Diaspora, African Union and Sustainable Regional Integration in Africa

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Abstract

The role of African Union in the African integration project has remained a topical issue among scholars. Various views have been canvassed on how to strengthen African Union for a more effective regional integration in Africa. This paper examined the central role the African Diasporas can play in repositioning African Union for a sustainable regional integration in Africa. Its analysis of the situation was anchored on the mo-functionalist integration framework and applied essentially the secondary data gathering techniques. Among other recommendations, it suggested for the creation of a pan-African Diaspora Organization.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the question of Diaspora, its relationship to the African Union (AU) and sustainable regional integration in Africa has dominated discussions among scholars across Africa and beyond in recent times. The contention here is that African Diasporas have a major role to play within the framework of the AU to drive sustainable regional integration in the continent based on their specialized or professional training, experience and exposure. The formation of the AU as a replacement for the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) was conceived as a paradigm shift in continental thinking towards a new era of African cooperation. It has been suggested that the African Diaspora is a major component in the matrix of continental renewal and cooperation if the African Union can make meaningful impact in this direction.

For the purposes of clarification, it is important for us to understand the meaning of Diaspora, especially in the African context. The term "Diaspora" has become a subject of debateamong scholars in terms of its conceptual clarity. Vertovec (1999:1), has argued that the term is a loose word that is

used today to describe "practically any population, which is considered 'de-territorialized' or 'transnational'. He went further to suggest that such de-territorialized or trans-national population must have originated in a land other than that which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the border of other states, or in fact, span the globe.

The implication of the above view by Vertovec is that such population must have a link to their native territories and affect their native territories through new and more advanced forms of social, economic and political processes. Again, it is interesting to observe that such Diasporic populations are growing more in prevalence, numbers and more importantly in self awareness. Unlike other Diaspora populations across the world, especially in the USA and Europe, the African Diaspora has a special history anchored on the logic of slave trade and other forms of forceful displacement by powers from outside the continent. At the point of the extirpation of slave trade, these scattered African populations were consumed by a new awareness of identity giving rise to various forms of agitations.

Hence, the concept of African Diaspora takes a cue from the globalized nature of blackness as a common identity and people of similar historical and cultural origin. Diaspora as a term, according to the American Institute for Cultural Diversity (2013), is derived from the Latin word *'diaspeireiri,* which simply means 'disperse' or 'dispersal'. In this paper, therefore, the term 'Diaspora[1] is employed to depict Africans, who for one reason or the other are dispersed outside of the African continent.

We have hinted above that the African Diasporas are people of African heritage or descent that were forcefully displaced or dispersed from Africa by forces beyond their control, in the course of time, various manifestations relating to the historical dimensions of the African Diaspora have emerged such as 'Back-to-Africa' campaign initiated by Marcus Garvey; 'pan-Africanism' pioneered by George Padmore, 'African nationalism' which became the dominating philosophy during the decolonization period, and 'Afrocentricism' which emerged as a continental ideology in the early 1980s.

In other words, the African Diasporas have been significant players in the construction of our national and continental narratives in the drive towards regional integration or creating of alliances and even in global political economies. Within the context of academic discourse, we observe that much of recent commentaries on the issue of Diaspora appear to approach the subject in three perspectives, which include the Diaspora as a social form; as a type of consciousness and also as a mode of cultural production. Taken together, these three dimensions dovetail into a new dimension, which is regional integration. The important question here is: How can the African Diaspora fit into the African Union and drive sustainable regional integration in the continent? That is the crux of this paper- to examine the linkage between the Diaspora. AU and sustainable regional integration in Africa.

Apart from the introduction, this paper is divided into five sections. The first section examines the theoretical foundations of integration. Here, we will appraise the relevance of integration theory in Africa with special emphasis on the neo-functionalist model of integration. In doing this, the section will look at some European integration theories in relation to the African realities. Section two dwells on the challenges to regional integration in Africa, i.e. the perceived obstacles to effective regional integration in Africa such as socio-economic and political obstacles. In section three, we did an overview of the AU and the challenges of regional integration in Africa while section four analyzes

the place of the African Diasporas in strengthening the AU for sustainable regional integration. Section five concludes the paper and makes recommendations.

Theoretical Foundations of Integration in Africa

Very often, scholars have tended to deploy many analytical frameworks to explain the process of integration in Africa. These frameworks, no doubt, emanate from the various integration theories that shaped the European Union, which have formed a huge part of international relations and have been studied in great detail.

