from the Organization of African Unity to African Union (AU) in 2002. In doing this, attention would be paid to the high-wire politics that led to the transformation. We would end the piece with suggestions on how the new body can fare better by avoiding the flaws of the former regional body.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS:

The political history of any group, nation or continent from available history, revolves around roles played by its political elites. History of twist and turns of the OAU and now AU, have African political elites at the center of it all. From formation to veiled struggle for its leadership, subtle elite struggle remains manifest. Consequently, analysis of the role played by African political elites is crucial to understanding the regional political grouping quest of the African continent. For this piece and for purpose of clarity, Elite Theory would be embraced as an analytical framework since it touches the very core of our discussion. Elite theory emphasizes the will of the few powerful elites in determining policy direction in a country or for a group. The choice of this theory in this piece titled "*from O.A.U to A.U: the politics, problems and prospect of a continental body*", would be appreciated if considered against the backdrop of the fact that it is the elites that have thus far, shaped continental politics in Africa. From pushing forward selfish interest to covert quest to dominate African political landscape, they are seen to be well informed about the need of the people. For this reason, many see Africa's continued romance with the very idea of an ideal regional body to achieve continental unity has always been a battle of the elites in Africa. From Nkrumah to Nyerere, Keyanta to Balewa, and Gnassingbe to Ghadaffi, it has been elite affairs in Africa. The present struggle to evolve a United States of Africa with active support by the late Libyan leader, Ghadaffi, who Okhonmina (2009) said "*abandoned Pan-Arabism for Pan-Africanism*". What this represents, is clear case of elite battle for the political soul of Africa.

DIASPORAN ELITE AND AU

As briefly seen above, AU as a continental political body was shaped largely by the internal elitist quest for political dominance in continental scale. We saw this in the futile effort of late Ghadaffi of Libya to birth United States of Africa (USA) as well as the disbanded quest of late Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, leaning on Pan-Africanism, to create same USA. In all this, African elites in diaspora appear silent in terms of contribution to events that will shape continental political future. What this implies, is a continent denied needed expertise to build a political future capable of engaging the west. In another sense, this also calls to question, attitude of place African leaders that tended and actually did scare elites in diaspora from wanting to come home to contribute their quota to development of the continent. However, in an era where most people favour looking inwards to engender internal development as presently seen in Latin America, Africans in diaspora can't afford not to do same. They sure have a role to play in shaping the continental political integration quest using the platform provided by the AU. This is irrespective of whether or not the AU experiment would work out or not. Not much is seen in this direction at the moment but role of African elites in diaspora, is crucial if irreversible political progress is to be made in Africa.

EMERGENCE, SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF O.A.U

The O.A.U came into being on the 25th May, 1963 when 31 government representatives from across Africa signed the O.A.U Charter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Twenty one other states and South Africa later joined the regional body bringing the membership to 53 as at 1994 when South African apartheid regime ended; (Ajala 1983). As plausible as the whole machinery of OAU as a regional organization seems, it was however bugged by

some salient and fundamental problems that necessitated its overhaul as at when it was overhauled. These were among other things, ideological differences among leaders as evident in the sharp divide between English speaking and French speaking countries, poor organization due to inadequate funding and the much vilified principle of non-interference the continental body embraced at formation. It became clear as early as 1979 that the whole essence of regional organization which the OAU represented, needed to be reconsidered. This prompted the formation of a committee to review the OAU Charter so as to streamline it to brace-up with the challenges of a changing world order Eregha (2007) if African voice is to be heard in the scheme of things. Perhaps because of the change the European Union brought to the political landscape in Europe which was so luring to the admiration of African leaders, there was then a need to reposition the continental body.

Consequently, the charter review committee was able to formulate amendment to the flawed OAU charter by recommending that the chapter be augmented through ad-hoc decisions of summit such as the Cairo Declaration that established a mechanism for conflict prevention, resolution and management. It also recommended that urgent steps be taken to enhance the organization to achieve the needed platform for a more efficient and effective regional body. The need to integrate the political activities of the OAU with the economic and developmental issues as articulated in the Abuja Treaty (Ajala 1983), was also canvassed. The Abuja Treaty birthed the African Economic Community in 1994. Another effort made to strengthen the OAU for the challenges of the present world realities, was the Sirte Summit in September, 1999. The Sirte Summit which was the 4th extraordinary summit held at the instance of the Libyan leader, Col Ghadaffi, purposed to amend the OAU Charter.

