

Introduction

The specific factors that have resulted in Africa's un-impressive regional integration efforts and by extension relatively disappointing economic performance over the past few decades have been the focus of much enquiry. The subject of debate these days is why, several decades after independence, African countries are still unable to integrate their disparate markets. Opinions differ widely as to what Africa has to do now to reverse this dismal trend and guarantee its relevance in the emerging world. Among the dominant thoughts, is the talk of marginalization and being in the periphery. The sad story of how Africa's economies were integrated into the orbit of international capitalism has been repeatedly told. The French, British, German and Belgium colonial governments consciously built economies of their colonies to synchronize with their domestic markets.

For other, the deep causes of all of Africa's problems are exclusively of Africa's making, and that these problems are all aspects of the continent's post-colonial delinquency. But hardly is an honest mention made of where, the rain began to beat us.

How can we honestly comprehend the recurrent problems of nationality and nationhood on the continent without a candid memory of the Berlin Conference of 1884/85? How did the so-called "nation-states" of Africa come to be? Whose colonial interest and design were they created to serve? Why are these old scars taking so long to heal? Former United States President Bill Clinton was right on target when he apologized to Africa for the unprincipled conduct of American foreign policy during the Cold War, a policy that scorched the young hope of Africa's independence struggle like seedlings in a drought.

Let me enter a caveat at this juncture, lest I be misunderstood: no wholesale exoneration of Africa is intended here; nor blanket condemnation of Europe. It is however the marriage of both points of view that holds any real prospect for the future of the continent. Much of what we know as the African predicament today owes its cause to the African's own doing. And the African culpability is immense and exasperatingly

grave. But no candid and comprehensive diagnosis of the Africa malaise can take place without a proper understanding of the continent's troubled history of maximum exploitation and dispossession by those from outside its shores. A willful or unwitting neglect of this history and its repercussions for Africa's current condition constitutes one of the fundamental impediments to integration efforts in Africa.

This paper does not attempt to make apology for Africa's many failings. And we are hard-headed enough to realize that we must not be soft on them, must never go out to justify them. But we are also rational enough to realize that we should strive to understand our failings objectively and not simply swallow the mystifications and mythologies cooked up by those whose goodwill we have every reason to suspect. We understand and accept the logic that if a country mismanages its resources, it should be prepared to face the music of hard times. There is not much sense in blaming others for ones own failures.

I have not gone into all this unpleasant matter to prompt any new apologies, but to make all of us wary of those easy, facile comments about Africa's endemic incapacity of Africans to get their act together and move ahead like everybody else.

Historical Background

One cannot understand the concept of regional integration in Africa without locating the venture in the historical matrix in which its contemporary forms have emanated.

Despite the political independence, given the nature and practice of colonialism, the continent has had a long period of confusion. The many years of enslavement of the people of the continent and century of colonization followed by independence and neo-colonialism have supposedly set Africans off balance and confused the black race.

Thus, as Gbor (1998) succinctly put it:

Africa, like a bird that has been caged for most years of its life and has suddenly gained its freedom, may not know immediately how to survive. Sometimes the free bird may have to fly back to its master for food, a tendency to become

dependent...the majority of people under condition of confinement and torture will take considerable amount of time to transform from the state of dependence to becoming self reliant...this is particularly true when such individuals or group of individuals do not have the pre-arranged structures that facilitate self reliance.

The problem which clouds the African mind and disorients his political direction similarly affects his economic orientations. In effect, Africans have had their political independence but they are still prisoners of colonialism.

The international environment was not propitious for the achievement of the dreams and expectations of the nascent African states. Africa soon realized that political independence made very little difference in its position in the world system. Independent Africa was born into a world in which it was both a late and handicapped starter. All the odds were stacked against it.

But how have the African countries themselves performed in the management of their own affairs after independence? Dismal! To begin with, the ex-colonial powers failed to build viable institutions beyond the economic arrangements that would facilitate massive exploitation of African resource. They therefore, bear vicarious responsibility for some of the crises that plagued Africa after their departure.

The history of contemporary problems of Africa can be traced to the Berlin conference which started the demeaning experience of Africa. This followed the slave trade era. Hardly had slavery ended than colonization and the first-world-war started. The situation of the continent has not stabilized in terms of infrastructural development when the second-world-war ensued. Thus the history of Africa has been characterized by one harrowing experience after the other, and as a result of this relationship with Europe, Africa has not known any peace.