Though we will still look at some of these theories, we want state emphatically that this paper is anchored on the neo-functionalist theory of integration. The reasons for adopting this framework will become very glaring in the course of this section. In arriving at this model of integration analysis in Africa, we have to look at the trajectory of theoretical analysis from the European Union. We say this because scholars in international relations have devoted time to study the history of the EU and its processes of integration, and this is why each time we talk about integration process the EU comes to mind. This is so because the "EU has fewer competences and sovereignty than nation-states, but experiences a higher level of supra-nationality and integration than other international organizations like the United Nations" (Stefan Michel, 2012:9).

But the truth is that we can no longer restrict our examination of integration theories by concentrating on the European Union alone basically because the road to integration in other regions of the world did not essentially follow the pattern of European integration.

In Africa, for instance, the continent has experienced several efforts in her integration process. Integration theorists have always claimed to provide an all-inclusive framework to, explain the process of integration but it does appear that these theories have not adequately explained Africa's case. Hence, we see scholars who have tried to explain Africa's integration process from the prism of federalism or liberal inter-govermentalism or neo-functionalism. Therefore, in adopting a theoretical framework for this paper, it is necessary that we examine some of these theories and see how they bear on Africa's integration process.

The reason for this is simple. A lot of scholars have approached African integration from various perspectives and this is a clear indication of the difficulty of adopting one theoretical approach. If we compare the European Union integration to African integration, we would notice that both processes have been driven by ideology; only that the difference is that African ideology of integration has been bogged down by a number of factors. This is why we see many scholars adopting purely descriptive analysis in explaining African integration by dwelling on the historical development of the former OAU, for example and the present AU. Others have attempted to create a theoretical foundation for African integration by attempting to explain the failure of integration in Africa while others have attempted to explain the partial success of the process in the continent. The truth is that all these approaches do not provide a clear theoretical focus for Africa's integration process. Thus, for us to navigate a theoretical framework for African integration we have to take recourse to integration theories in Europe and adapt same for Africa.

It is generally agreed among scholars of international relations that serious academic examination of regional integration gained currency from 1951 to 1957 following two remarkable events in Europe. The first was the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 and the second was the conclusion of the Treaties of Rome in 1957.

The earliest attempts to explain the European integration came from the functionalists and the realists. The realists advocated the theory of federalist integration. For the realists, the ultimate aim of integration project in every region of the world appears to be the federalist integration as depicted in the European Union (EU). In the view of Hill and Smith (2005:20), the major factor that accounts for European integration is federalism. The , argument is that federalism is not just another ideology or political philosophy but an organizing theoretical concept that drives integration.

As Wiener and Diez (2004:26), remarked, "Federalist integration is a way of bringing together previously separate, autonomous or territorial units to constitute a new form of union". It is this driving force to create a federation that has led to the establishment of what we can refer to as a federal Europe. The thinking behind federalist integration in Europe is that the political strategy of small, concrete economic steps would culminate in a federal Europe. The aim of the European Union, for example, is to integrate different entities without assimilating them.

According to Weiner and Diez (2004:29), within the EU, although bodies are working in partnership, difference and diversity is acknowledged. In practice, 'previously discrete, distinct, or independent entities come together to form a new whole- a union in which they merge part of their autonomous selves while retaining certain powers, functions and competences fundamental to the preservation and promotion of their particular cultures, interests, identities and sense of self-definition' (Wiener and Diez 2004:29).

The critical element here has to do with finding the right balance between self rule and shared rule, about being a unified entity and maintaining diversity and difference. This is one of the greatest appeals of federalist integration. Federalist integration focuses essentially on what Hill and Smith (2005:21), refer to as 'high polities', i.e. major issues of violence and political order. This form of integration is interested in unification in a bid to tackle international anarchy and the conflicts which arise from them. Federalist integration, no doubt, has had a great impact on the growth of the European Union in terms of its values and purpose.

Another form of regional integration is what is often called functional integration. David Mitrany (1966), is regarded as the major proponent of this concept of functional integration. Functional integration, according to Mitrany (1966), refers to the integration of technical or non-controversial activities of nations. He adopted the terms "technical" and non-controversial to separate non-political activities of states from the political issues.

Functional integration is premised on the assumption that effective integration can-only be achieved when political and non-political issues are separated. These non-political issues, according to proponents of this concept, include social, economic, scientific and technological issues. This separation, according to the functionalists is necessary because political issues, almost always are controversial. However, this kind of separation between the political and non-political realms is always difficult.

