

# The Underlying Political and Diplomatic Forces in the Formation of the Africa Union (AU)

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**Abstract:** *The paper carefully examines underlying political and diplomatic forces that shaped the formation of the African Union (AU). Effectively utilizing the qualitative approach to data collection and thematic analysis, the study traces the origin and evolution of the AU from the era of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in segments, and in each of the segments the political and diplomatic factors that shaped actions are fleshed out. The study reveals that what informed the formation of the OAU in the early 1960's was the desire to speed up political liberation of African countries from vestiges of colonial rule and racial discrimination. In the 1980's a new dawn emerged to tinker with the economic integration which began with the Lagos Plan of Action and ultimately given rise to the enunciation of the African Economic Community (AEC) in the 1990's at the onset of globalization. Furthermore, the burning desire to restructure the OAU at the dawn of the new millennium ridden with increasing demands for good governance, handle new types of internal strife and to reflect the political and diplomatic challenges of a changing world heralded the transformation of the OAU to a more robust politico-economic African Union. The study concludes that the essence of this exercise is to foster a proper understanding, that each epochal period in the process of the AU formation were not mere exercise of benign desire to create a supranational institution but out of the existential circumstances prevalent in that period.*

**Keywords:** Integration, Political forces, Diplomatic factors, Development, Africa Union.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The foundation of African Union was laid on May 25, 1963 when Organization of African Unity (OAU) was formed as the foremost Pan-African institution instituted for the integration of Africa, though it began with a drive to political integration given the peculiar situation and experiences of slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism, and general domination and exploitation of African people (Agbaenyi, 2016).

Thus the structure of the OAU was shaped by the urgency to salvage the continent from the yoke of colonialism, racial prejudice and discrimination and bring the African peoples much closer together. The OAU was therefore, finally established as a political organization to speed up political liberation. Its organs, including the General Secretariat were designed and evolved to undertake political activities, including advocacy. Although the OAU Charter recognized the need for economic cooperation and commits its members to economic integration, it was designed more to handle political issues with over all central objective to free Africa from the vestiges of colonialism (Waldi, 2012; Jere, 2012; Duodu, 2012; Chilaka, 2013; Mbah, 2013; Oguntona, 2014; Thom-Otoya, 2014; Chrisa, Mumba and Dirwai, 2016; AU, 2016).

Having achieved to a great extent, the political agenda particularly the total eradication of colonialism and apartheid in Africa, the need to face the problem of development became the major focus. This therefore requires a more formidable continental supranational organization whose

institutional framework is structurally repositioned for a higher form of cooperation and integration that will meet the aspiration of Africa for greater unity and solidarity. Africa therefore entered the realm of economic integration in 1990s. In fact, a number of factors culminated to the African leaders' renewed bid to embrace deeper regional integration. First, the need to overcome the challenges and constraints to consolidating the regional integration process in Africa through economic and structural reform of OAU received attention with the Abuja Treaty; the treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). The AEC marked the beginning of what scholars see as a significant but complex road toward full economic integration for Africa (Asante, 2001, Kenates, 1999). The treaty aims to build the AEC gradually through harmonization, coordination and effective integration of Africa's RECs, eight of which have been chosen as "pillar" of AEC. It proposes the establishment of a continental free trade area (CFTA) by 2017, and integration of the RECs into a single customs union with a common currency by 2028. The Abuja Treaty presents a comprehensive 34- year strategic plan towards an African Economic Community. The treaty included in the six stages of its strategic plan ... the setting up of the structure of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and election of its members by continental universal suffrage. Another important element of the treaty was the provision to strengthen the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Thus, as building blocks of the African Economic Communities, the RECs play a role as central agencies for reaching the goal. This formal recognition given to the role of the RECs in the continent in terms of Abuja Treaty subsequently aimed to strengthened cooperation between the RECs and the African Union (AU). The Abuja

Treaty thus positioned the PAP and RECs as integral institutions in the journey towards an AEC (Nzewi, 2009).

The second important factor rests on the urgent demands of globalization of the world economic and political system. The third factor as noted was the international and local pressures for government reforms. Going into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the call for good governance became more vocal in Africa. This is evidenced in the 1996 Yaoundé and 1999 Algiers summit declarations of African Heads of State, and the need for reform within the former Organization in the light of approaching millennium. It was also clear that the institutional and governance framework defined by the Abuja Treaty was proving difficult to implement due largely to capacity constraints and lack of political will of many member States who in 1990s were dealing with numerous national crises. However, at the dawn of the new millennium increasing demands for good governance signified an opportunity for the reform.