In continuation of this, the era of neo-colonialism has depleted the mineral resources of the continent and brought about wars from controversial boundaries created by the colonialists. In view of this, Africa cannot ignore the fact of this historical experience.

These different episodes, coupled with the prevailing unequal relationship between Africa and the developed states of Europe and North American, are partially responsible for the current predicament of Africa. It may appear unrealistic to blame the current underdeveloped conditions of African states on the slave trade and colonialism as these episodes took place many years ago. One may argue that slave trade in particular, took place over a century ago. However, this argument will be misplaced because the current state of African states cannot be understood without resort to the unfortunate past.

Quoting Walter Rodney, Falola (1996) said:

My assumption is that the past influences the present in a variety of ways that explain the roots of contemporary problems, the continuity and resilience of aspects of indigenous institutions, some limitations to initiating new changes, and rhetoric of where Africa stands in world politics and how its people define themselves.

After the abolition of the slave trade, the European powers, one after the other, turned African territories into their colonies, thus making European colonialism to have a retarding effect on the overall development of Africa.

Though, Africans are free to govern themselves, but their surpluses are cleverly siphoned away to sustain the capitalist West through the international monetary and other economic systems. The treasures of the continent till date are looted with impunity and an economic system has been established to ensure the continuity of the exploitation. The mechanisms through which this neo-colonialism activity is sustained include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Market (which determines prices of African products outside of the African continent), the multi-national companies which may invest in a developing country but may also withdraw suddenly with their capital to ensure economic loss for the country, as has happened with Asian states. The more recent forays African countries' have made into regional and bilateral preferential trade

agreements have not yielded much more. However, these experiences left a big mark on the socio-economic and political development of most Africa states.

The devaluation of African lives as a result of an IMF-sponsored “Structural Adjustment Programme” (SAP) and the concomitant devaluation of national currencies; the consequent collapse of social and life-supporting services; the annihilation of local enterprises and whittling down of the industrial base, the decline of the education sector and the resurgence of illiteracy. Put in simple terms, when currencies are devalued and exchange rates become cruelly unfavourable, food disappears from the table, medicines from the pharmacies. This is one of the “conditionalities” that have made Africa a “basket case”.

As this brief exploration of the social and political constraints on African development has shown, developing the continent through the strategy of economic integration is a challenging proposition. So, whilst UNCTAD (2009) argues that regional integration can promote better institutions and intra-regional cooperation, the challenges in the African context, as shall later be revealed in later section are formidable.

Misapplication of European Integration Model to African Regional Process

Given their position and non satisfaction from international order, African states realized that they could improve their position within the order by entering into agreement among themselves in order to cooperate and collectively improve their position within the international system.

Formal regional integration, in which neighbouring states negotiate a path towards deepening their economic and political ties, is commonly touted as an essential tool for raising growth and reducing poverty and improving Africa’s supply side capacity mainly by generating greater economies of scale and scope, but also through more effective co-operation on infrastructure and other trade facilitation measures within geographical groupings. However, few analysts view RI in Africa as a means of raising demand for Africa’s exports substantially, as the economies in the African countries concerned are

often tiny or slow-growing in addition to them still being tied to apron string of their colonial master.

European governments too, have long promoted this ideal, citing their own experience with the EU to support their case. Regional integration is supposed to increase trade between member states; enlarge their markets and expand their production capabilities (economies of scale and scope); and allow them to develop common laws and regulations that improve the region's institutional strength. This is precisely what has happened in the EU, the most advanced formal integration arrangement in the world. Yet for Africa, there are significant problems, at the conceptual, political, policy and implementation levels, in using this linear model. So, as this new involvement of EU in African RI processes — through the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) — is making them worse, there therefore urgently need for Africa and Europe to re-examine Africa's RI project. This is because it is an enterprise fraught with impediments.

