

REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA AND THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRICAN UNION (AU): AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

Regional integration has been known for its inherent benefits to the states. As a concept of international relations, it has brought growth, development, political stability and order in almost all the states of the world that have formed one regional integration system to another. The study examined the achievements, challenges and prospects of African Union since its inception in 2002. In other words, the central thrust of study was to find out about the performance of AU in comparison with the defunct organization of African Unity. The study adopts liberal institutionalism as its theoretical framework of analysis. The study also made use of secondary source of data. The findings of the study as follows: financial problem, high level of unemployment, poor implementation of its programme, poverty, prevalence of dictators and corruption and bad governance. The study recommends the following: that African Union should double its efforts to eradicate corruption and bad governance in the African continent if they are to make progress towards elimination of poverty and African leaders should rise up to their responsibility of funding peacekeeping operations within African States without the involvement of the external bodies/states.

Keywords: *Regional Integration, Africa, Performance, African Union.*

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1. Introduction

Regional integration cannot be overemphasized. It is one of the concepts of international relations. Regional integration refers to the coming together of nations to form either a political union or economic union for a common goal of all. The expectation for regional integration between and among regions is that deeper integration would allow sustained and robust political and economic development and ensure poverty alleviation enhance movement

of goods, services, capital and labour, socio-economic policy coordination and harmonization, infrastructural development as well as promotion of peace and security within and between the region (Adeniji & Agaba, 2014 cited in Sherriff & Nwokedi 2016). Nations that have decided to come together to form one regional integration to another have benefits unaccountably from it because its inherent benefits. For example, nations that are weak economically, socially, politically and militarily have been helped by the members of the union (regional integration system).

It is in the light of the above statements or benefits that led the peoples of African States that have common problems, similar economic products and weak military might to establish OAU. Later, it was transformed from the OAU to African Union (AU) when they have seen that OAU had outlived its usefulness as to gain political liberation and independence for African States, fight against all kinds of discrimination and dismantling of apartheid regime in South Africa as well as solidarity and unity of Africa (Shinkaiye 2006 cited in Bakare 2014). The idea of creating the AU was revived in the mid-1990s under the leadership of Libyan Head of State, Muammar Al-Gaddafi. The Sirte Declaration was subsequently issued by the heads of state and government of the OAU on September 9, 1999 calling for the establishment of an African Union. The Declaration of the AU was established in 2002 with the mandate of fostering good governance, promotion of democracy, human rights protection, conflict prevention, management and resolution, eradication of diseases and alleviation of poverty in Africa, (Bakare, 2014). It is in the crux of the above mandate that was enshrined in the constitutive Act of the AU; that the study would examine the achievements, challenges and prospects AU since its inception. This paper is divided into two sections. Section one discusses the background to the formation of African Union, theoretical framework, objectives of the AU according to the Article 1 of its Charter and organs. Section two examines the achievements, challenges and prospects of African Union, conclusion and recommendations. The study adopts secondary source of data as methodology.

2. Background to the Formation of African Union

The origin of, what is today called, AU can be traced back to 23 November 1958 with formation of the first regional organization, Union of African states (UAS) (Howe, 1959),

from where it evolved. The AU which was open to all African states, however had a membership of only three West African states, however had a membership of only three West African states-namely, Ghana, Guinea and Mali- as no other state joined between 1958 and 1963 when it ceased to exist (Khiss, 1966). By 1963, the organization of African Unity (OAU) was established by 31 newly independent African states in a spirit of Pan-African that aimed to promote economic unity, Collective Security (Zweifel, 2006), with a gradualist approach to political unity (Adeniyi, 2011). The charter of the OAU, which was signed on May 25, 1963, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, reflected the compromise between the radicals (Casablanca Group) and the moderates (Monrovia Group) (Adejo,2001).