Through the 1990s, African leaders debated the need to amend the OAU's structure to reflect the challenges of a changing world. Specifically, on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1999, the African Heads of State and Government issued the Sirte Declaration calling for the establishment of a new African Union. In all, four significant summits were held in the buildup to the official launching of the African Union.

- 1999 Sirte Summit which adopted the Sirte Declaration calling for the establishment of the AU;
- 2000 Lome Summit, which adopted the Constitutive Act;
- 2001 Lusaka Summit, which, drew the road map for implementation of the AU;
- 2002 Durban Summit which launched the AU and convened its first Assembly of Heads of State and Government (AU, 2015).

The African Union concretized its aspirations. It was intended to fast track the integration process of establishing key institutions including the African Parliament (inaugurated in March 2004); the African Court of Justice; the Central Bank, and the African Investment Bank in a timely manner. The African Union is modeled on the EU, and economics assumed one of its major areas of focus. It is a direct response to the many constraints and challenges affecting African sociopolitical cooperation and integration.

The AU remains constructively engaged in; the task of peace, security maintenance, promotion and consolidation of democratic governance on the continent, and to increasing participation and involvement in the management of global affairs under the UN auspices. Furthermore, it needs to be

acknowledged that the 2001 Constitutive Act of the AU pays more attention to socio-economic issues.

Thus, the AU was expected to make a tremendous difference to the sustenance and pace of progress towards integration goals (ECA, 2006). By providing the necessary continental policy guidance and framework, it was meant to serve as the primary institutional anchors of regional integration and streamline the regional process across all sub-regions in the continent. This could result in substantial harmonization of policies and approaches of trade, and market incorporation, free movement of people and better factor mobility in general, micro economic convergence parameter, regional policies conducive to saving and investment in productive sectors, transport, and communication links, and energy policy (AU, 2016). Imobighe (2008) states that since the transformation of OAU to AU on July 9, 2002, there have been optimism that this change which included few new clauses and institutions would automatically make it an effective role player in the high-tech global environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in finding solutions to problems facing the continent.

It is against the above backdrop that the study examines the political and diplomatic intrigues that shape the various epochs that culminated to the eventual formation of the AU. Thus we shall flesh out the political and diplomatic factors that shape the following period in the life of the African continental body: the 1960-1979 era; the 1980s era of Lagos Plan of Action (LPA); the 1990s era of African Economic Community (AEC); and the 2000s era of the AU.

## II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical disposition adopted in this study is Lee's development integration theory. Development integration theory was developed in response to problems created by market integration. According to the theory; the objective of integration becomes economic and social development; and it is therefore linked with development theories. Development integration requires more State intervention than market integration. States must first and foremost make a political commitment to integration, since such commitment is seen as laying the foundation for cooperation. It is anticipated that this will help member States work toward implementing policies that will help with problems created as a result of the unequal distribution of benefits, one of the major causes of the failure of market integration (Lee, 2002).

Lee (2002) further argues that while regionalism in Africa has taken on different forms to accommodate the changing national, regional, and international environment, all organizations that aim to integrate regional economies in Africa have adopted market integration as a condition of their strategy, with a view to increasing intra-regional trade. Market Integration in this context Lee posits is the linear progression of degrees of integration beginning with total

economic integration. The model for such integration is the European Union (EU).

However Lee observes that African economies are not competitive because they are not managed on the basis of comparative advantages; African countries are not industrialized; they produce primary commodities; trade among them is very low; there is higher level of trade between African countries on the one hand and European and North-American countries on the other. On this backdrop, Lee avers that attempts to develop or achieve integration through market integration paradigm invariably lead to trade diversion rather than trade creation. In approaching regional development therefore, African countries should shift emphasis from market integration to regional cooperation development and integration(Michel,2012). Three conditions were given by Lee as necessary for African countries to achieve integration as;

- Commitment to regionalism;
- Economic and political stability;
- Conscious regional planning.

The crux of the matter implicit in Lee's analysis is that any region or sub-region that is truly committed to integration and development is likely to resist attempts by external forces to frustrate their integration schemes through the time-worn tactics of rule. The second point Lee noted is that for successful integration to be achieved, economic and political stability at national and regional levels is necessary, as she asserts that where political instability is compounded by frequent changes of economic policies or incessant economic crises, regional integration becomes virtually impossible(Michel,2012). On these recommendations of Lee lies the relevant and utility value of the theories to this study.