Dubbed “*Strengthening OAU capacity to enable it to meet the challenges of the new millennium*” (Ajala (1983:37), summit sought to make the OAU as a regional body more efficient and effective. Here, African leaders declared their commitment to accelerate the establishment of regional institutions, including an African Parliament, Court of Justice and Central Bank as the A.U. is presently composed of. The Sirte Summit stressed the following declarations: The need to effectively address new social, political and economic realities in Africa and the world; fulfil the people’s aspirations for greater unity in line with O.A.U objectives. The resultant treaty established African Economic Community; revitalized the continental organization to play a more active role in addressing the need of the people as well as eliminate scourge of conflict within the African continent. Other focus was meeting global challenges and harnessing both human and natural resources of the continent to improve the living condition of the people for sustainable development Hodge, (2002).

To achieve these lofty ideas, the summit while concluding, decided to take some key steps which included the following to enhance the hitherto moribund OAU. First was the establishment of an African Union in conformity with the objectives of OAU so as to strengthen ability of the continental body to meet present continental political challenges. Consequently, other measures such as establishment of the African Economic Community to accelerate implementation of the Abuja treaty that paved way for the creation of African central Bank, African Monetary, Union Parliament. The decision to convene an African Ministerial conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in the continent was also reached, Eregha (2007). Curious mind would want to know why all these measures were taken if the OAU lived up to its billing? As Olufemi (2007) noted earlier, the failure of the OAU, necessitated formation of the AU in 2002. All these laid the foundation stone for the eventual formation of the African Union. Because of the need to make more assertive continental body out of the OAU in the face of global political pressure that made it necessary for African voice to be heard.

UNDERSTANDING THE FAILURE OF THE O.A.U

Aside observed failure of the Organization of African Unity that led to its metamorphosis into African Union in 2002 that can be seen in context, we can as well consider a number of reasons for the transformation. These range from the abysmal performance to complex institutional arrangement that made efficient functioning of the continental body to foster unity in Africa, difficult. While Olufemi (2007) see evolution of AU As mere imitation of the fairly successful European Union (EU), Mukundi (2007) was more concerned about the purpose the new continental body was meant to serve. As he observed, “*the A.U was established to accelerate the continent’s integration process and to strengthen its shared values and common purpose*”. Flaws associated with the structure and organization of the OAU prompted its amendment as we earlier observed. According to Maurizo (2003:3) African leaders under the platform of OAU recognized the need for Africa to progress when they declared at the 29th Summit of Heads of State and Government of OAU in Cairo that

“Despite the fundamental changes that have taken place in the post-independence era and more particularly since the end of the cold war, there is still the need for establishing a close link between development, democracy, security and stability in the years ahead as the

most ideal formula for fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of Africa to a decent life, progress and social justice. This formula will enable us to solve gradually the acute socio-economic and political problems facing the African continent. It will also serve as a proper framework for the preservation of the diverse nature of our nations and societies and further enhancement of the fraternal ties that exist between our states”

Events that earlier took place when in 1979 when a committee saddled with the responsibility of overhauling the OAU framework was constituted., can be said to given the resolution a bite. The Sirte Declaration of 1999 further gave the call for the amendment of the OAU Charter a boost. Thus, by 2000 during the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government meeting in Lome, Togo, African Leaders practically adopted the Constitutive Act of the African Union. This saw the transition of the former OAU to AU. To discerning political minds, this was due to: the need to strengthen and refocus OAU since it was a regional body originally formed to achieve the following. Firstly, secure for Africa, freedom from colonialism and secondly, position Africa for her voice to be heard in world politics, to enhance greater unity of African States and to check cases of internal crises in Africa. Principal aim of these was the need to bring Africa to present world realities where continental political groupings give global political regions, edge in world politics. With EU becoming a near a perfect example of regional political integration for Europe Adejo (2001), others were thus tempted to integrate Olufemi (2007).