As theories of integration, federalism and functionalism do not rank with neo-functionalism but they offer explanations for integration in general and in international cooperation in Europe in particular. Stefan Michel (2012:18) has noted that no single theory of federalism or functionalism is available to explain integration in Africa basically because many scholars dealing with federalism, for example, have linked it to specific political projects. The specific outcome of federal integration is not a fixed concept.

In exploring this assertion, Weiler (2003:75), argues that the EU was probably not established with the goal of being a federation. He exemplifies his argument by referring to the constitutionalizing steps that have taken place since the establishment of the EU; such as the creation of direct effect and supremacy of the European law through the European Court of Justice. The federalist theory of integration has been seriously criticized for lacking explanatory power in defining integration processes in other regions of the world like Africa. Though the apostles of this theory maintain that it is not another ideology, some scholars like McKay (2004:70) see it as a mere ideology and challenge the validity of the assumption that security issues and threats are the drivers of regional integration. McKay also has problems with the assumption that federalist integration sees the starting point in inter-state bargains, which are mostly presumed, to provide some kind of constitutional setting, which regulates all relationships between different levels of government.

This leaves us with the neo-functionalist model in explaining regional integration in Africa. The neo-functionalists criticize the assumptions of the federal and functionalist theories on the ground that regional integration in any region of the world is a gradual process. The pitfalls in both the federal and functionalist theories of integration gave rise to the neo-functionalist theory of integration which was championed by Ernest B. Haas.

The contention of neo-functionalism in integration is located on the notion that very often the motivation towards integration comes from national governments. The neo-functionalists believe that the separation between the political and non-political spheres is usually very tenuous and this is why they argue that nation-states are motivated to come together under regional groupings for both socio-economic, technical, security and political reasons and this is why they are always emphatic about the concept of "spill-over".

This concept simply assumes that integration among states in one issue-area usually spills over into other areas- be it non-political or political. The implication of this assumption is that integration is a thoroughgoing process that admits no isolation or separation; hence the issue of separating the political from the non-political realm becomes an abstraction basically because it is through such inter-sectoral integration among states that an interdependent web is created in the form of regional groupings.

According Haas (1958), as this inter-sectoral integration is established, national governments get involved with a view to giving a sense of direction to the process of integration. It is important to make certain clarifications here. Neo-functionalism is not just an improved version of the functionalist theory of integration primarily because neo-functionalism shows some fundamental differences to functionalism. For instance, neo-functionalists argue that the role of any emerging international organization was considered to be greater than initially thought.

The meaning of this is that such emerging international organization serves as an actor in future integration processes. This is why Niemann and Schmitter (2009:45-66) argued that supra-national institutions are usually seen as actors in international relations capable of developing their own interests and stimulating the integration process. Regional integration in African has, in recent years, taken on the character of neo-functionalist integration especially since the emergence of AU and the creation of the NEPAD framework, which emphasizes inter-sectoral cooperation in the continent. In Africa, this inter-sectoral cooperation has manifested in conflict resolution,   peace-keeping, economic

cooperation, and trade agreements etc. Thus, the best approach to explaining integration in Africa is the neo-functionalist perspective.

Challenges to Regional Integration in Africa

There is no doubt that a lot of challenges beset contemporary integration projects in Africa. Kennes (2007), has argued that the viability and effectiveness of regional integration is ultimately determined by the internal strengths and weaknesses of the member countries as well as the extent to which they are prepared to meet their obligations to their integration institutions. The concept and design of integration schemes assumes that member states would have the capacity and ability to make good their obligations and live up to commitments undertaken.

Regrettably, African efforts at regional integration have not yielded the desired results. This failure could be gleaned from a number of perspectives but basically we can contend that such failure is a reflection of the enormous constraints which African countries experience at their respective country levels. Scholars like Tesfaye (2007), Kennes (2007), Lawrence and Schiff (2004) have identified two broad categories of challenges to contemporary regional integration in Africa.

The first category has to do with poor political commitment and lack of organizational coherence within national governments. There is also the problem of lack of national consensus in support of regional integration in Africa. The second category of challenges is the supply side constraints, which includes low level of economic integration, lack of ideological direction etc. Let us examine these challenges in more detail.