At its formation, the OAU charter provided for a loose confederation or association of states whose members undertook the process of coordinating and harmonizing their general policies through cooperation in the political, diplomatic, economic, communication, health, sanitation, nutritional, scientific and technological spheres as well as in defence and security. The scope of regional integration of the AOU was further enhanced by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSCOO of the United Nations (UN) in 1958 as pone of the UN's five regional commissions. ECA's mandate was to promote the economic and social development of its member states, foster intra-regional integration and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. As far back as the mid-1960s, following the birth of the OAU, the Economic and Commission for Africa (ECA) had emerged as the champion of regional integration ,proposing the division of Africa into regions for the purposes of economic development .At the end of 1973, the OAU comprised 42 states and by 1980, the expansion of the OAU meant that African leaders were gradually gravitating towards deeper integration. Thus, the Lagos Plan of 1980 (Akinsanya & Abegurin,1985) was launched as a special integration initiative by the OAU, promoted by the ECA.

The Lagos Plan of 1980 envisaged three regional arrangements aimed at the creation of separate but convergent and over-arching integration arrangement in three Sub-Saharan Sub-regions. While West Africa would be served by the Economic Community of West African States(ECOWAS) , a preferential Trade Area (PTA) was established in 1981 to cover the

countries of Eastern and Southern Africa, which was eventually replaced in 1993 by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (Akinsaya & Abegurin, 1985).

The Lagos Plan was followed up in 1991 by the Abuja Treaty, re-affirming the commitment of the OAU's Heads of States to an integrated African economy (Akinterinwa, 2005). Sadly, intra-African trade remained low and Africa became a theatre of fratricidal and unending of conflicts. While the OAU had a poor record in the area of conflict resolution and management, as well as financial and logistical problem, its coordinating committee for the liberation of Africa however succeeded in forging a consensus in support of liberation struggle and fight against apartheid (Thompson, 1969). In the dying years of the 1990s, most African states numbering about 55 states (including Western Sahara) had achieved independence and by 1994, the apartheid regime in South Africa had been dismantled. At this point, African leaders believed that the visions of the former Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, for the liberation of the continent from colonialism and white minority rule had been accomplished by the OAU and it was time for the establishment of a more integrated union of African states. Besides, the OAU appeared moribund after the liberation were achieved but underdevelopment, poverty, diseases and conflicts persisted (Danso, 1993).

Consequently, on September, 1999, the fourth Extraordinary Session of OAU Heads of states and Government under the leadership of president Muammar Al-Gaddafi adopted the resolution for the establishment of the African Union in Sirte, Libya (Browne, 2005). The Sirte Declaration calling for the establishment of the AU was followed by the Lome Summit of 2000, which adopted the Constitutive Act of the African Union as well as the Lusaka Summit of 2001, which adopted the implementation plan of the AU (Adejo, 2001). The Constitutive Act was ratified on 28 April 2001 and was formally launched by its first president, Thabo Mbeki on July, 9, 2002, Durban, South Africa.

3. Theoretical Framework

The research has adopted the neo-liberal theory in this work as an appropriate theory which has dealt with the African Union regional integration and cooperation. Neoliberalism seeks to update liberalism by accepting the neoliberalist presumption that states are the key actors in

international relations, but still maintains that non-state actors (NSAs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOS) matter. Proponents argue that states will cooperate irrespective of relative gains, and are thus concerned with absolute gains. This also means that nations are; in essence, free to make their own choices as to how they will go about conducting policy without any international organizations blocking a nation's right to sovereignty. Neoliberalism also contains an economic theory that is based on the use of open and free markets with little, if any, government intervention to prevent monopolies and other conglomerates from forming. The growing interdependence throughout and after the cold war through international institutions led to neo-liberalism being defined as institutionalism, this new part of the theory being fronted by Robert Keohane and also Joseph Nye.

Liberal institutionalism argues that emphasis should be placed on global governance and international organizations as a way of explaining international relations. This theory places emphasis on the role that common goals play in the international system and the ability of international organizations to get states to co-operate. Liberal institutionalism therefore rejects the realist assumption that international politics is a struggle for power in which military and security issues are top priority and argues that instead we can "imagine a world in which actors other than states participate directly in world politics, in which a clear hierarchy instrument of policy" (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