In general, the African Union finally adopted the constituting charter in 2001 when South Africa and Nigeria ratified its charter as the 35th and 36th members respectively, with an objective that can be said to be more comprehensive than those espoused by the OAU. Just like what Duncan (2003:76) observed, “The OAU has served its mission and was due for replacement by a structure geared towards addressing the current needs of the African continent”. What can be gleaned from the assertion above is simply the fact that the need to replace the OAU was inevitable because the continental body had completed its mission of securing for Africa, freedom from colonial subjugation and dislodgement of apartheid in Johannesburg. That explains why the OAU which AU succeeded as regional body was aimed at achieving the following objectives: To promote the unity and solidarity of African States, to coordinate and intensify cooperation and efforts of African States to achieve a better life for Africans, to defend the sovereignty of African States as well as their territorial integrity, to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa and to promote international cooperation among African States Eregha (2007).

Comparatively, the objectives of the African Union as contained in the Constitutive Act include the following: to achieve greater unity and solidarity among African countries and Africans, seek to achieve and defend the earned sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the African continent; accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the African continent. Others include to promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and her people; encourage improved cooperation among African states on issues of human rights, taking due account of the chapter of the UN and the universal declaration on human rights; promote peace, security and stability on the African continent; promote democratic principles and institutions as well as people’s participation and good governance; promote and protect human and people’s rights in accordance with the African charter on human and people’s right and other relevant human rights instruments; establish the necessary conditions which will enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations; promote sustainable development at the economics, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies; promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of the African people; coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future regional economic communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the union; advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all field, particularly in science and technology; and work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent (Eregha 2007).

No doubt, the AU Charter espoused broader objectives within the spectrum of its desired change for the African continent; this obviously was an improvement on what the erstwhile regional body provided for. This was in apparent recognition of the fact the time was seen to be ticking away and Africa cannot afford to be left behind in the globalised world of today. According to Ambassador Sule Lamido, (former Nigerian Foreign Affairs Minister)

“...we Africans are essentially on our own, the leaders had to re-think. We have to look inwards to try to create a stronger, more effective process of continental Interaction, something more integrative, merging our economies, markets and

capacity. We have to bring our potentials so that our partners will be forced to engage us” (ThisDay, 2001:21).

What he clearly admonished Africa is simply the need to evolve a pragmatic continental body to chart the developmental course of the continent. This came on the heels of the failure of the O.A.U because African had her voice drowned in world politics while O.A.U lasted, thus making it inevitable to overhaul it. The framework of A.U like we earlier noted, is expected to provide all Africa needs to wriggle free from underdevelopment. Obasanjo (2001:16) aptly observed that “*regional economic cooperation and integration has remained a central pillar of Africa’s development strategy*”. The A.U has the solemn responsibility to achieve this for Africa. This was the view earlier expressed by Mukundi (2007) when he held that; “*The establishment of the African Union in 2002 was meant to accelerate the continent’s integration process and to strengthen its shared values and common purpose*”. Harping further on the need for the A.U, New African (2009) observed that the aim of the A.U is to bring about the deepest possible integration of the continent socially, economically militarily, culturally and politically. This is aptly captured in article 3 (c) of the Union which seeks to “*accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent*”. The question remains why the transformation? Would the mere change of name place Africa on the development pedestal? Why the hue and cry about political integration when the internal economies are highly disarticulated? These and other salient questions, would guide subsequent paragraphs as we consider the possible political reasons that necessitated the transformation of O.A.U to A.U and how same would likely serve as the albatross of the continental body, A.U.

WHAT NECESSITATED THE TRANSFORMATION?

While many scholars would have us accept that seeming failure of OAU to give Africa a political voice in global affairs necessitated the transformation, many are silent about the internal political battle for supremacy among African leaders. Events that shaped the change of name and focus of the continental body showed that politics was at the centre of the transformation. Seen as a high-wired one, the transformation politics has both historical and practical necessity angles to explain it. The historical angle of it has to do with the quest of some African leaders such as late Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Muhammad Gadhafi of Libya to be president of a United States of Africa. Essence of the transformation was thus dwarfed by the subtle quest by these leaders to form a continental government with them as sole leaders.

A peep into history, trace politics of the transformation can be traced to the Pan African movement which late Nkrumah gave a vent with renewed vigour prior to independent Africa. Though African leaders agreed on the need to form a continental body prior to the formation of OAU, they however differed on the steps to take in bringing it to fruition and the extent to which the integrative measure would take. The differences among the rank and file of African leaders birthed the Casablanca and Monrovia groups, with each holding diametrically opposing views. While the Casablanca group favoured unhindered continental political integration, the Monrovia group squared up with a gradualist approach to continental integration. The logjam was resolved to birth the erstwhile regional body, OAU, on the altar of compromise Adejo (2001). Nkrumah played an active role in seeing to it that a United States of Africa was made possible. To confirm his political intention of heading a united continental political body, he however wanted and overtly too, to be the pioneer president. This did not work out as the compromise charter that birthed OAU indicated. While it is enough to conclude that the emergence of OAU put paid to the politics that trailed the formation of the continental body, realities years after revealed the contrary. Today, there is still deep seated political contest for relevance among African leaders.