There is no doubt that Africa's regional integration process is a function of the political will and commitment by member states to build and nurture the process. Incidentally, at the various country levels this political will and commitment is lacking. Many African countries are not willing to go beyond mere participation in meetings of institutions saddled with regional integration in Africa. Hence, some of these institutions designed for integration in the continent lack resources to carry out their mandate. The inability of member states to meet their obligations in this respect could be understood in the light of many domestic challenges confronting them.

One of such domestic constraint is the nature of evolution of most of these African states. It will be recalled that colonialism unilaterally lumped so many disparate ethnic nations into one country without recourse theirculture, religion, language and history. Consequently, ethnicity has become a major obstacle to regional integration in Africa at the country level. According to Nwankwo (2010:5), the negative influence of ethnicity on the politics of most African states has further been exacerbated

by the politics of religion. Unfortunately, religion has become a destructive tool in the hands of most African statesmen who use the tenets of their faith to mislead and incite people to destruction and riots. The present situation in the Central African Republic is a case in point.

Hence, such issues like religion, resource control and resource allocation, citizenship question, political leadership, etc are contentious and evocative issues that tend to divide most African states along their worst seams. Differences in culture and tradition among the various ethnic nations also have serious impact on Africa's political culture and behaviour. While some African societies are very republican and open, inclusive and extensive, others tend to be more restrictive, exclusive and intensive.

Political interaction, contest for power acquisition and succession are conducted on this premise. These factors, in the main, kill the spirit of integration, political commitment and dedication to regional integration in Africa. In addition to the foregoing is the issue of corruption. Africa's greatest nemesis is the cesspool of corruption that is threatening to bleed most states in the continent to death or at best leave them in a permanent state of comatose. Consequent upon the foregoing limitations, most African states are today engulfed in violent conflicts and wars. All these vitiate political will and commitment to integration process in Africa.

These internal problems imply that most African countries cannot meet their financial and implementation-related undertakings to regional institutions and to that extent they cannot provide support to streamline and rationalize integration structures in the continent. Again most policy makers in Africa, especially at the country level are not consistent and coherent in their policy objectives in relation to regional integration basically because there is no appropriate coordination mechanism on regional integration and in this context there is always a problem in building national consensus in favour of regional integration.

On the supply side of the constraints or challenges is the problem of poor trade volume among African states. Increased trade among states is one of the major drivers of regional integration in any particular region. Sanoussi and Szepesi (2005:374-393) have noted that intra-regional trade in Africa or within African integration groupings has hardly grown over the years and this low level of intra-regional trade in Africa sharply contrasts the situation in Europe and other regions of the world.

According to Economic Commission for Africa (2003), an important explanation for the low level of trade among African countries is the "non-complemetarity of their export offerings. For this reason most African countries face a common developmental challenge of how to achieve diversity and growth of exports. Even when some countries are able to export manufactured commodities needed by their neighbors. Kennes (2007) has noted that such successful exports create a perception of unequal sharing of the integration benefits. Other crippling challenges on the supply side of regional integration in Africa include lack of peace and insecurity of investments as well as fragile political situations.

At another level, the lack of ideological direction in Africa is a major challenge to regional integration on the continent. Earlier than now, especially during the decolonization process, African leaders were guided by the ideology of pan-Africanism and it was on the basis, of this that leaders like Kwame

Nkrumah advocated for the formation of "United States of Africa". Unfortunately, today such robust pan-Africanist ideological orientations are lacking in integration projects in Africa.

It was the pan-African ideology that actually led to the formation of the erstwhile OAU and the formation of the AU. But as Adogamhe (2008) remarks, Africa's search for unity and regional integration did not just start with the formation of OAU in 1963. In the earlier section of this paper, we have tried to do an examination of integration in Africa and noted that African integration projects have always been anchored on the ideology of pan-Africanism. The historical illuminations on pan-Africanism and its impact on the formation of the OAU clearly illustrates that there were motivating factors for regional integration in Africa from times past.

Overview of African Union and the Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa

Any scholarly overview of the AU would naturally begin with the historical overview of the defunct OAU, which gave birth to it. The African Union originated from the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa by 32 independent African states. By 1994, membership of the OAU had grown to 53 states. The formation of the Organization of African unity (OAU) in 1963 was the culmination of the search for African political and economic unity or integration, which began outside the shores of Africa. In the course of its formation, contending socio-political forces in Africa pursued divergent and very often conflicting national and regional strategic interests. In spite of these divergent pursuits, the OAU fundamentally represented Africa's collective efforts in search of continental unity and development. Adogamhe (2008), remarks that Africa's search for unity did not just start with the formation of OAU in 1963. According to him, "since the late 1950s, African states have experimented with various forms of formal integration arrangements to promote African unity and economic development"[1]. Adogamhe further argues that the search for African unity was a consequence of Pan-Africanism.