### III. POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC FORCES THAT SHAPE THE FORMATION OAU (1963-1979)

In historical terms, there were political and diplomatic forces that shaped the OAU and these forces continued to play out up till 1979 when the actors made efforts to change the narratives.

**Political Forces:** A major political force that propelled the formation of the OAU is rooted in the Pan-Africanist ideology of the Diaspora Africans. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century Pan-Africanist ideological movement emerged in the United States among Black American intellectuals such as Martin Delany and Alexander Crummel who were able to create a picture of similarities between Africans at home and Blacks in America. The shared sentiment among these crop of intellectuals hinged on the belief that the black civilization cannot advance if they did not create an African nation that is free from the

United States and on the basis of self-determination and dignity. This early Pan-Africanist thought soon gathered momentum and was amplified by W.E.B. Du Bois, an astute advocate of African culture and history, whose idea lay claims to the fact that colonialism is responsible for Africa's economic, political and social problems. Marcus Garvey propagated this ideology and sought for the return of Africans in Diaspora to Africa. Though he attempted to make good his thought by establishing a shipping company known as the Black Star Line, the venture was not successful due to the obstacles posed by the US and British authorities given their concern for the future their colonies (South Africa History online, 2021).

Taking a cue from the foremost Pan-Africanists, political actors like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Sekou Toure of Guinea and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia pressed forward the cause of Pan-African ideology. In this common race of Pan-Africanism, a series of Pan-African Congresses were organized in continuation of the advancement interest of African people in terms of strategies to achieve unification. Following the fifth Congress in Manchester, England which was attended by Nkrumah, a number of issues were discussed and agreed on. These include: "complete independence of the African continent and total rejection of colonialism and exploitation in all its forms"; unification of Africa through regional blocs and the adoption of democracy option; the need for economic reorganization so as to replace colonialism with economic self-determinism as well as assumption of a position of "positive neutrality" or non-interference on matters of peace and security (South Africa History online, 2021).

Thus, between 22 and 25 May 1963, delegates from 32 African countries convened in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa to establish the Organization for African Unity (OAU), based on a 'watered-down compromise' between competing ideological blocs, and on the basis that the organization would proceed incrementally by step-by-step approach towards integration until the goal of a Union of African States was realized (South Africa History online, 2021).

**Diplomatic Forces:** Having imbibed the ideology of Pan-Africanism, after Ghana's independence Nkrumah was poised to convene series of conferences in Accra between 1958 and 1960 in order to assist countries still under colonial rule and to foster cultural and economic relations between African countries. Using his diplomatic tact, Nkrumah also convened the All African People's Conference and hosted liberation groups and African nationalist organization in which the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa attended. Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa, generated a sharp split and contentions among the African states, which was resolved by taking a middle road to African unity. In other words, though there was a common vision of uniting Africans, it generated a differing ideological commitments and opinions with regards to strategy and structure of the continental body. The diplomatic row on account of differing

ideological stance gave birth to the emergence of three ideological blocs on the goal of the proposed continental body. In this vein, the Casablanca Group consisting of Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Libya, Egypt, Morocco and Algerian Provisional Government, formed in January, 1961 advocated for radical and full continental integration; the Monrovia Group which comprised Nigeria, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sudan, Togo and Somalia, formed in May 1961, canvassed for a moderate approach to unification on incremental basis, while the Brazzaville Group made up of Francophone countries is composed of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Madagascar, the Peoples' Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Gabon, Mauritania, Upper Volta, Niger, Senegal, and Chad, formed in December, 1960 was tied to the apron string of the interest of France (South Africa History on Line, 2021). There was also the Pan-African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA) (Munya, 1999).

Though many African leaders such as Kenya's Julius Nyerere and Nigeria's Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, were supportive of the ideal of African unity in principle, but in practice they played the diplomatic chest game of protecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity which they felt that Nkrumah's sweeping United States of Africa vision could not protect. They felt that for countries to embrace a seamless United States of Africa approach it would amount to surrendering "hard-fought-for" independence and sovereignty just to gain a common monetary, foreign and defence policy. In its place the African leaders opted for a "diluted version of unity" thereby reducing the continental body to an association with the aim of eradicating colonialism and protecting the individual sovereignty of its members (South Africa History on Line, 2021).