Such played out in the formation of the AU in 2002. The string of political struggle for continental leadership is still very pronounced Hodge (2002) and Maurizo (2002). Apparently condemning the domineering posture of Col Ghadaffi of Libya in the formation of the AU, Maurizo (2002) had observed thus;

“After his failure with Arab League, Ghadaffi turned his attention to the AU project, hoping to expand his leadership in the region. He even envisages becoming the first president of the United States of Africa and hoped to establish the headquarters in Sirte (Libya)”

A situation like the one painted above, is sure capable of serving as an albatross that will derail the AU and thus, make mockery of the whole essence of continental integration it intends to achieve. If Africa must get it right, conscious effort must be made to obey the spirit of the AU Charter. Personal interest such as that Ghadaffi espouses, must jettisoned to promote continental goals of regional integration. While it can be said that great challenge lies in wait for the AU including paucity of funds, poor economic fortune and disarticulated economies

and the challenge of democratic governance, that of political rivalry among African leaders and their blind quest for power to assuage their selfish craving, remains one potent force that could pull the continental body down.

FACTORS THAT LED TO THE TRANSFORMATION

Besides the practical necessity to overhaul the arguably ailing OAU with a view to evolve a more pragmatic continental political platform to give Africa a voice in global politics, other factors equally played role in the transformation. Intricate politics and the quest for political dominance of African political affairs as seen in the pan-Africanist movement tilted to gratify interest of Africa's political elites necessitated the transformation. Another factor that led to the transformation, was the success recorded in the near perfect union of the European Union, (EU). Voicing his fear, Olufemi (2007) had expressed worries about futility of mere imitation of the EU by Africa in the quest of the former to evolve a continental political platform that can be likened to the latter. Added to these, the continued slip of the African continent into political irrelevance in global affairs, made it all compelling for the OAU to be overhauled.

Hodge (2002) ably captured what I call essence of the transformation when he observed that the regional body became "*an old boy's club where the so-called leaders meet once a year to showcase their ill-gotten wealth*". What this portrays, is abuse of the original purpose of continental unity by those that should promote it. In addition, crucial issues of continental development suffered as personal interest dominated the transformed continental body. If the founding fathers and those that came after them had placed high premium on African unity as a leeway to continental development; the precarious development condition of Africa would have been helped.

From all we have seen above, OAU was an idea whose time for change was long overdue. This was evident in the quest for its overhaul by African leaders. A careful look at the structure of the AU as a regional body reveals a wide range of differences between the former regional body and the new one. If for nothing, scope and objectives of AU far more surpass that of the OAU. Kofi Annan (2004) was apt when hinted on the compelling need for Africa to integrate for development when he observes thus: "*the continent continues to face numerous daunting developmental challenges. Economic growth is still far below what is needed to meet the MDGs of reducing poverty by half by the year 2015...*" The African Economist (2003). Annan merely echoed the need for the AU to brace up for the task of developing Africa in line with the present global realities since OAU could not achieve that.

CAN THE AU WEATHER THE STORM?

While it is gratifying that the OAU was overhauled to birth the AU due to the aforementioned reasons above, one is however still bothered about the future of this new continental political group. Consequently, the question of whether the AU can weather the storm of giving Africa a continental political body like the European Union gave continental Europe, comes readily to mind. While time and events in the coming years would answer, it is however important that we consider key issues that may either aid the AU to succeed or fail. One of such conceptual issue is the structure of the new continental body considered against what obtained in the transmuted continental body. Unlike the OAU which was overly state centric in character, the AU was designed to be a regional organization that aim to achieve economic integration and social development of Africa. In an apparent reference to the desirability of the AU as a functional regional body capable of advancing the African cause, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo in (2001) had posited that; "*it has rightly been seen as a necessity rather than a choice. It has been seen as an essential instrument for faster collective growth and prosperity for the people of this continent*" This can be said to have captured the mind of the founding fathers of the AU for Africa. To them, developing Africa and bringing about her political unity, was a sacred task all Africans must support by supporting the AU framework.