The thinking behind the emergence of the OAU, in the first instance, was that it would sway global attention for the benefit of the continent and at the same time, protect Africa from external predators and manipulations and in the process promote unity, peace and drive integration among member states of the organization. However, its formation was fundamentally flawed basically because it lacked any real Africanness in it.

For instance, according to Schalk (2005:263), the OAU represented in theory, both in function and organizational structure, a combined blueprint of the Charter of the United Nations Organization as well as that of the Organization of the American States (OAS). The OAU, he remarks, concentrated so much on ridding Africa of all forms of colonialism to the detriment of other areas that would engender integration on the continent. This singular objective was consequent upon the fierce disagreement and later grudging compromise that gave birth to it.

Within this context, argues Cervanka (1977:307), it is understandable why the OAUfollowed the organizational pattern and regulations of the UNO in constructing its Charter as well as adopting the structures and institutions of the world body. Cervanka further argues that the example of OAS was followed by the OAU because of its experiences with colonial domination. The founders of the OAU realized that they had an important presence alongside the OAS as an African group in the UN and that the UN had particular relevance as an international platform for the championing of black

interests. Thus, the so-called African group in the UN constantly promoted the idea of Pan-Africanism. Being the ideology that founded it, the OAU promoted this ideology vigorously to emphasize a sense of comradeship or we-feeling among people of African descent (Schalk, Auriacombe and Brynard, 2005:499).

Despite its lofty aspirations and the fire of Pan-Africanism, the OAU became a constant victim of various crises that threatened its very foundation and thus failed to deliver on its promises. It will be recalled that one of the major aims of the organization was to promote sustainable African development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies but it is a fact that up to the point of its demise, the economies of most independent African states were neither integrated nor developed. Rather the economies of many African states were dominated by a lot of crises arising from both internal and external factors. African economies were characterized by institutional decay, poorly articulated policies, corruption, deficit managerial and administrative capacities and crippling poverty.

The expectation that the OAU would protect Africa from external manipulation gradually petered away, giving room to frustration and despair. Africa became a victim of vicious international economic and political forces, which culminated in adverse terms of trade, rapid decline in financial flows, capital flight, decrease in commodity prices and high debt profiles.

Hence, by the 1970s and 1980s, most Africans had lost faith in the capacity of the OAU to do Africa any good and even the leaders of the organization agreed that Africa was rapidly drifting into serious catastrophe- what with endemic crises and violent conflicts with the accompanying bloodshed that sign-posted Africa. Lamenting the fate of Africa at this time, Meredith (1984:377), noted that the picture thatemerged was almost a nightmare. It became obvious that something constructive and drastic had to be done to redeem the continent from this impending doom. Even the West had lost confidence in the capacity of the organization to establish a new economic order and this was why when in 1991 the OAU created the AEC, the West viewed that attempt with contempt *(African News,* June 24th, 1991:10).

The failure of the OAU was further exacerbated by the end of apartheid in South Africa, which had for so long provided a common binding force for the organization. The end of apartheid effectively signaled the end of activities of the Liberation Committee of the OAU and consequently cast a dark pall on the future of the organization as the driver of regional integration in Africa.

The failures of the OAU do not suggest that the organization recorded no successes. Perhaps, its greatest achievement was the facilitation of the decolonization process of Africa. Other highpoints include making of bilateral treaties between member countries. This has helped in the development of international law in the continent.

Howbeit, the failures of the OAU by far outweigh its successes. The major failure was its inability to drive regional integration; maintain peace and ensure security and political stability on the continent. Regrettably, the OAU did nothing substantial to respond to the various tyrants, dictators and treasury looters that were ruining Africa at the time. This inability to respond to such barefaced misconducts by African leaders was a gross deficiency that undermined the credibility of the OAU. In addition to the foregoing, the powers of the organization were very limited and very often circumvented and thus

constrained any effort it undertook to address issues of regional integration, conflicts, poor governance, corruption, poverty and underdevelopment.