The above is better explained by the Charter of the OAU as documented below: Thus, the OAU Charter outlined its objectives to

- a) Promote unity and solidarity of the African states
- b) To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa,
- c) To defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence,
- d) To eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, and
- e) To promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This was to be achieved by calling on member states to recognize

1. The sovereign equality of member states,
2. Non-interference in the internal affairs of each state,
3. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and its inalienable right to independent existence,

4. Peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation,
5. Unreserved condemnation, in all its forms, of subversive activities on the part of neighbouring states or any other states,
6. Absolute dedication to the total emancipation of the African territories which were still dependent, and
7. Affirmation of a policy of nonalignment with regard to all other blocs (South Africa on Line, 2021).

Thus, the road to the formation of OAU was full of obstacles as independent African states emerged from colonialism found themselves balkanized into regional and ideological groups. The pre-May 1963 Addis Ababa Summit of African leaders, which was to adopt a charter for continental unity, was a divided house with two main ideological camps. The middle ground chosen to appease opposing radical and conservative groups resulted in the OAU's Charter blueprint of maintenance of status quo of sovereignty and sanctity of colonial boundaries as well as attachments. This compromise led to the dismal performance of OAU in conflict resolution and management, particularly the Charter's norm of non-intervention in internal affairs of member states insulates internal conflicts from scrutiny and resolution by the OAU, while the sanctity of national borders prevents the OAU from addressing the problem of border conflicts. The OAU cannot easily be divorced from the historical setting within which it was created as it was established when the African states were emerging from colonial rule. Hence its abnormal for these newly independent states to take steps aimed at safeguarding their sovereignty from any future subjugation. The aims and objectives of the OAU therefore embody these African concerns of the time (Munya, 1999). This also explains why African countries could not take independent decisions concerning their economies as well as inability to really maintain the non-alignment posture during the cold war. It is on record that the alignment posture of most African countries gave room for proxy wars in the continent during the cold war (Munya, 1999).

Although in the first two decades of the OAU, majority of the African states gained independence except few states like South Africa and what later became Zimbabwe and Guinea Bissau, the African states were still highly economically dependent on the Western nations with marginal economic position in the globe. In fact, Clark (1991), Rubin and Weinstein (1977), Ojo, Orwa and Ute (1985) have described the OAU as a major diplomatic move by African leaders to steer the ship of the continent contrary to the imperial intrigues played by the major powers in the bid to promote and secure Africa's interests in the global diplomatic game. This informed the attempts made in the following decade to restructure the continental body.

#### **1980s Era of Lagos Plan of Action (LPA)**

At the ideological level, as agriculture deteriorated and the burden of food aid and purchases of food products weighed heavily in the balance of payments, African leaders began to

embrace the 'theory of unequal development and the need for autocentred development'. The theory implies that development from a peripheral position requires delinking and simultaneous development of South-South co-operation; from then on, every reservation about the concept of autocentred development began to whittle down (Seka, 2009). In deft political and diplomatic moves, the OAU in 1980 established the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Final Act of Lagos (FAL) in 1981. The essence is creating enabling environment for Africa to take ownership of its development plan and also to participate fully in the international division of labour (Adedeji 1985; Ake, 1996; Clark, 2008; Teriba 1991, Asante 1997). The LPA emerged as an OAU strategy to reposition and strengthen Africa in the global economy (Seka, 2009).

The groundwork for the launching of the LPA began with the Monrovia Conference in 1979. Many intellectuals participated in the meeting and their views contributed in strongly influencing the resolutions that set the ground for the Lagos Plan of Action meetings proper. Thus, the "Monrovia Declaration of Commitment or the guidelines and measures for national and collective self-reliance in economic and social development for the establishment of a new international order" and which, Inter-alia, calls for the creation of an African Common Market as a prelude to an African Economic Community (AEC) (Seka, 2009). Although, the Lagos Plan of Action dealt more with economic issues than politics, it is a part of the political and diplomatic strategy devised by the African leaders to escape the economic quagmire bedeviling the continent. The LPA was primarily devoted, along with the final Act of Lagos, to restructure the economic base of the continent to make it consistent with a far-reaching regional approach based on a collective and self-reliance scheme. The Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act I of April 1980 reaffirm the commitment of the Heads of States to establish by the year 2000, an African Economic Community in order to foster the economic, social and cultural integration of the continent (Seka, 2009).