First among the major drawbacks to RI in Africa is the issue of fear which is conceptual. It is argued that RI tends to benefit the stronger members only. This argument, first proposed by Anthony Venables, is now well established, and Paul Collier has recently summarized it elegantly:

In essence, it holds that when the cluster of countries in an RI arrangement contains economies performing well above the global average (such as Germany in the EU), the forces of convergence will prevail. In other words, the weaker members will 'catch up' as resources flow from countries like Germany to those like Portugal, Greece and now the states of what was once the eastern bloc. But when a group contains no globally strong economies, the forces of agglomeration will prevail. Resources will flow from the weakest in the group to the strongest, where it is relatively cheaper and easier to do business, and where there are better-developed connections to global export markets. The relatively stronger economies will grow at the expense of the weaker members in the RI arrangement.

Empirically, however, there is no evidence to suggest that formal RI amongst *developing* countries improves their individual or collective economic performance. The

world's most successful developing region in the 20th and 21st centuries, East Asia, eschewed such processes. Integration there was driven by unilateral trade and investment liberalization, significant inflows of Japanese and Western capital, and the dynamics of Cold War foreign policy. One explanation of the lack of applicability of RI to developing countries is that, there are few obvious complementarities in trade between countries that are all at the same stage of development.

Crucially, as we know it, successful integration requires strong states capable of supporting those markets among its members that are prone to failure, and of collecting and directing resources to areas where they are most needed. Unfortunately this is a prerequisite generally lacking in the African context, where governance problems and lack of capacity abound. Worse still, globalization has largely passed Africa by. Far from having been overexposed to this complex process, the continent tends to hover on its margins. Nowhere is this more evident than in trade and FDI flows.

Perspectives that shaped African Regional Integration Process

For over a hundred years, African leaders in diaspora and those on the continent, like W.E.B Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, George Padmore, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatha, Modibo Keita, to cite a few, have articulated the notion of, and struggled for African development through pan-Africanism and the concept of African solidarity and brotherhood.

The wave of African regional integration which is seen as the dominant strategy for resolving the numerous development challenges bedeviling the continent of Africa is resident in the history of pan-African thought and pan-African movement whose antecedents have deep roots in the struggles of black and African peoples in Africa and in diaspora against racialism and foreign domination, and for cultural, economic, political and racial emancipation and self-determination. So, it goes without saying that the current thoughts on African regional integration process benefited immensely from the four dominant perspectives of pan-Africanism on pan-African unity. The first among the approaches called for a single charter that will unite those of the three rival groups i.e.

the Lagos Charter of the Monrovia group, the Casablanca group and the U.A.M Charter of the core Francophone Brazzaville group - a charter that would be like the one adopted at the Bandung non-aligned conference. The sponsors of this approach were Libya and Sudan whose conception of unity was to be a loose one where each state "conducts its business at home and abroad very much as before (Cervenka, 1977).

A second approach called for a kind of an All-African Organization whose constitution should be like that of the Organization of American States. This view was projected by people among whom were William Tubman of Liberia. They saw such an organization as the most suitable for the African situation.

The third view popularly known as the Monrovia group called for a functional approach to the issue of African unity, first through economic cooperation. They argued that the African continent is too large with poor transport and communications systems. It will be more advantageous to go through functional cooperation to improve such things as telecommunications, roads, air links and so on. Such cooperation should be pursued first at the regional level as a stepping stone to greater African unity.

While a member of the Monrovia group, Haile Selassie, an elder statesman respected by most African leaders, often made speech which were contrary to the position taken by majority of the group. One of such occasions was the speech he delivered at the Lagos conference of the Monrovia group held in January 1962. He spoke at length that:

Ethiopia urges that while we press ahead with all urgency and speed in those economic areas in which rapid advances can be achieved, parallel steps should simultaneously be taken to explore the possibilities of achieving increasing future political unity among us. Ethiopia is committed to the principle of political unity among African states-indeed we believe that we all are, and that we differ only in our assessment of the speed with which this most of goals can be attained. The task now is to devise the means where by this basic agreement may be most rapidly advanced (Thompson, 1975).

The fourth and last argument was the most radical of the approaches. This was advanced by Ghana and the Casablanca group. The approach called for immediate political unification on a continental scale which to them “was a pre-requisite for subsequent integration of African economies. One of the forerunners to this group was Marcus Garvey who injected radicalism into the Pan-African movement. It was he who first advocated the need for continental unity as a pre-requisite for dealing with the numerous problems facing the Negroes and Africa. He perceived continental unity as the only means through which Africans and peoples of African descent could effectively fight “for their own industrial, political, social and religious emancipation.” (Ajala, 1974). As a result, he thus called for “the repudiation of all foreign rules and control and the eradication of all vestiges which are retarding the growth of African man (Thompson, 1975). This was a departure from other like DuBois who provided a pragmatic and moderate approach in the struggle and were contented with demands for “justice and fairplay.”