Modelled after the European Union, the AU was envisaged by the founding fathers to be something new from the former OAU and capable of reflecting the African experience. That explained why it was meant to embrace all shades of opinion on the African soil. For instance, the Constitutive Act incorporated African NGOs, Civil Societies, Labour Unions and Business Organizations in the process of cooperation and implementation of the *Abuja Treaty* which remains the watershed of the AU today. This was expressed in the *Ouagadougou Declaration* and provided for in the *Sirte Declaration*. This remains a novel innovation when compared to what obtained under OAU. Again, the AU made provision for gender issues as women were accommodated in the constitutive act. Many see this as a semblance of the EU model that gave women pride of place in the European model of continental political union.

Remarkable changes introduced in the AU as seen in the *Constitutive Act Establishing the African Union* (CAAU), were embraced to dwarf OAU's appalling record seen by many to be too restrictive and as such; were

ill-prepared to develop Africa. To this end, AU is expected to provide Africa the opportunity to brace up for the multifaceted challenges posed by globalization in a rapidly changing world. As Adejo, (2001) observed, “*The constitutive Act of the AU envisages the establishment of a supranational type of executive body that can promote integration and sustainable development more effectively than the former OAU*”. A charge like the one above represents clarion calls for a collective and a determined African effort to seek solution to her developmental problems in a manner that the OAU never did. Though it’s doubtful whether AU ambitious agenda differed from the template the OAU operated with, it’s noteworthy that the desire to extricate Africa from squalor, prompted founding fathers of the AU, to evolved a more pragmatic agenda for the continental body. These include promoting and protecting human and peoples' rights, consolidating democratic institutions and culture as well as ensuring good governance and the rule of law at all levels across the continent. To achieve the latter, *African Peer Review* as an internal inter-governmental checks Mechanism, was launched. By this token, AU can be said to have broken new grounds when mirrored against what OAU Charter provided for.

Furthermore, what can be seen as sweeping changes were introduced in the core objectives of the AU as can be seen from the avowal of the union to engage international community on how to eradicate preventable diseases and promote health care? Article 4 of the AU embodied all that there is in the AU. It contained some basic elements that bordered on the issues of sovereign equality and interdependence, respect of existing borders, peaceful resolution of conflicts, prohibition of use of force, non-interference, peaceful co-existence, rejection of political assassination and acts of subversion. However, the Act broke new grounds in what many considered as weak point of OAU in inter-African relations. The Union in her Constitutive Act, agreed to operate in accordance with the following principles: Participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union; establishment of a common defence policy for the African continent; 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; the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security; promotion of self-reliance within the framework of the Union; promotion of gender equality; respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance; promotion of social justice to ensure balanced economic development; condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of government.

To come to grips with the new vision of the Union, existent organs were expanded with novel changes that reflected the fundamental objectives of the Union, were introduced. This according to late Kwame Nkrumah; “*Salvation for Africa lies in unity...for in unity lies strength and I see it African states must unite or sell themselves out to imperialist and colonialist exploiters for a mess of pottage or disintegrate individually.*”

ORGANS OF THE UNION:

(i) *The Assembly of the Union*

As it was under OAU, this is home to Heads of State and Government of the Union. It constituted the supreme organ of the Union whose decisions are based on consensus, in lieu of which a criterion of two-thirds majority of the member states of the Union applies (Art.6, 2). Nevertheless, procedural matters, including the issue of determining whether a matter is one of procedure or not, are expected to be resolved by a *simple majority* (Art.7, 1). The Assembly of the Union is also empowered to adopt its own rules of procedure (Art.8). Of its many functions, the Assembly is the sole and accredited organ to determine the policies of the Union (Art.9, a), monitor the implementation of policies and decisions of the Union as well as ensure compliance by all member States“(Art.9, e), give directives to the Executive Council on the management of conflicts, war and other emergency situations and the restoration of peace“(Art.9, g), including the appointment of Judges to the Court of Justice (Art.9, h), and Chairman of the Commission and his/her Deputy or deputies (Art.9,i). what is however not clear, is how this differ from what obtained under the largely derided OAU.