Liberal institutionalism argues that in order for there to be peace in international affairs, states must cooperate together and in effect, yield some of their sovereignty to create "integrated communities" to promote economic growth and respond to regional and international security issues (Lamt, 2005). Liberal institutionalism focuses on the idea of complex interdependence as first argued by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the 1970's placing emphasis on four characteristics which differentiate institutionalism from realism and these include: multiple channels which allow for interaction among actors across national borders and which increase the interaction and links between actors and non-state actors; attention is given equally to all issues, that there is no distinction between high and low politics unlike realism in which the emphasis is placed on security issues and the decline of military force as a means by which policy is determined, (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

Furthermore, within a liberal institutionalist model, states seek to maximize absolute gains through cooperation; states are therefore less concerned about the advantages achieved by other states in cooperation arrangements. The greatest obstacle to cooperation in world affairs is non-compliance or cheating by states. By focusing on international organizations like UN, EU, NATO, AU and the world Bank, liberal institutionalism argues for greater emphasis on soft power and cooperation through the forms and procedures of international laws, the machinery of diplomacy and general international organizations, (Bull,1977).

Liberal institutionalism is a very attractive theory to this work and it is easy to apply this to the study borrowing from the foregoing example of the African Union (AU) with various organs and agencies to realize its visions, missions and mandates.

4. The Objectives of the African Union

Omoiya (2005) notes that the objectives of the AU as contained in Article three (3) of constitutive Act are as follows: to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa; to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States; to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent; to promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples; to encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent; to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance; to promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments; to establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations; to promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies; to promote co-operation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples; to coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union; and to advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields

5. Organs of African Union

The African Union is the regional organization for economic and political coordination for the continent African nations. Ogbu, (2015) held that, African Union has the nine (9) organs as provided for in Articles 5 of the Constitutive Act are: The Assembly of the Union; The Executive Council; The Specialized Technical Committees; The Pan-African Parliament; The Court of Justice; The Financial Institutions; The Commission; The Permanent Representative Committee; The Economic, Social and Cultural Council; and The Peace and Security Council.

5.1. Assembly of the Union

The assembly is the supreme of the Union. It will consist of Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives. The Assembly shall meet at least once a year in ordinary session. At the request of any member state and on approval by a two-thirds majority of the member states, the assembly shall meet in extraordinary session. A Head of state or government elected shall hold the office of the chairman of the Assembly for a period of one year. The powers and functions of the Assembly shall be to: Determine the common policies of the Union; Receive, consider and take decision on reports and recommendations from the other; organs of the union; Consider requests for membership of the union; Establish any organ of the Union; Adoption of the budget of the union; Appoint and terminate the appointment of the judges of court of justice and Appoint the Chairman of the commission and determine their functions and terms of office, (AU constitutive Act, Article 9i).

5.2. The Executive Council

The body or organ shall be composed of the ministers of foreign affairs or such other ministers or authorities as are designated by Government of member states. It shall meet at least twice a year in ordinary session. It shall also meet in an extraordinary session at the request of any member state and upon approved by two-third of all member states.

The Executive council shall coordinate and take decision on policies in area of common interest to the member states including the following: Foreign Affairs; Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources; Food, Agricultural and Animal Resource; Livestock Production and Forestry; Water Resources and Irrigation; Environmental Protection, Humanitarian Action

and Disaster Response and Relief; Transport and Communication; Education, Culture, Health and Human Resources Development and Nationality, Residency and Immigration Matters.

5.3. The Specialized Technical Committees

Specialized Technical Committees shall be responsible to the Executive council. The committee comprises of:

- i. The Committee on Rural Economy and Agricultural Matters;
- ii. The Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs;
- iii. The committee on trade, custom and immigration matters
- iv. The Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Energy, Natural Resource and Environment;
- v. The Committee on Health, Labour, Culture and Social Affairs and
- vi. The Committee on Education, Culture and Human Resources.

5.4. The Pan-African Parliament

In order to ensure the full participation of African peoples in the development and economic immigration of the continent, a Pan-African parliament shall be established. The parliament will consist of elected representatives nominated from the five regions of African (North, East, West Central and South) and will ensure civil society participation in the African Union process.

The organ will, if finally establish, have legislative power. The composition, powers, functions and organization of the Pan-African parliament shall be defined in a protocol relating there to, (AU Constitution Act, Article 17).