Nkrumah later came to be a strong exponent of continental unity as opposed to functional unity as some of his contemporaries were advocating. At the May, 1963 conference Nkrumah argued his case for continental government. It was championed by Nkrumah and it called for:

...the setting up of a Union Government of Africa with all the machinery needed to make it work, an African civil service, and African High Command, a court of Justice and other all-African institutions.

He further elaborated this proposal by suggesting that commissions be set up to work out:

a constitution for a Union Government a continental plan for a common economic and industrial programme. plan to include proposals for a Common Market; an African currency; a monetary zone; and African Central Bank; a continental communications system; and to work out a common foreign policy.

Corroborating this view was Milton Obote who enjoined, other fellow African Heads of State that:

...the time has come, indeed almost overdue, for African Independent States to surrender some of their sovereignty in favour of an African Central Legislature and executive body with specific powers over those subjects where divided control and action would be undesirable. I refer to such subjects as the establishment of an African Common Market, Economic Planning on a continental wide basis, collective defense, a Common foreign policy, a common monetary zone. This is by no means Exhaustive.

Naser of Egypt who spoke the minds of other African leaders, advised against haste and argue that:

Let it be an African League. Let there be a Charter for all Africa. Let there be periodical meetings of the African Heads of State and the people' representatives in the continent. Let there be anything. One thing the United Arab Republic does not want: namely to leave this place with mere enthusiastic words or with formalistic institutional facdes (Woronoff, 1970).

This radical approach to African unity was rejected by African leaders as impracticable and therefore opted for a functional approach to African unity; i.e. through economic, educational, scientific and cultural cooperation.

Neo-Colonialism Influences

African politics and the widespread feeling that with the task of continental liberation from foreign and minority rule having been completed, the next challenge which Africans needed to face frontally, was that of promoting economic development. Yet, the challenge of economic advancement is not one that can be realized effectively if the most basic conditions do not exist for it to be organized.

Africa is today made up of states that are both economically and militarily weak. As weak states they are totally dissatisfied with the existing international order for two related, major reasons. First of all the development of the international order created them and made them what they are today. Secondly, despite the fact that they are the ones that support the dominant powers that benefit from the international order, they remain far from ever being satisfied with the order, since the benefits are largely

minimal. They serve as the sources for raw material for the powerful industrial nations and also as markets for the products produced by them. In this way therefore, they sustain the international order through providing resources for the great powers to maintain their dominant position thus maintaining the order.

Based on the development, the divisive forces of neo-colonialism have hindered much progress. The impact of a compact, integral African economy fired by the rich resource base and a large market confronts its hubris daily in the regional loyalties and intra-regional rivalries entrenched by colonial sentiments. The affinity of the African countries, north of the Sahara desert with Arab world of the Middle East has proved a strong bond than continental considerations. On the other hand, the countries of Africa, south of the Sahara desert have much more in common in terms of ethno-racial, socio-cultural, economic and attitudinal circumstances than with Arab Africans north of the great desert.

Of course, there was the language barrier between the Portuguese, French, English, Spanish and Italian speaking African states. In some cases like in the French states, the colonial master refused to break the economic umbilical cord with the result that the fiscal policies are tied to the apron strings of their erstwhile colonial master. The British maintains this type of hold on the English speaking African states through their membership of the Commonwealth.

One of the continent's biggest economic-cum-political blocs, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where the Francophone and Anglophone countries have often been pulling in opposite directions is a case in point. Perhaps, the most formidable obstacle to Africa's integration bid is its colonial legacy.

Similar problems bedevil other regional efforts. These include the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA), the Mano River Union (MRU), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community

of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL). Other troubled initiatives are the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) for Eastern and Central Africa, which has since transformed into the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Another source of crises in Africa is the contradiction between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Forces of Islam have influenced the political, social and ideological life of Africans in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Therefore their ways of life are different from that of the people of Sub-Saharan Africa. This has often led to crises such as that between Northern and Southern Sudan.

Because of all this, regional integration among African states has not been very easy as a result of the legacy of European colonisation.