Sequel to the LPA Final Act I of April 1980, there was the Arusha Symposium in 1984 which later formed the basis for the creation of the African Economic Community (AEC). Part of what strengthened the resolve to continue to foster the LPA in the 1980s was the fact that in 1984, the economic conditions of Africa was further weakened, with severe droughts and famines. Following this debilitating economic and social conditions, the meeting of the Ordinary Session held between July 18 and 20, 1985 was mostly devoted to economic and social issues, and this in turn led to the establishment of the African Priorities Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990 (APPER) to concentrate on food production and food security issues in the spirit of self-reliance. During that meeting, an Assembly was called to deliberate on the debt problems of Africa which later took place at an extraordinary session in Addis Ababa, on November 30-December 1, 1987. When the meeting was

eventually held, it leaned towards adopting a Common African Position on the External Debt Crisis in the bid to ease the debt burden through responsibility sharing between donors and debtors. This was followed up by setting up a committee to that effect (Seka, 2009).

Apart from the economic issues thrown up in the LPA of the 1980s, there were other political issues which the OAU engaged in relation to African development. These include human right issues. In 1981 the OAU initiated the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) to address issues of abuses of human rights in Africa. The OAU took the above step so as to contribute to the progressive development, promotion and protection of human rights. It could be argued that the Banjul Charter was the first human rights legal instrument in the world to incorporate the right to development in Articles 22 and 23: Article 22 provides the right to development while Article 23 provides for the right to enjoy a favourable air in the process of development. The human rights provisions imply that development is essential and imperative for African society to improve its standard of living. Hence, the Preamble of the Banjul Charter noted that it is henceforth essential to pay particular attention to the right to development and that civil and political rights cannot be dissociated from economic, social, and cultural rights in their conception as well as universality and that the satisfaction of economic, social and cultural rights is a guarantee for the enjoyment of civil and political rights. This culminated to the establishment in 1989, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights as ratified by two-thirds of the states in Africa (Clark, 2016).

### Counter Diplomatic Forces to the LPA

The lofty effort made by the OAU to refocus and reposition African economy through the Lagos Plan of action met with serious oppositions from the international community, including the Bretton Woods Institutions (Seka, 2009). Barring other internal limitations to the LPA, it was forced adoption of the Priority Plan for the Economic Recovery of Africa (PPERA) in 1986, as proposed by the Bretton Woods institutions that completely negated the LPA's ideals of autocentric development. The PPERA created room for excessive external aid in conjunction with the Economic Commission for Africa (D'Sa, 1983).

The World Bank through numerous seminars campaigned vigorously against the LPA. In one of its counter-plan publications the Bank dismissed the LPA in the following perspectives:

First, the World Bank document alleged that food self-sufficiency is not a scientific concept but a 'politico-ideological one, rooted in nationalism and not from economic analysis that is based on law of comparative advantage; secondly, Africa got enmeshed in the economic crisis because they failed to apply this principle (comparative advantage) and they could not industrialize due to protectionism that had

not allowed capital to thrive; thirdly, it stressed on the ambiguity of the LPA on the role of international official assistance after which it went ahead with emphasis on doubling international assistance in real terms between 1980 and 1990 even when previous assistance had not contributed to increasing food output. This was a clear advocate in favour of ultra-liberalism as against auto centric development idea of the LPA (Amara and Founou-Tchuigoua, 1990).

Apart from the intellectual counter to the LPA, the Bank arm twisted the African governments to jettison the autocentric aspect of the LPA for a partnership arrangement with the West. While the African intelligentsia and the Council of Ministers rejected the Bank's approach and the African states treated the Bank's plan with suspicion, the World Bank went through the respective Central Bank Governors and blackmailed them into adopting the Bank's proposal. The World Bank succeeded in putting pressure on the Central Bank Governors due largely to the states' urgent need to reschedule their external debts; hence they needed to secure the bank's acceptance. This was how the World Bank became a key player and whittled down the supposedly self-reliant LPA with its incompatible plans (Amara and Founou-Tchuigoua, 1990).

With the World Bank neo-liberal interference, it became imperative that food self-sufficiency became shortchanged for a reformed LPA that is based on the following contradictory five-year PPERA principles as summarized by Amara and Founou-Tchuigoua (1990):

1. Implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act in an updated form.
2. Improvement of the food situation and rehabilitation of agriculture.
3. Alleviating the external debt burden.
4. Action against the effects of the destabilization policy of South Africa on the economies of southern African States.
5. Measures for a common platform of action at sub-regional, regional, continental and international levels.