5.5. The African Court of Justice

A court of justice like the international court of justice shall be established. The court will rule on human rights abuses in Africa using a common legal framework. This will provide the AU with legal teeth with which to try and sentence individuals, bodies or institution in the advent of any breach of law.

5.6. The Financial Institution

Three financial institutions will be established under the auspices of the African Union. The institutions are: The African Central Bank, the African Monetary fund and the African investment Bank. The rules and regulations governing their activities are to be defined in protocol.

It is expected that these institutions will assist in the cooperation, integration and development of African economies. The proposed financial institutions have a vital role in enhancing greater productive and infrastructural development throughout the continent.

5.7. The Commission

The commission forms the secretariat of the African Union and consists of the Chairman, his deputy or deputies and eight other commissioners. They will be assisted by the necessary staff for the smooth functioning of the commission. The body deals with administrative issues and implements the decisions of the African Union. The structure, function and organization of the commission are determined by the assembly.

The Commission is at present structured into: Bureau of the interim Chairperson; Commissioners; Peace and security; Political affairs; Infrastructure and energy; Social affairs; Human resources, science and technology; Trade and industry; Rural economy and agriculture; and Economic affairs.

There is no doubt that if these committees carry out their assignment effectively, the work of the Union will be much enhanced.

6. Achievements of African Union

6.1. New Image for Africa

The African Union has become the voice of the African continent on the global level. Many times, the United Nations and the European Union just decide to follow the position of the African Union on African problems. Morton (2016),

6.2. Improved relations with the industrialized world

Through New Partnership for African Development, the African Union has been able to create a better relationship between the world's industrialized nations and Africa. NEPAD had relationship with the World Bank in the early formulation of the programme. The World Bank including Callisto Madaavo, the Vice-President for the African Union was involved in preparing the background materials for drafting the NEPAD document. Furthermore, during the annual regional consultation of U.N agencies working in Africa in January 2002, the world Bank presented several proposals for pursuing NEPAD programmes in the areas of infrastructure, agriculture, regional trade, health, nutrition, population, Education, community driven development and capital flows. Particular emphasis was placed on fighting corruption and on the inauguration of appropriate budget and financial system that will make African governments more accountable, as well as a conscientious implementation of the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP), (Saleh, 2012). Through the programme, African leaders are making a commitment to the African people and the world to work together in rebuilding the continent. It is a pledge to promote peace and stability, democracy, sound economic management and people centred development and to hold each other accountable in terms of the agreements outlined in the programme, (Saleh, 2012).

6.3. Continental Peace

The African Union has achieved a certain level of peace and security on the African continent. For example, a 7000-man African Union peace-keeping force was formed and sent into Darfur to maintain peace. The African union also successfully mediated in the conflict that erupted in Cote d'Ivoire and that country is now enjoying relative peace. Again, through the activities of the AU peace and Security Council, the number of civil wars in Africa has decreased since the creation of the AU from eight in 2002 to four in 2012, (Paterson, 2012). This has further reduced as Northern Mali conflict has also been recently resolved with the signing of a peace accord in 2015 with the Azawad rebels. AU peacekeeping operations have been deployed to Burundi and Somalia. Other places where African Union had maintained peace and stability were Darfur and Cote De Voire in a crisis between two warring factions through mediatory role, (Sherriff and Nwokedi, 2017).

6.4. Ensuring Credible Elections and Promotion of Democracy

The African Union has been monitoring elections in various parts of the continent. This has helped to ensure credible elections and the installation of legitimate governments in many member states. For example, eleven coup d'états were recorded in Africa since the emergence of AU and all the countries where these coups took place were suspended immediately. Some of these countries include; Mauritania, Guinea, Niger, Madagascar, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali Guinea Bissau and Central African Republic (CAR) (Paterson,2012 cited in Zoaka 2018). Consequently, all these suspended countries from AU have since returned to democracy and were subsequently readmitted into the supranational entity called the AU. This was made possible because military rule was completely outlawed. Within the AU, democracy would be a condition for membership. Only democrats would be allowed to work together. Those who came to power through the bullet process would be kept sway. This was not the case during the time of OAU (Egbo, 2003 cited in Zoaka, 2018).