(ii) *The Executive Council*

True to its name, the Executive Council of the Union comprised of Ministers of the Union who are Foreign Affairs Ministers member countries. In some cases, members of this arm of the Union are Authorities appointed by the government of member states (Art.10, 1). The Executive Council is saddled with the responsibilities of co-coordinating affairs of the Union and taking decisions such as making policy statements on issues of common interests to the wider continent. With no specific area it is mandated to focus on, the Executive Council, dabbles into matters relating to environmental protection, humanitarian issues and disaster response and relief (Art.13, e), energy industry and mineral resources (Art.13, b). The council as it is popularly called can however delegate any

of its powers or function to any one of the *Specialized Technical Committees*, which shall be responsible to it as stipulated in the provisions of Article 14 of the Act. Those committees are categorized under a wide range of offices entrusted with separate duties. These cover monetary and financial affairs; trade, customs and immigration matters; industry, science and technology, energy, natural resources and environment; transport, communication and tourism; health, labour and social affairs; and education, culture and human resources. In addition to those numerous functions the specialized committees, are expected to prepare projects and programmes in their respective areas of specialization and submit same to the Executive Council. They are also expected to supervise, evaluate and implement decisions taken by the various organs of the Union, including co-ordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the Union, while making reports and recommendations to the Executive Council either under its initiative or upon request (Art. 15.a-d).

(iii) *The Pan-African Parliament.*

As attention shifted from the institution based OAU to people centred AU, it became imperative to embrace a broader platform that can make people's participation in the affairs of the continental body, possible. To this end, the AU made a novel invention by establishing the *Pan-African Parliament*. Saddled with law making responsibility of making law for the continent, the *Parliament* and creation of same, was seen by many as a step in the right direction Duncan (2008). Consequently, the idea was embraced as member states took turn in quick succession, to ratify the instrument setting up the continental parliament seen as the African version of the European Parliament. By February 2004, thirty-two member States of the AU had presented their instruments of ratification of the protocol establishing the African Parliament. Members to the Parliament as provided for in the enabling charter are to be appointed by the ruling governments of member states. The Parliament was inaugurated on 18 March 2004.

In brief, the Parliament shall be the principal judicial organ of the Union, and shall consist of eleven Judges elected by the Assembly of heads of states and government through secret ballot, and by two-thirds majority of its members. In consonance with the Union's commitment to gender issues, the election of Judges must also reflect gender representation. Their term of office would be six years, and may be re-elected only once. In the interim, the parliament was expected to function as a consultative forum for five years before assuming full parliamentary responsibility continent wise. As envisaged, a successive political integration would see the AU parliament in the long run, assuming responsibility for passing legislation for the entire continent. Promoting and protecting human rights across the continent, were top on the agenda of the parliament since I safe-guarded human rights, encourages democracy which serves as a sign-post of good governance.

Novel as this development sounds and the promises of a greater continental unity therefrom, there are however concerns about the possibility of this AU Parliament delivering on its promises of efficient law making for the continent. Why not sounding pessimistic about the success of the parliament, the rocky contours of Africa's democratic development is enough to leave one apprehensive. Unlike the EU where the European Parliament commands continent wide acceptance and respect, mere commitment of the member states to adhere to the AU Parliament's decisions would, may just not be enough. A sure platform is needed to inject fresh dynamism into the continent's search for democratic peace via efficient legislation. This is the challenge since mere pledge to obey the parliament law, doesn't necessarily translate to a successful continental parliament such as the AU parliament.

(iv) *The Court Of Justice*

To deepen root of progress made with the establishment of the continental parliament, the AU also provided for judicial arm to adjudicate issues on continent wide basis. Article 18 of the AU act, established a Court of Justice. Made up of eleven judges, the AU court of justice was saddled with the responsibility of handling judicial disputes brought by the member states before the Union. Judges are appointed into the court in similar manner as that of electing members into the AU parliament. Duration of term of office, is same as that of the parliament too.

(v) *The Commission*

This means the Secretariat of the Union and shall be composed of the Chairman, his or her deputy or deputies and commissioners assisted by a body of staff (Art.20, 1-2). It replaces the erstwhile Secretariat of the OAU. The point of departure from the past is that the Commission has the executive power and authority to set and take initiatives. Its members are elected and assigned with clear political mandate, and a collegial decision making

mechanism. But most important of all, the Commission has also been recognized as the Custodian of the Treaties establishing the Union. Its duties include acting in defence of the interests of the Union under the direction of the Assembly and the Executive Council. It is also mandated to initiate proposals to facilitate the Operations of the organs of the Union, while assisting them to execute the decisions they have taken in the course of their assigned duties. Plausible as these sounds, it is however the continental body, lacked the needed platform to perform. As briefly seen above, interested infested quest for a continental unity as AU would provide, stands on the way of that coming to fruition.