On the whole, the PPERA interference by its objectives, can be viewed as the justification of the Abuja Treaty (Clark, 2016), which is examined below.

### **The 1990s Era of African Economic Community (AEC)**

The commitments made during the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos were translated into concrete form, in Abuja, Nigeria, in June 1991 when the 51 OAU Heads of State and Government signed the Treaty establishing the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). This treaty was expected to integrate the OAU, herein known as 'The Abuja Treaty' The treaty supposedly became a turning point of the OAU's agenda, especially on economic matters as it has embraced all the thinkable issues related to

economic development. The key objectives of the community are:

- i) To promote economic, social and cultural development and integration of the African economies in order to increase economic self-reliance and promote an endogenous and self-sustained development;
- ii) To establish, at a continental scale, a framework for the development, mobilization and utilization of human and material resources of Africa in order to achieve a self-reliant development;
- iii) To promote cooperation in all fields of human endeavour in order to raise the standard of African people, maintain and enhance economic stability, foster close and peaceful relations among member states and contribute to the progress, development, and economic integration of the continent; and finally, to harmonize policies among the existing economic associations and those to be created.

The Abuja Treaty was adopted in 1991 but became effective only in May 1994 when the required number of instruments of ratification for its coming into force were deposited with the Secretary General of the OAU/AEC (EDECO, 2021). The Abuja Treaty set up the modalities for establishing the AEC; they consist of six stages of with varied duration over a transition period not exceeding thirty-four years from the date of entry into force of the Treaty. Each of the stages has specific activities to be implemented concurrently. These include:

Stage One (five years):

Strengthening of existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and establishing new ones in regions they do not exist.

Stage Two (eight years):

- i. At the level of REC, establishing tariff and non-tariff barriers, customs duties and internal taxes at the May 1994 level, and determination of the time table for the gradual liberalization of regional and intra-community trade, and for the harmonization of customs duties vis-à-vis third states;
- ii. Strengthening of sectoral integration, particularly in the fields of trade, agriculture, money and finance, transport and communication, industry and energy; and
- iii. Coordination and harmonization of the activities of RECs.

Stage Three (ten years): At the level of each REC, the establishment of Free Trade Area and Customs Union.

Stage Four (two years): Coordination and harmonization of tariff and non-tariff barriers among various RECs with a view to establishing a Continental Customs Union;

Stage Five (four years): Establishment of an African Common Market (ACM).

Stage Six (five years): Consolidation and strengthening of the structures of the ACM, including free movement of peoples and factors of production; creation of a single domestic market and Pan African Economic and Monetary Union, African Currency; Establishment of a Pan African Parliament (EDECO,2021).

In November 1996, the Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC) of the AEC held its first ministerial session in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire and adopted its work programme which is designed to accelerate the integration process in the continent. Also, the AEC Assembly of Heads of State and Government held its inaugural session in Harare, Zimbabwe on June 2 1997 (EDECO, 2021).

#### IV. CHALLENGES TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INTEGRATION OF AFRICA UNDER THE OAU

There was a constellation of challenges which confronted the OAU from achieving African integration. These include: ravaging economic crises brought about by a number of internal and external influences; poor policy advice, resource deficiencies and a lack of institutional and physical infrastructure coupled with corruption, political instability culminating to underdevelopment. All these served to hamper the goal of socio-economic development the OAU craved for (South Africa History on line, 2021).

Despite the OAU's stance on jumpstarting the African Economic Community (AEC) preferably through indigenous solutions other than and work towards the creation of free trade areas, customs unions, a central bank and eventually, a monetary union; the OAU allowed the injection of billions of World Bank dollars which led to the burgeoning Africa's debt crisis. Even with the burden of moral obligation to pay their debts, the OAU members, have shown high preference to remain obstinate and unwilling to enthrone economic discipline and fulfill their obligations to the international economic order. Furthermore, the OAU's recourse to encourage the multiplicity of regional economic communities had its own challenges of creating problematic economic relations as each of the blocs show preference for acting in their own regional interest (South Africa History on line, 2021).