6.5. Promotion of Socio-economic Integration of the Continent

In pursuit of prosperity in the region, the AU has in place declarations and institutions to promote and support integration among its 54 member states as the pathway to sustainable development .Progress has been made by the AU commission, in collaboration with international partners and U.N, towards better coordinating and harmonizing development policies and programmes with the five(5) Regional Economic Communities (REC'S) representing the various geographical regions of the continent. Some of these RECs, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development (SADC), have been quite active in exploring possibilities to harmonize budgetary and fiscal policies and for a monetary union on the basis of a common currency. Proposal for an African monetary union at the continental level are still on the drawing board, as vested interest and concerns about sovereignty hold back the necessary political will to drive the process, (Sherriff and Nwokedi, 2017).

6.6. Reduction in Military Intervention in Politics

Hitherto, there had been military adventures on the African continent, disrupting the march of the continent toward democracy. The African Union has been able to dampen the resort to military coups on the continent, bringing a measure of stability onto the political scene. The Constitutive Act of the AU frowns upon coups.

It was added by Paterson (2012) that the AU has successfully discouraged unconstitutional change of government in Africa such that military intervention in African politics has become anachronistic. Between 2003 and April 2013, 11 coup de 'tat, took place in Africa. The AU suspended Mauritania, Guinea, Niger, Madagascar, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, and CAR from its membership between 2008 and 2013 (Paterson, 2012).

6.7. Establishment of AU institutions

The AU has successfully established its constitutional organs such as the African Union Parliament African and the African Court of Justice.

7. Challenges of African Union

7.1. Financial Problems

One of the main problems of the African Union is the inadequacy of financial resources to prosecute its objectives. The member states find it difficult to pay their membership dues regularly. This is a spillover from the days of the Organization of African Unity. By the time the A.U. was establishing, member states owed the former organization US\$50m in unpaid dues by member states. This financial problem slows down the union's activities. It was added by Zoaka (2017) in his book, the future of African Union and the lesson from Brexit, that this financial problem has greatly affected African Union in the area of conflict resolutions. The Union needs funds to its ambitious programmes such as peace keeping operations and peace enforcements in crises areas but the contributions from member states are at best lethargic and this makes the Union to rely more on external donors for its activities. It was added that AU needs to run the organization its expected point is \$500 million that is estimated will be needed each year to run a prototype of the European Union (Onuoha, 2008:p

130 cited in Moses 2017).But the problem is that the member states have not been able to pay their annual dues which amounted to \$ 30million.This is a serious setback that will bring out in member nations underdevelopment.

7.2. High level of Unemployment

A major challenge confronting the necessitating AU and its leaders is how to respond to the job and livelihood aspirations of Africa's youth who account for as much as three-quarter of the labour force in most countries. Many have gone to school and attended universities to become productive members of the society, but end up being jobless. High and still rising levels of unemployment among young people in Africa prompted heads of state at the AU summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, to adopt a 'Declaration on creating employment for accelerating youth development and empowerment', (Zweifel, 2006).

7.3. Poor implementation of its Programmes

The AU has been unable to implement and monitor its programmes such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program(CAADP).According to (Paterson.,2012), the African Peer Review Mechanism which sought to address democratic deficits and to oversee import tax and electoral reforms, only about seventeen countries have undertaken its review process out of thirty three that have joined APRM. So, the point here is that, compliance with the mechanism has been hampered by the non-binding nature of its findings and capacity constraints at the national level, (Zoaka, 2017 cited in Sheriff and Nwokedi, 2017). According to Serriff (2017), added that the implementation of AU programs was caused by the voluntary compliance of states, and lack of cooperation by states. This will continue to undermine the AU performance.