Thus by September 1999, African leaders had come to the conclusion that the OAU as then structured was incapable of meeting the challenges of continental development and integration in a multipolar world and therefore resolved to create a new continental body that would meet its needs. Thus was born the African Union (AU) which Schalk (2005:263), suggests represents a blueprint of the European Union. The AU is envisioned to accelerate political and economic integration of Africa and is anchored on such values as respectfor rule of law and human rights, democracy, good governance, probity and accountability. The AU, according to Salim (2001), seeks to address the many challenges confronting Africa through the broad framework of NEPAD.

The difference in vision and mission of both organizations is immediately evident in the instruments that created them. Whereas the Charter of the OAU concentrated on the consolidation and protection of the hard-won political independence and espoused such ideals as continental integration, promotion of unity and solidarity among African states as well as the eradication of all forms of colonialism from the continent, it failed to create a practical framework or strategy for the actualization of its objectives. This assertion is evident from the institutional structures of the OAU which the establishing Charter proudly proclaims was predicated on the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Charter provided limited latitude for the operation of the organization by recognizing the establishment of only four structures.

The OAU, by its Charter was also empowered to establish specialized agencies subject to the approval of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. It was based on this that it created such specialized agencies as the Economic and Social Commission; Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Health Commission as well as the Defense Commission.

However, because of the constraining nature of the Charter, the structures and specialized agencies did very little to achieve the objectives of the organization. The guiding principle of the OAU is a typical example of the constraining nature of the Charter. The Member states of the OAU, in pursuit of the goals of the organization, affirmed and declared their adherence to such principles as sovereign equality of all member states; non-interference in the internal affairs of member states; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and for its inalienable right to independent existence, peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation or arbitration, unreserved condemnation, in all its forms, of political assassination as well as well as of subversive activities on the part of neighbouring states or any other states, absolute dedication to the total emancipation of the African territories, which are still dependent andaffirmation of a policy of non-alignment with regard to all power blocs.

Most of these principles, in actual sense worked against the organization in the realization of its objectives. The principle of non-interference, for instance, prevented the OAU from responding to gross abuse of power and human rights by many of the African states. A possible explanation here could be that a contrary but innocuous statement by a neighbouring state would be interpreted as subversive and undue interference into the 'internal affairs of the state[5]. This was exactly the main reason why the Commission on Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration failed woefully in mediating any crisis or conflict in Africa throughout the life-span of the OAU. The interventions in Liberia and

other troubled spots in the West African sub-region by Nigeria and Ghana were conducted under the auspices of the ECOWAS – a sub-regional multi-lateral agreement. The OAU's affirmation of a policy of non-alignment was very dubious because no African state was actually non-aligned, especially to the erstwhile colonial masters.

The establishing instrument of the AU is significantly different from the Charter of the OAU in that it laid strong emphasis on democracy, rule of law, good governance; promotion of social justice and gender equality as well as balanced economic development. The Constitutive Act of the AU retained some salient features of the OAU Charter such as the principle of non-interference but provided a *caveat* to encourage such intervention. For example, items (h) and (j) of Article 4 of the Constitutive Act upholds 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; and also the right of member states to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security. The Constitutive Act of the AU expanded the scope and mandate of the Union and consequently established about nine organs as against four established by the defunct OAU.

Under the Constitutive Act, the Assembly, which is composed of all Heads of state and Governments, is given sweeping powers as the supreme organ of the Union. The framers of the Constitutive Act paid due attention to the failings of the OAU and that is why Article 5(2) of the Act provides that theAssembly shall establish other organs that it may deem necessary in the realization of its mandate. Also Article 9(1) vests the power to establish any organ of the Union in the Assembly. This is a clear departure from the OAU and a loud testimony to the powers of the Assembly. It is this blank cheque to act in the best interest of the Union and Africa, based on shared vision and values that the Assembly created the Peace and Security Council of the AU, which was not part of the organs stipulated in the Constitutive Act, but the realities on the continent and the consensus by African leaders to maintain peace and security necessitated its creation. The same is true of the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism as a self-examining process by the African leaders. All these structures are aimed at ensuring more effective regional integration in Africa.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the emergence of AU is monumental in the trajectory of institutional evolution in Africa, The overwhelming declaration by African leaders to establish the AU is indicative of their intention and determination to plug into the horizontal and vertical benefits of regional integration in a rapidly changing global order.