Multiple Interests

Since independence African governments have embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies and concluded a very large number of regional integration arrangements (RIAs), several of which have significant membership overlap. Given this multiplicity and with few success stories, African RIAs are generally ambitious schemes with unrealistic time frames towards deeper integration¹ and in some cases even political union.

It is well known that many African countries are unsure which REC offers them the greatest benefits, so a number of member states are 'hedging their bets' by joining more than one regional body. The 'overlapping membership' dilemma, to which there is no obvious solution at present, is well-documented.

In West Africa for example, two additional regional groupings are being perceived as a mere distraction and an unnecessary addition to ECOWAS – the main regional group. These are the UEMOA – which is mainly a Francophone fraternity, save for Guinea – and the MRU, where most of the region's warring nations belong. These two groups

have aims and objectives that are similar to those of ECOWAS, to which they also belong. The question then is, why form another small union when a larger one that encompasses the whole region is still in place?

In the Southern African sub-region, on the other hand, the confusion is more pronounced. With the growing influence of COMESA, notably Africa's largest regional economic group, others feel threatened as it establishes free trade areas all over Southern, Eastern and Central Africa. COMESA has even ventured up north into Egypt and Sudan. It has in its fold up to 22 member-countries out of which 9 have already established the COMESA Free Trade Area (FTA).

The Maghreb Union seems to be comfortable in the north since it has no other group to compete with. This may be due to the existence of one race and religion in the region.

The Central African countries have been less fortunate than others. In this region, there exists, ECCAS which covers Chad down to Angola, extending from Sao Tome and Principe to Rwanda. Also within this region is CEMAC, which is in charge of the single currency for the Francophone Central African region. The monetary unions of both the UEMOA and CEMAC states are considered success stories, thanks to the protective umbrella provided by the French franc. Before the introduction of the Euro, the fiscal policies of UEMOA and CEMAC states were under the supervision of the Central Bank of France, while the CFA Franc was pegged to the French Franc.

The East African Economic Community (EAEC) is a late comer to this field. This perhaps explains why its activities have been overshadowed by those of COMESA, which incorporates all the EAEC members. There is also the Indian Ocean Commission, where all the island nations of the Indian Ocean belong. They, too, are members of COMESA.

In spite of the proliferations and multiplicity of interests, it is worth noting that no RIA has yet established a fully-fledged customs union. While the political commitment is persuasive, it does not translate into effective implementation.

Irreconcilable force between Sovereignty and Supra-nationalism

One major challenge that militates against African regional integration process is the issue that revolves around sovereignty. Integration at the level of economic union presupposes the erosion of sovereignty and emergence of supra-national authority to coordinate, manage and direct the affairs of the Union. Much more so than OAU Charter, the Constitutive Act presupposes the sharing of sovereign power in some areas between the Union and its member-states. Two key organs of the African Union, namely the Pan-African Parliament and the Court of Justice, presuppose the creation and establishment of supra-national sovereign authorities, at least on the long run, with direct legislative and juristic power and competence in some areas over not only its constituent units, the member-states, but also over their citizens, much like the central or federal government does in a federal system.

But in the light of the relative young nature of post-independent African states (decolonisation being a very recent historical process) it is not surprising to find that leaders in many countries are reluctant to really yield their prerogatives to regional institutions. In fact, it is not clear whether the members of any of Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) are prepared to do this. Instead, regional forums, particularly those comprising Heads of State, provide both a refuge from domestic concerns and a source of external legitimacy. So, it is not surprising to find gaps emerging between pronouncements made at Heads of State level and translation of those pronouncements into practical implementation requiring actual surrender of sovereignty.

The success of African regional integration would remain limited as long as members of the AU continue to maintain their sovereignty. This will continue to rob supra-national institutions of the powers they need to perform their functions effectively. No states willing to maintain their independence and sovereignty will give the supra-national

institutions more powers than they do to make it act against their interests. If for anything, member of AU will only obey the collective will of their organization in order to achieve other interests which they know that obeying such collective will, will not cost them more than they bargained for. Organski (1968) gave insight to this:

The problem here lies with two irreconcilable contradictory forces of 'national sovereignty' and 'international interdependence'. This is the main problem that faces international organizations. They are two important concepts that explain the reality of national behavior within the context of international politics. People have both sentimental and security interests attached to the sovereign existence of the nation which cannot be easily eroded unless there are other vital interests to be gained and an assurance that such vital interests will be permanent. Since no nation can survive on its own and its prosperity depends on the behavior of others, there is always the urge to cooperate with others to achieve desired goals.