7.4. Poverty

The level of poverty in African States is getting worsening by the day and it needs an urgent attention and programe that will bring about development. According to Minter,1999, the 48 countries that make up Sub-Saharan Africa are home to the 10 per cent of the world's population that have struggled to survive on 1 per cent of the world's income. 17 per cent of

some of the world's poorest people live in Africa, second only to the 34 per cent that live in South Asia. It is also estimated that, 51 per cent of the people that live in African nations live under the world poverty line. Nearly over 415 million of the 815 million people in Africa have to live on less than \$1.00(US) a day (Minter, 1999; JICA 1999 cited in Moses 2017). Poverty has increased in both the rural and urban areas of many African countries in the wake of prolonged internal strife, political upheavals and adverse climatic conditions such as drought, desertification, and flood to mention a few (Olaniyan, 1996).

7.5. Other Groupings

The African continent has other separate groups within the African Union. Some of these groupings include the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, WAEMU, SADCC, etc. These regional groupings compete for loyalty with the African Union and the duplication of their objectives is a contribution to wastage of resources.

7.6. Prevalence of Dictators

Some member states of the African Union continue to be run by dictators and pseudo-democrats. This is in spite of the fact that they still promote Pan-African democracy in member states. Of the 54 member states of the African Union, only 16 were considered truly democratic and only eight of the countries had a free media (Morton, 2016). The AU has been criticized for only sanctioning military coups and not extensions to presidential term limits. It is paradoxical that the AU, which seeks to promote democratic ideals has its symbolic head Robert Mugabe who has been in power in Zimbabwe since 1980 (Sheriff, 2016).

Low rates of intra-African trade continue to be exacerbated by poor infrastructure, high tariffs unwieldy customs procedures, and a lack of diversity in production, (Paterson, 2012).

7.7. Corruption and Bad Governance

Corruption and bad governance still remain a carryover from the previous OAU and this is found across the length and breadth of Africa. Some AU members currently have some corruption allegations against them. For instance, Jacob Zuma of South Africa is facing trial over arms deal worth billions of dollars, (Zoaka, 2017). These two hydra-headed phenomena

have distorted development in the various African States that make up the AU, and would consequently, have a correlation effects on the union. It was also stressed by Ayittey (2012) that, corruption epidemic in African countries owes its existence to the long-term tenure of their dictators. Examples of past dictators with long tenure include Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie (44 years), Gabon's Omar Odimba Bongo (42 years), Libya's Moammar Gaddafi (42 years), Togo's Gnassingbé Eyadéma (37 years), and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak (31 years). Similarly, some of the current dictators with tenure spanning more than three decades include Angola's José dos Santos, Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Mbasosgo, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, and Cameroon's Paul Biya. African leaders have not really considered the practical aspect of democratization and without democratization; it is very difficult to build strong political structures devoid of any form dictatorial or sit-tight to power syndrome as this will always militate against economic growth and development (Moses, 2017).The level of corruption in Africa has got so high to the point of underdevelopment. Again, Corruption is seen as cancer that has plagued the region for so long and has been responsible for underdevelopment of the continent. The issue of corruption is in fact a common place that has seen Africa retrogress pathetically from developing or witnessing any form of socioeconomic or political growth. The effect of corruption is so pervasive that it has given us poor image amongst the comity of nations and has borne fruits in unemployment, low foreign direct investment, low quality and standard of education and low standard of living. All these indicators point to how badly development of the continent have been affected, (Moses, 2017).

7.8. Health aspect

It has been estimated that, 34.2 million have been infected with HIV in developing countries and about 75 percent of those persons live in Sub-Saharan Africa alone. The sum of this number makes up approximately 70 percent of the world's incidence of the deadly infection as African countries are limited to spending only about \$165 million a year to fight the scourge of AIDS, and most of the money comes from the advanced and industrialized countries as Africa's fragile economy cannot support such effort alone. Again, another disease that continues to ravage the continent has been malaria and as Okowa (2012) argued, in Africa alone, the estimated annual direct and indirect costs of malaria were US\$800 million in 1987

and exceeded US\$1800 million by 1995. Malaria undermines the health and welfare of families, endangers the survival and education of children, debilitates the active population and impoverishes individuals and countries. Accordingly, the Director-General of the World Health Organization- Dr. Margaret Chan said that, an estimated 278 million people in Africa still live in households without a single insecticide-treated bed net, and about 15 million pregnant women remain without access to preventive treatment for malaria. Malaria is still responsible for over 430, 000 child deaths in Africa every year. Emerging drug- and insecticide-resistance continues to pose a major threat, and if left unaddressed, could trigger an upsurge in deaths (Chan, 2014). The socio- economic aspects of a disease is a significant factor in the epidemiology and control of the disease. Malaria causes significant economic losses, and can decrease gross domestic product (GDP) by as much as 1.3% in countries with high levels of transmission. Over the long term, these aggregated annual losses have resulted in substantial differences in GDP between countries with and without malaria, particularly in Africa (Okwa, 2012 cited in Moses, 2017).