The Place of African Diasporas in Strengthening African Union for Sustainable Regional Integration in Africa

There is no gainsaying the fact that African Union is in dire need of support and encouragement from both groups and individuals within and outside Africa to achieve the onerous responsibility of sustainable regional integration in the continent. The Diaspora Africa, as a formidable group, has a critical role to play in this direction. Specifically this group can strengthen the functionality of the African Union in the following areas:

1. *Providing Ideological Direction for African Union:* One of the major challenges to the effectiveness of AU is the absence of any ideological direction- No doubt a clear- cut ideology is the driving force in the achievement of any organizational or societal goals. The absence of defined ideology in an

organization is akin to a ship without direction. Such organization cannot elicit any form of commitment from members hence the level of the political will of African states to the objectives of the AU has been quite low. This is so because a clearly spelt ideological direction will act as a galvanizing force for both African leaders and the citizens in championing the objectives of the African Union. Such ideology will provide the fundamental ideas behind the integration project of the AU in the region and sustain its currency. Interestingly, the earlier generation of African Diasporas filled this role through the ideology of pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism was a liberating ideology of freedom and unity, which originated from the Americans. As Walkers (1997:131), argues, "Pan-Africanism is usually seen as a product of the European slave trade. Enslaved Africans of diverse origins and their descendants found themselves enmeshed in a system of exploitation where their African origin became a sign of their servile status. Pan-Africanism, as a liberating ideology among these enslaved and deprived Africans, set aside cultural differences but rather asserted the principality of their shared experiences to foster solidarity and resistance to exploitation". This ideology eventually berthed in Africa as a major driving force for decolonization by autochthonous African nationalists. The African Diasporas, in our contemporary times, can reinvent this ideology to give ideological focus to the AU as a roadmap for continental unity and integration. Such ideological reorientation would emphasize the Africanness of the continent above the narrow confines of state boundaries. A broad-based platform of African Diasporas would infuse in the AU a new dynamism of continental brotherhood and strengthen the cooperative drive of the Union. Experience has shown that Africans show greater sense of cooperation outside Africa on account of their common sense of history, culture and blackness. As a matter of fact it was this feeling of a common descent that propelled the ideology of pan-Africanism which developed outside the continent. This feeling has given rise to the formation of associations by Africans across several regions of the world as platforms of cooperation irrespective of national affiliations. The African Diasporas can and should reinvent this ideology of oneness as a boost to continental integration.

2. *Source of Funding for African Union:*

One of the major debilitating factors in the quest for sustainable regional integration in Africa by African Union, like its predecessor, is the paucity of fund on account of poor financial commitment by member states. This has hampered the effective implementations of the core programmes and objectives of the AU. The situation is explainable because of the monumental economic challenges facing various member states of the Union. No doubt, without sound economic base, there is little AU can achieve in terms of realizing its cardinal objective of sustainable regional integration. The African Diasporas can be of immense assistance in alleviating this challenge by providing some level of funding to the Union. This can be achieved by creating African Union Fund where a certain percentage of their remittances to their families could be compulsorily transferred to the Fund. A mechanism should be put in place by national governments to ensure compliance especially through regulation through the banking institution. This will no doubt provide veritable source of funding the Union programmes.

- *Driving the Process of Infra-African Economic Cooperation:* It has been established that one of the problematic issues militating against regional integration in Africa is the low level of economic exchanges among African countries. Thus Szepesi (2005), African Economic Commission (2003), etc lamented the impact of low level of trade among Africans on her regional integration efforts. Trade relations among states are necessarily perceived as critical drivers of regional integration. The mono-cultural nature of African economy has been held accountable for the low level of economic interactions amongst African states especially in the area of trade. This is because (each African

country specializes only in the export of a particular primary commodity that does not enhance complimentarity of trade among African states. Achieving greater economic relations among African states necessary for sustainable regional integration requires high level of industrialization among these African states. The African Diaspora, no doubt, can help in providing the necessary industrial base for their respective countries to enhance intra-African economic cooperation. This is highly feasible given the diverse professional expertise of many of these Diaspora Africans. In addition, many of these Diasporas have the needed financial muscle and skills to invest in the industrial development of their countries. This will provide the basis for a formidable sustenance of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The only possible impediment in this direction would be the non-creation of enabling political environment to safeguard such investments in these countries