Other organs of the A.U include the permanent representative committee, the specialized technical committee, the economic, social and cultural council as well as the peace and Security Council. Others are the African court of human and people's rights and financial institutions

The list of organs is opened for reconsideration as regards the creation of new organs as well as abolishing existing ones, as time and capacity of the total transformation process may determine. However, the whole process of institutionalization of the Union seems to go on at a snail space. This would not be in the interest of the entire continent in the long run. It in this light that we will briefly highlight some of the challenges that the successful evolution of the AU will encounter.

CHALLENGES BEFORE THE AU

Though the quest African leader is to birth a regional political platform that can give the continent a political voice in global political affairs, this is however not coming without a price. No doubt, the AU faces a lot of challenges. Some of these are already manifesting such as paucity of funds for the Union's activities, why others such as cut-throat rivalry for political leadership of the continental body, would become more pronounced as time progresses. On the basis of these perceptible dangers on the path of the AU to full blown political union for the continent, one postulate that the AU may go the way of the OAU if the bobby traps that drowned the OAU, are not avoided. This can however be averted if conscious effort is made by African leader in sync with informed civil public on continental basis. Of the numerous challenges before the AU, the under listed would suffice for the sake of time and space. Some of the challenges includes: *Unwillingness of African leaders to honour the spirit and letter of the crucial Articles of the Union such as Article 30 that stipulate suspension for any member that comes to power through unconstitutional means.* Language divide as the Francophone and Anglophone divide symbolises as well as the issue of xenophobia in Southern Africa, would hinder integration process in Africa.

While this sounds laudable, it is however expected that African leaders with their sit-tightest hold onto political power, would make mockery of the provision, thus making it the albatross that would aid the fall of the Union. Hodge (2002) was apt when expressed his fears that the AU would likely become docile like the erstwhile OAU which he described as "*old boy's club for corrupt African leaders*". Bobby traps on the path of the AU, remains its inherent failure to make provisions that will making seating governments, accountable. What came close to this was the compromised peer review mechanism that has failed to achieve expected result till date. Checks such as this will propel member states to create an enabling environment needed to integrate marginalized sections of society and the interests and views of minority groups. Anything outside an inclusive continental body, would retard progress and shift the base-line of African political development.

Issue of internal crisis in Africa, is another challenge that AU would face. No continent can achieve meaningful development in the face of constant turmoil like the continent faces at the moment. The conflicting regional agreements are an omnibus sign lurking to wreak havoc of the infant Union; Dearth of basic infrastructural facilities to achieve the lofty dreams of the Union among other necessities, would plague the Union. Decay of infrastructure on continental scale as absence of good roads, reliable telecommunication facilities and other basic needs, will stifle the dream of achieving an AU that can play the role EU plays for Europe. Until these hurdles are crossed, AU as a vehicle for achieving sustainable continental political integration would be a tall dream indeed.

CONCLUSION:

Politics and what it entails to be politically relevant in a globalizing world, is unity of purpose either as a nation or continent. African continent have had it bad in the past especially in the colonial days with domination of the continent in global political affairs. Effort at changing the trend, led to the formation of the OAU which was to be changed to AU later due to practical exigencies discussed above. In an age of globalization, need for an apt response of the African continent to emerging political trends in the world, can never be over-emphasized. It's thus clear that the need for regional integration for Africa, necessitated formation of the AU. Though with

similar name and orientation like the EU, the former however have different historical trajectory from the latter. It is thus expected that the AU would focus on care issues peculiar to the African continent and not just cosmetic imitation of the EU. Focus must be on need to evolve a pragmatic framework beyond mere name, with which Africa can engage the political world. If Africa must succeed in achieving this, some of the However, the road to achieving this has been dogged with bobby traps some of which, we briefly touched above.