The health costs of malaria include both personal and public expenditures on prevention and treatment. In some heavy-burden countries, the disease accounts for: Up to 40% of public health expenditures; 30% to 50% of inpatient hospital admissions; Up to 60% of outpatient health clinic visits. Malaria disproportionately affects poor people who cannot afford treatment or have limited access to health care, trapping families and communities in a downward spiral of poverty. Malaria is the commonest cause of work and school absenteeism in the tropics. It is the commonest cause of outpatient attendance in sub-Saharan Africa. Economic costs due to malaria are enormous if quantified (Okowa, 2012 cited in Moses, 2017).

7.9. Poor Performance of African Standby Force

African Standby Force has not performed wonderfully well in its operational and strategic plan and command as well as its maintenance of peace and security in troubled African states.

The issue of HIV/AIDS in Africa is another setback to the future of ASF. Previous deployment of troops to war torn countries such as Liberia, Burundi and the DRC has

contributed to relative stability. On the other hand, the spread of HIV/AIDS is partly blamed on those troops deployed for peace keeping. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) records, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high among African armed forces, and presents serious challenges towards troop contribution for the ASF. High prevalence leads to alarming loss of experienced senior officers at all levels of command, and loss of specialized and technically trained staff that cannot be replaced within a short period of time. The other concern is fear of attending injured soldiers due to possibility of contacting the virus, blood transfusion is no longer safe due to the virus and this is becoming one of the limitations of medical support provision during military operations. This is a challenge that requires regional leaders' commitment to address HIV/AIDS pandemic, (The CERTI home page, 2007). Logistical support is a primary and fundamental challenge for deployment due to lack of sufficient logistics and equipment stocks to support peacekeepers in-theater, as well as mission specific items such as communications equipment. Transportation is also fundamental; this includes airlift or sealift into a mission area, and appropriate vehicles for the mission once in the field. It is also important to address the issue of equipment standardization at regional level to enable deployment with inter-operable equipment in order to reduce the cost of logistics support. Colonialism and the Cold War influenced procurement of military hardware among African nations, hence a mixture of Western and Eastern Block military hardware making it difficult to standardize. However, standardization in key areas where interoperability is essential such as inter-unit communications is required, but would have to be discussed within regions because this will impact national governments' defense procurement practices. Each region requires the capability to stockpile essential equipment to facilitate rapid deployment of equipment, thus a need for suitable central logistics facility to further enable a cost-effective logistics support (Vanessa & Mark, 2007). On the other hand, poor lines of communication between these facilities and deployment areas present another challenge to rapid deployment capability, especially, during wet seasons when roads are difficult to negotiate. The ASF framework has proposed a system of AU Military Logistics Depot (AMLDD), a logistics structure and re-supplies system based on the UN logistics base concept, with each region having its regional logistics depot and the AU depot will be established at Addis Ababa, (Richard & Jakki, 2006). In developing its African Standby Force concept, the AU needs to provide a clearer understanding of the role of these forces and

identify a common doctrine and strategy to guide the sub-regional groups in developing their roles

Mohammed (2010) summarized the challenges of African Union in his article; reflections on the challenges and prospects of African Union as some instances of bad governance, huge foreign debts, unfair terms of trade, crushing poverty, and endemic armed conflict which, together with other constraints, present a formidable threat to the progress of the African body. The dilemma posed by the dichotomy between state sovereignty and regional integration is another obstacle that cannot be overlooked. There are, also, the problems created by colonial/territorial boundaries. Traveling across the border from one African country to the next remains a nightmare, with numerous road checkpoints where ordinary travelers and traders routinely have to part with money before border officials on duty allow them to get through.