- *Encouraging the Culture of Good Governance in Africa:* One other major challenge to regional integration in Africa is the pervasive absence of the culture of good governance in Africa. Over the decades, African countries have been characterized by dictatorial, corrupt and inept leadership, which has hampered development and the evolution of the true spirit of nationalism among the citizenry. This has tended to erode the spirit of patriotism and the lack of interest in the African project by the citizens of the different African states. There is a positive correlation between good governance and both national and regional integration. A responsible government creates a sense of belonging among its citizens, which is a pre-requisite for any integrative project. This has been lacking in the continent as a result of decades of poor leadership in the various African states. The Diaspora group, no doubt, can provide the platform to stimulate good governance in Africa. One of such mechanisms could be in the form of Annual African Leadership Summit. The African Diaspora could also help in strengthening the AU Peer Review Mechanism as a way of ensuring good leadership direction in Africa.

- *Supporting the AU to set up Effective Conflict Resolution Mechanism:* The African Diaspora can also help in strengthening AU integration efforts in Africa through its encouragement of an effective pan-African inter and intra-state conflict resolution mechanism. Many African Diasporas today have acquired great skills in the area of conflict management, which could be provided to the AU in its efforts to ensure the resolution of the various intractable conflicts in Africa. Such support is highly imperative as the prevalence of conflict in many countries of Africa negate the spirit of African integration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, we have examined *African Diasporas, African Union and Sustainable Regional Integration in Africa.* The paper explained that African Diasporas are those Africans who are dispersed outside the continent by circumstances beyond their control. The era of slave trade in Africa resulted in the forced dispersion of Africans in Europe and America and the urge to regain their freedom and become integrated into their new environment, even while not forgetting their African roots, gave rise to sustained agitation in the form of pan-Africanist ideology, which emerged as a continental ideology in the pursuit of regional integration in Africa. This ideology gave birth to the formation of the defunct OAU and the current AU. It was also stated that renewed African interest in regional integration is direct response to the paradigmatic shift in continental thinking about regional integration.

The paper also x-rayed the theoretical perspectives to regional integration and observed that regional integration in African has, in recent, years, taken on the character of neo-functionalist integration especially since the emergence of AU and the creation of the NEPAD framework. Next, the paper

looked at the challenges to contemporary regional in the continent as well as the overview of the AU and regional integration in Africa. This paved the way for the discussion of the place of the African Diaspora in strengthening the AU for sustainable regional integration in Africa.

Based on the issues raised in the paper, we make the following recommendations:

1. There is an urgent need to reinvigorate the formation of pan-African Union by the African Diaspora in all the countries of the world. This will ensure functional and sustained interaction between the Diasporas and national governments in Africa. Such sustained interactions will help in confidence building and cross (fertilization of ideas between African spates and the Diaspora as well as provide new ideological impetus to the Union

2. African national governments should be committee and dedicated to their obligations   to regional   integration institutions through the timely provision of logistics needed by such institutions to facilitate regional integration in Africa

3. African national governments should also cultivate the culture of good governance   and   sustainable political temperament. This will reduce corruption in government, strengthen institutional   capacity, and   check   the incidence of brain drain.

4. Professional African Diasporas should help in the transfer of technology by bringing their professional expertise to bear on development in Africa. It is no longer news that some of the best brains in Europe and America are Africans and the continent will gain much if such professionals can bring home their experiences.

5. There is also need for the creation of African Union Fund where a certain percentage of Diaspora remittances to their families could be compulsorily transferred to the Fund through a functional, transparent and sustained mechanism established banking regulations by national governments to ensure compliance.

6. African leaders should devise a mechanism of accommodating the African Diasporas in decision-making processes; bring them on board in such bodies as AU, Summit of African Heads of States. Peer Review Mechanism, and other sub-regional organizations or structures envisioned for integration in Africa. This will give the Diasporas a sense of belonging and motivate them to raise the bar from family remittances to continental and regional development.

7. In brokering bilateral and multilateral trade deals, African governments should exploit the advantages of the Diasporas since they understand better the economic environment where such deals are made. Hence, in the construction of dialogues and relations between the AU and international organizations like the EU, WTO and even the UN, the Diasporas should lead such interactions on behalf of Africa and their national governments.

8. There is also the need for the African Diasporas to encourage the empowerment and exposure of African youths through exchange programmes and other forms of engagement that would benefit the African youth. Such exposure is currently in place with some universities in Africa but it should be expanded.

9. African countries are currently enmeshed in many intractable conflicts. The African Diasporas should provide expertise in conflict management and quick resolution since most of them are versed in such skills.

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