On this AU tended to be bogged down and, generally, to be handicapped in pursuit of its longer-term objective of continental unity, by the fact that most of its underlying principles place emphasis on the sovereign rights of its member-states, particularly the principle of "...non-interference in the internal affairs of its member states," and that of "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and for the inalienable right to independent existence." One effect of this emphasis is to diminish commitment to pan-Africanism and a retreat into micro-nationalism and the pursuit of narrow national interest at the expense of continental interest.

The goals of international organizations have always been made vague so that they can generate wider support. This, especially is the case with organizations where there are ideological and other divergent interests among member states. This is why the Charters of international organizations consist of such concepts as justice, unity, freedom, peace and security, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Concepts which appeal to all people who also have different interpretation of what they mean. The vagueness makes it possible for member states to over-look issues that divide them and the possibility of being exact in the overall objective of the organization. This makes it possible for potential members to sign the Charter believing that in due course their

views and interpretation of the vague concepts will prevail. From the on set therefore, they do not loose anything but believe that they will gain in future through mutual dialogue. Vague goals therefore makes it possible for sovereign nations to talk and work together, even in areas where they are not in complete agreement.

The recognition of this problems and the determination to address them forces the OAU to temper its adherence to micro-nationalism and withdrawal into the cocoon of 'non-interference.' The underlying conception, structure and process of African Union reflects a strategic shift from a mono-centric to a poly-centric notion of state sovereignty, from emphasis on the indivisibility of state sovereignty, to an acceptance of a limited a carefully-guided derogation from that sovereignty within a larger supra-national arrangement.

More significant is the fact that, as a result of the positive experience of the functionalist logic of the OAU as well as the ECA, the OAU Heads of State and Government progressively shifted their inflexibility on the immutability or indivisibility of national sovereignty. The broad acceptance, the ratification and the coming into force of the Constitutive Act of the African Union reflect an important, perhaps tentative or weak, shift in the thinking of African Heads of State and Government in this respect.

However, it should be said that The Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Community relating to the Pan-Africanism Parliament both represent a compromise between the conflicting pulls of sovereignty and supra-nationalism. It is in this light that one may appreciate the sometimes conflicting and contradictory provisions of the Constitutive Act. The Act is the product of political compromises made by OAU leaders at their 4th Extraordinary Summit in Sirte, Libya, in September 1999. Whereas the Pan-African Parliament would be one of the important vessel through which the views of all could impact on the process of decision-making in the Union, current frustration in the ratification of its protocol detracts from the enthusiasm at the launch of the Union. It also cast some

clouds of doubt on the seriousness of the establishment of democratic arrangement for the continent.

As the pursuit of Africa's cooperation and integration under the OAU is almost at the exclusive responsibility of governments and political leaders whose practice of unquestioning solidarity among themselves and non-interference with national sovereignty are not conducive to the realization of the goal, the process of African cooperation and integration may not be sufficiently people-oriented, as most African governments would be so occupied with the problem of political survival than to pay adequate attention to economic matters.

Lastly, is the problem that may arise from the need to decentralize the organs and institutions of the Union in terms of Pan-African Parliament, Court of Justice, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council and some of the financial institutions. The implementation is likely to be politicized and controversial as member-states compete to host the decentralized organs and institutions of the Union. That may occasion some delay or even stalemate. Beneath this delay in ratification lies the residual, colonially-inherited apprehension, which many African governments have about sacrificing their sovereignty through the transfer of legislative powers to African supra-national institutions. These problems highlight the obvious fact that regional economic integration in Africa ought to be primarily inter-governmental, with a minimum of supra-national aspirations.

Africa's position in Global Trade

Over the last two decades, global merchandise trade (in current US dollars) has tripled (WEF et al., 2011). Africa, however, has not featured prominently in this trade growth. While African merchandise trade did grow over the past few years – exports and imports growing by an average of 10 percent and 13 percent between 2005 and 2010, respectively (WTO, 2011) – the region's share of world trade declined. While Africa contributed 8 percent to total world exports in 1948, this decreased to 6 percent in 1980 and 2.3 percent in 2000, before improving somewhat to 3.3 percent in 2010.