If Africa must get it right with the vehicle AU expects to provide, sacrifices need to be made. To this end, intrigues that tended to serve personal interest in the past especially in the days of the OAU, must give way and come under the platform that can bring about sustainable development for Africa. When this happens, AU would then be able to give Africa a voice in the present global political scene that needs collaborative efforts for regional and continental development. In addition, Africa and Africans through their leaders, must rise to the occasion by blurring lines that divides Africa across religious and cultural lines and see Africa as home to all. Personal leadership interest of African leaders must be submerged under the larger continental interest. The Yaoundé Declaration of 1996 on Africa that saw her as “indeed the most backward in terms of development from whatever angle it is viewed, and the most vulnerable as far as security and stability are concerned”, can only be ignored at continental peril. This was equally re-echoed by Adejo, (2001) when he observed thus;

“The success of the AU would require mature African statesmanship that strikes a balance between the desires of member states to Pursue their individual interest, and the political will to forgo certain aspects of national sovereignty and independence for the common good of the continent”

AU as a continental body is a welcome development. For it to succeed, Africa needs the political will to ensure that spirit of the charter, comes alive. To this end, all organs so provided, needs to be active for any meaningful impact to be made. It is only then that Africa can be said to have acquired the needed pedigree to favourably compete in the present world political order where the continent is vulnerably exposed to exploitation and manipulation by developed and powerful countries of the West. Anything outside this, would amount to mere imitation of the EU which Olufemi (2007) cautioned against.

REFERENCES:

- Abutudu, M.I.M (2005), “The Development Crisis” in Ikelegbe, A.O (ed).”Introduction to Politics”, Benin City, Imprint Services, pp298-308
- Adams, Oshomhole (2001), ”Popular Participation and the African Union” in Adagbo Onoja (ed), *plying the foreign pitch*, Vol 2,2000-2002, Abuja, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001, pp119-120
- Adejo, M.A, (2001), From OAU TO AU: NEW Wine in Old Bottles? *African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 4,Nos 1 & 2, pp119-141,2001.
- Adekunle, A., (1983), Background To The Establishment, Nature and Structure of The OAU, *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 14, NO 1
- Ajala, A.(1998), Background to the Establishment, Nature and Structure of the Organization of African Unity, *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.14, No.1, pp35-63.
- Ake, C. (2001), Democracy and Development in Africa, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Arowolo, D.(2008), Contemporary Issues in International Relations, Lagos, Prince way-Gbedu Ent (Nig) Ltd.
- Brazier, C.(2006), ”African United: Not Hopeless nor Helpless”, *African Agenda*,Vol. 3, No 4, 11-15
- Duodu, C. (2002), “Give Unity a Chance”, *News Africa Magazine*, July 29, pp20-22
- Eregha, E.E. (2007), Democratic Governance in Africa: Challenges of AfricanUnion, *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol14, No.3, pp205-214.
- Hodge, T, (2002), From OAU to AU: Same Old Lady, New Dress, Atlanta, *The Perspective*.
- Maurizo, C. (2003), “From OAU to AU: Turning Pages in the History of Africa”, *Focus*, pp 1-3
- Mukundi, G et al,(2007), An African Union Government: *Towards the United States of Africa*, Public Seminar Report by *Institute for Securities Studies and Southern African Trust*.
- Mulikita, K, “The UN Security Council and the OAU”, op. cit p30.
- Murray, R. (1999), Human Rights in Africa: From OAU to African Union,USA, Cambridge University Press.
- Olufemi B. (2007), The EU as a Model for The African Union: The Limits of Imitation, Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series Vol7(2),April

- Okhonmina, S. (2009), The African Union: Pan-Africanist Aspirations and the Challenge of African Unity, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.3(4)
- Pfaltzgraft, R.L Jr, (1972) Politics and the International System, U.S.A, J.B.M Lippincott Company.
- Obasanjo, Olusegun (2001), “African Union: The challenges of Corporation and Integration”, *National Interest*, June 11, 2001, p6
- Steven, L.S, and Fred L.W, 2nd edition, 2003), World Politics in a New Era, Agincourt U.S.A, Brace College publishers, USA.
- Sule Lamido (2001), on “Nigeria has no Reservation on African Union”, *Thisday News paper*, April 8,2001, p21
- The African Economist*, (2003), The OUA: From Establishment to AU, *The African Economist*, Vol. 4, No 12, pp7-12
- Zartman, W. (1966), international Relations in the New Africa, New Jersey
- Charter of both OAU and AU @ www.google.com/wikipedia.com/au

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