Another significant challenge for the OAU was its deference to state sovereignty which grossly affected the Organization's efficacy in preventing and stemming conflict within its member states. The OAU's undiluted respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of members resulted in emergent dictatorships, coups and counter coups exacerbated political instability. For example, when leaders such as Haile Selassie, Kwame Nkrumah, Abubakar Balewa and Sekou Toure, founding fathers of the OAU were overthrown, the OAU could not intervene as members saw it as interference. The same coup happened in Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gambia, Chad, Guinea Bissau, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo in a series of coups and counter coups which established military dictatorships and set African states on a path to perpetual civil war and OAU had no answer to them due to the non-interference provision in its Charter (South Africa History on line, 2021). The OAU exhibited lack of capacity to establish any proactive conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, rather the organization created avenues for receiving aid from Europe,

the United States and the United Nations. Though unintended, the Organization's Liberation Committee, through its support of liberation movements, inadvertently entrenched the legitimacy of guerrilla tactics for regime overthrow which has not ceased to continue (South Africa History on line, 2021).

Thus, the OAU succeeded in decolonizing the continent with the dismantling of Apartheid regime in South Africa; however, the inbuilt constraints in its Charter limited its scope of operation as a key driver of continental integration. The penchant by the African leaders to maintain and nurture the Westphalian idea of state sovereignty contributed to rendering the OAU weak via the principle of non-interference. The many member states in the organization soon got embroiled with financial thereby rendering it financially underfunded and financially incapacitated, as many of the member states which relied external funding could not pay their membership fees. Given the fact that the OAU lacked enforcement capabilities, the continental body could not enforce member state compliance with any of its decisions, instead it relied persuading the members to exhibit political will. Lastly, due to a requisite two-thirds consensus on all resolutions, the existence of factions within the organization further complicated the resolution of pressing issues. This explains why, when the continent experienced a number of intrastate wars and insurgencies following the fall of the Soviet Union, the OAU was rendered largely incapacitated (South Africa History on line, 2021).

#### V. THE POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC FORCES IN THE FORMATION OF THE AFRICAN UNION

The Libyan President, Muammar Al Gaddafi called for the reformation and re-conceptualization of the OAU at the 35th OAU Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Libya (referred to as the Sirte Declaration of September 9, 1999) with a view, inter alia, toward accelerating the process of integration in the continent, and also address the social, economic and political problems arising from globalization (Pugliese, 2014) and another call to convene its fourth extraordinary session which would further consider the reformation of the OAU into a more capable and less constrained African Union, that later metamorphosed into the African Union coming into force in 2002, there were a number of political and diplomatic forces that shaped it as expressed below. It has earlier been stated in the paper on the weakness of the OAU in really championing socio-economic and political integration in a true sense of it. These forces include:

The sudden collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union: The collapse of the communist bloc threw up a number of significant events that the OAU was ill equipped to handle effectively. Thus, contrary to expectations that the fall of the Berlin Wall in October 1989 would usher in a global peace dividend, especially for Africa, it rather became a nightmare. The post-Cold War era provided the

leverage for insurgencies to question the legitimacy of autocratic regimes across many countries in the continent. In effect, the shelter covering the sit tight heads of state was pulled out from them and exposing them to insurgencies that were equally determined to replace them by every means at their disposal as was in the case of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Rwanda, etc. (Akinrinade and Sesay, 1998).

In this vein, Africa's post-Cold War conflicts typically referred to as 'post-modern' and 'network wars' can be rightly distinguished from their Cold War precursors in several significant ways (UNRISD 1995). First, these conflicts erupted mainly within states, and started by non-state actors and armies, or 'warlords'. Second, they were protracted and not easily amenable to resolution with the existing conventional conflict management mechanisms of the OAU. Third, they involved the use of large numbers of 'child' or 'baby' soldiers, 'many of whom became notorious for heinous war crimes and atrocities such as rape, kidnapping, cannibalism, crude amputations, etc.' Fourth, most of the victims and casualties were civilians: children, women and the aged. Fifth, the armaments used were more of small arms and light weapons whose carriage and usage are easy, hence facilitating massive participation of children in the wars (Sesay, 2008).

Given the, 'network' nature of the conflicts, it bred complex humanitarian emergencies such as: massive internally displaced persons (IDPs), unprecedented refugees, collapse of social infrastructure, hunger, diseases, etc., culminating to state collapse. Hence, the demise of the Cold War was synonymous with state collapse arising from ethnic identities within the state entity. It became obvious that the OAU proved incapable of tackling these complex challenges for lack of requisite institutional mechanisms, capability, political will, and the financial resources to stem the tide of this kind of conflict situation (Sesay, 2008).