Similar trends are observed in Africa's international trade in services. Services exports from Africa increased seven-fold between 1980 and 2010, from a share of 10 percent of Africa's total (merchandise and services) trade to a share of 18 percent. However, Africa's services exports, as a share of global services exports, declined from 3.5 percent in 1980 to 2.5 percent in 2010. On the import side, Africa's share of global services imports decreased from 6.6 percent in 1980 to 4.4 percent in 2010.

The situation is as disappointing, if not more so, with regards to intra-Africa trade, which has remained consistently low compared with its intercontinental trade (Economic Commission for Africa, 2010). On average, only about 10 to 12 percent of African trade takes place amongst African nations. (This can be attributed partly to the developments espoused above and partly to the slow implementation of regional integration agreements designed to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers (Economic Commission for Africa, 2010).

The level of trade going on within African countries pales into insignificance when compared with the continent's dealing with Europe. More than 80 percent of Africa's exports are still destined for outside markets, with the European Union (EU) and the United States accounting for more than 50 percent of this total. Asia, and China in particular, are also important export markets for African countries and RECs. At the same time, Africa imports more than 90 percent of her goods from outside the continent, despite resource endowments which provide the potential to supply her own import needs.

Taken together with the continuing adverse terms of trade facing the African continent and the decline in the continent's share of foreign direct investment receipts and international trade, the outlook for economic development and political stability did not seem to be very bright.

As has been clearly outlined above, the position of Africa in the world of today is precarious. The current position of Africa skewed. The preceding section, point had

been emphatically made that Africa development enterprise cannot be tailored along the unilateral European model of integration. The futility of this strategy in pulling the continent out of the dunghill has also been underscored. The immediate future would appear even less propitious for Africa. The simple fact is that, for Europe, Africa does not really matter for Europe, all the diplomatic posturing apart. Or to put it another way, Africa's raw materials are what really matter, not the African regional integration.

Post Independent Leadership Delinquency

One area where African leaders have failed is in the Democratic and Political Government Initiative". As one of the seven prioritized areas of the Action Programme, the initiative seeks to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights. Africa's political landscape is replete with depots. Not surprisingly the initiative has been ruined in a continent divided along tribal, cultural and linguistic lines. Unfortunately, there is more that divides than unites Africa and the divisions seem to be growing ever deadlier.

There is also the problem of the out-dated tenacious cling to micro-nationalism which is the antithesis of integration. Whatever the case may be, it is to be expected that Africa will need to put its own house in order and strive to improve its positions in the world especially with respect to political stability and economic advancement.

Moreover, the organization has been able to establish "an African international order" in the sense that it has helped to maintain unpopular regimes in power. This has been made possible through the inability of member states to collectively challenge the excesses of certain African regimes in the governance of their peoples under the guise of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states. This situation has blunted the revolutionary changes that have been developing among African peoples concerning their social, economic and political existence.

In spite of the sense of camaraderie they exhibit during their yearly summits, are still suspicious of one another. This submission centers on the belief that the much hyped "peer review" mechanism of NEPAD can only check African leaders' excesses on

paper, as most of these leaders are suspicious of one another and even uncomfortable with the level of integration achieved so far. Indeed, many an African leader exhibit traits that suggest that they would rather be “kings in hell than share power in heaven.”

Unity and common sense have so far largely eluded the AU. Getting together round one table has proved difficulty; at the 1976 summit, for example, a mere 7 of the 47 heads of states turned up. When they do meet, fist fights in the debating chamber are regular events. While it was fairly easy to agree on the need for integration, it has proven far more difficult to manage disputes that have since arisen among dissatisfied sovereign neighbours. Most troublesome and bloody of all have been the effects of conflicts within individual member states which spill over into international conflict.

There could be no doubt that the immediate post colonial leaders who had in most cases, fought for independence in one way or the other, wanted the best for their respective countries . However, the fact that they saw themselves as founding fathers if not owners of their countries, soon led to over-centralization of power, nepotism and sometimes despotism. They also did not groom successors since they hardly ever envisaged leaving their exalted positions. One can therefore not fault Calvocoressi (1985) when he concluded outright that:

Independent Africa is not a success story; quite the contrary. It has become a byword for incompetent government, political instability and economic disaster.