By far the most outstanding and most crucial challenge confronting the AU and Africa's quest for integration, however, is the non-performance of the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the continent. These include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (COSASS), the Economic Community of Central African States ((ECCAS), and the Southern Africa Development Commission (SADC) to mention but some. The reactivation and harmonization of the RECs is what would actually propel both the AU's integration process and Africa's economic development forward. Considering the large membership of the AU (53 nations) and other peculiar characteristics of the African continent, the RECs are essential building blocks whose effective function is a vital prerequisite to any successful integration process on the continent, (Mohammed, 2010).

Significantly, however, the question of external support from Europe and other parts of the developed world presents a double-edged sword. The exclusive support of a 'godfather' in the African scenario - France, Britain or Portugal, for instance - on the basis of past colonial ties, tends to produce zones of influence which could only exacerbate the prevailing trend of dependency and division on the continent. Unfortunately, the godfather syndrome is already a

reality in African politics, as almost all the countries have continued to depend on their former colonial masters for economic viability and for their security/defense needs, since independence. But in spite of its comforts, the godfather factor serves as a great disincentive to the continent's integration agenda. To a large extent, it is responsible for the low level of trade and cooperation among African countries and, for that matter, the ineffectiveness of the RECs, (Mohammed, 2010).

8. Prospects of the African Union

Ghana and Africa recently celebrated the centenary of Kwame Nkrumah's birth. The ultimate dream of Kwame Nkrumah and the rest of the founding fathers of African unity was not only the creation of a United States of Africa, but above all guaranteeing the Continent's true independence by making it economically self-sufficient,(Nkrumah, 1957).The unified states of Africa that Nkrumah was advocating was one with one continent, one government, common market, common currency, one central bank, and one military command called the "African high command." This idea could not be realized in the early years of independence due to suspicion among African leaders in discussing the need and requirements of African unity. The late Osagyefo preached that the only path to the actualization of this goal was for Africa to LOOK WITHIN rather than place reliance on external sources. Unfortunately, successive generations of Africa's leaders, in utter disregard of this guiding principle, have chosen to run after foreign investors whose ambitions and aspirations are not exactly the same as Africa's. Of course, in today's interdependent world Africa cannot act in isolation but the focus must remain intra-African, (National Open University, 2014).

For African governments the greatest challenge now is to demonstrate in practical terms their readiness to embark on a deliberate, sustained and practicable plan to transfer elements of state sovereignty to the newly established AU supranational institutions (since nationalism and integration are incompatible), as well as a pursuit of the progressive fusion of national economies, the removal of tariffs and trade barriers among African nations, the creation of a common market, and the progressive harmonization of their social policies. In all seriousness, the maxim for the 21st Century and beyond should be "The Prosperity of Ghana, Nigeria or South Africa is meaningless unless it is linked with the prosperity of the entire African

continent." Indeed, if there is one thing that governments on the Continent should do in honour of the legacy of Kwame Nkrumah and the rest of the Founding Fathers of African Unity, this is it, (National Open University, 2014).

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no doubt that AU has a lot of good policies in place which could put Africa on the right direction, engender stability and lead to steady development on the continent. But implementation has been a very serious challenge resulted from lack of political will on the parts of the African leaders.

The study revealed also that AU has not done much in its quest for the achievements of its set out objectives in its constitutive act. That is to say that the challenges are more than that of the achievements made since its inception in 2002. Some of these are being summarized below- financial problem, high level of unemployment, poor implementation of its programmes, prevalence of dictators, corruption and bad governance and poor performance of African Union Standby Force.

The following recommendations were arrived at:

- i. African union should double its effort to eradicate corruption and bad governance on the African continent if they are to make progress towards elimination of poverty and other critical issues that have hampered development and growth in Africa.
- ii. Another significant point is that the African leaders should rise up to their responsibility of funding peace keeping operations within African states without the involvement of the external bodies/ states for financial assistant.
- iii. The sit-tight power syndrome of some of the African leaders should also be discouraged.
- iv. There should be speedy implementation of its programmes and policies.

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