They have established a tradition of clinging to power which has become a syndrome of leadership on the continent. Their long stay in power which they ensure by all means fair or foul, makes them depots. In spite of their pronouncements, they are generally selfish, greedy and nepotic, caring only for themselves, their immediate relations and their retinue of sycophants and hangers-on. Although there are exceptions, the vast majority of African leaders live in scandalous opulence while most of their subjects wallow in sheer squalor.

While personal distrust has a relatively manageable impact on the politics of integrating Africa, security concerns seems to defy easy solutions. It goes without saying that inter-border crimes have militated against the desire of many sub-regional groupings to ease

trade movement across neighbouring states. The Chad basin for example is a zone that is badly threatened by rising crime. It is one of the zones where high levels of insecurity have hindered Africa's integration.

Other political barriers to successful RI are the endless policy, capacity and implementation shortfalls in member states. The regional integration is supposed to be concerned with growing trade and deepening integration, but have morphed into unsightly political battles.

The results of such poor leadership include political instability, military coups d'etat, civil war, policy inconsistency, and failure to build democratic institutions.

Way Forward

The fervor for African integration is based on the immense benefits waiting to be harvested if trade and industrial patterns, currently subordinated to metropolitan interests, should be restructured inwards.

The fact that the large number of RIAs has done little to promote intra-regional trade, or indeed to enhance the global trade performance of African countries, raises questions about the appropriateness of this linear model for addressing the real challenges that inhibit Africa's regional and global trade performance. In the case of Africa, regional economic integration does not offer much of an alternative in the medium term since neighbouring markets are generally small and trade levels are low. Substantially it is a function of small domestic economies that are largely rural, subsistence-based, significantly informal, with weak productive capacities concentrated in extractive industries, and huge infrastructure or 'supply-side' deficits that inhibit integration into the global economy. This picture is the basis for gloomier assessments of African development prospects, characterised as 'development traps'.

Bringing together the political and economic insights, it seems to me that there is a case for a limited regional economic integration agenda which steers clear of formal,

institution-intensive arrangements that parrot European forms, as seems to be the norm in most sub-regional groupings in sub-Saharan Africa. The European 'model' may be useful as an aspiration, but given its unique geopolitical foundations, complex governing institutions, elaborate coordination mechanisms, and levels of internal economic integration that developing countries can only dream about, it is very difficult to see how African political economy circumstances could replicate it. Rather, a much more limited approach is required, one that prioritises trade facilitation and regulatory cooperation in areas related primarily to the conduct of business¹⁹; underpinned by a security regime emphasising the good governance agenda at the domestic level. Care should be taken to design the ensuing schemes in such a way as to avoid contributing to major implementation and capacity challenges in establishing viable and legitimate states at the national level.

Again too, there is some willingness to replace 'hard' sovereignty with 'soft' sovereignty, which lends itself to a 'good governance agenda' even if that is controversial to some. However, if this is the foundation stone upon which sustainable RECs could be built, that in turn should be on the basis of inter-governmentalism, not supranational structures that demand major sovereignty concessions. This highlights the need to explore alternative models to the EU.

Furthermore, as capital inflows are sourced primarily from outside the region, seeking to build deeper regional economic integration doesn't mean it is necessarily going to happen, given the economic and political obstacles. Consequently, African countries may remain locked into current trading relationships with external partners for the foreseeable future. These dynamics point to a limited regional economic integration agenda, tailored to regional capacities.

For a project that raises great hopes for Africa and its impoverished citizens, its impact is yet to be felt, for obvious reasons. For one thing, much as internal efforts are imperative for NEPAD to succeed, external assistance from the continent's development partners is very essential. To many an observer, the problem of capacity

and capital inflow inadequacies constitute some of the factors militating against the success of the project. Thus, the establishment of a pan-African Stock Exchange “that would correct these inadequacies as well as raise the much needed capital for the project” is advocated. This should be done by harmonizing existing stock exchanges among African countries.

To sum up, this agenda should comprise three essential elements: promoting productivity gains through widening regional markets by establishing free trade areas (FTAs); trade facilitation; and provision of regional public goods, especially network services infrastructure. Furthermore, it is likely that over a period of time a small set of regional leaders will emerge around which regional economies will increasingly concentrate.

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