Politically speaking, the post-Cold War international system inputted new concerns that were not directly related to such items for which the OAU was created. These include: unprecedented globalization, strong commitment to respect for human rights, insistence on democracy and good governance, free and fair elections, accountability and transparency. These are 'new' concerns that to a large extent, are targeted at the developing countries, particularly African countries that had been persistent defaulters in many of these respects in the Cold War era (Sesay, 2008, Akokpari, 2003).

In strategic terms, the collapse of the Soviet Union signifying the end the Cold War came with the cost of significant reduction in Africa's strategic importance. This arose because the termination of the Cold War ended the era of political 'protégé system' whereby weak, corrupt, dictatorial and potentially unstable states were sustained by the great powers in return for meddlesome political support. Within that period, political dissidents who could not openly challenge

sit-tight leaders and presidents for life for many decades due to this protective shield given to them by major friendly powers were emboldened to do so and began to probe 'constituted' authority in their various domains. In doing so, they discovered that they were weak and abandoned without the protective shield once provided by Great Powers (Charters, 1994 cited in Sesay, 2008). Thus, African leaders who were once described by some great powers as 'close, tried and tested friends of western countries suddenly became victims of the political turmoil that erupted in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the great powers' own back yard'. Coupled with cuts in regular budget subsidies, many African leaders observed that they no longer had resources either to 'co-opt opponents or prop their tottering regimes and states'. This resulted to unprecedented political chaos in many African states (Sesay, 2008). Furthermore, with the emergence of the United States as a unipolar power (sole super-power) at that time, the situation was worsened by its insistence on liberal ideology of democracy and good governance as its cornerstone of dealing with countries in the web of post-Cold War international diplomacy. In addition to above developments were the unprecedented integration of the global economy especially under the aegis of the World Trade Organization, the unfettered triumph of market forces, and breath-taking innovations in information and communications technology, that converted the world into a global village for which Africa was also 'embarrassingly ill-equipped' to cope with (Sesay, 2008).

This era also coincided with the period Africa was experiencing crippling poverty, the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its debilitating impact on the continent. The vital socio-economic statistics on Africa were embarrassingly on the negative: For instance, in the midst of sluggish progress of its economic development, there was high rate of HIV/AIDS infections (about 30 million people living with HIV in Africa as at 2004), affecting mostly the active population between the ages 15-49 years. Africa is the continent with widest gap between rich and poor, with more than 40 per cent of its population living on less than one US\$ a day, and for many an average of only 65 cents. In economic parlance, Africa accounts for only 2 per cent of total global trade, and a miniscule 1 per cent of the global economic output. This shows that Africa traded the negative path of globalization than other regions of the world. For instance, the continent lost an estimated US\$150 bn in capital flight from globalization coupled with massive brain drain of its highly skilled professionals (Sesay, 2008).

Given the above socio-political and economic quagmire which Africa found itself in the post-Cold War era, the political actors deemed it absolutely necessary to transform the OAU to the AU in 2002 so that the continental body can effectively face these challenges, integrate and become relevant in the emergent new world order. This was a bold attempt by African leaders to 'break clean' from the past, be abreast with the future by 'evolving a state-of-the-art Pan-



African organization' to replace the weak and lack luster OAU. It was hoped that the new organization is better suited to tackle the retinue of challenges of the continent in the 21st century and as well fit into the global arena with some elements of self-reliant strategies and impactful exchange with other regions.

The objectives of the AU has been succinctly summarized by Cohen (cited in [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org), 2021) as an organization that seeks to increase development, combat poverty and corruption, and end Africa's many conflicts. More specifically, "The AU is the world's only regional or international organization that explicitly recognizes the right to intervene in a member state on humanitarian and human rights grounds". Although at the initial stage, two critical approaches to the formation and nature of the African Union: those of slow and high speed. The views of these two camps Accra meeting there were those who think that the creation of the African Union involves both costs and benefits that should be weighted properly before taking any action; therefore, things should go slowly, step by step. Such idea is shared by a group led by President Mbeki of South Africa. On the other hand, those who think that time is running fast, and Africa cannot afford to wait longer therefore, things should go quickly. Such idea is shared by another group led by President Gaddafi of Libya (Seka, 2009).

The above explains the political and diplomatic forces and trajectory of African Union from the period of the OAU and the various stages the OAU passed through to its dissolution giving way for the AU.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study has made robust narratives of the political and diplomatic forces that led to the formation of the AU from the ashes of the OAU. It traced the political and diplomatic forces that were at play in the formation of the OAU, the initial limited scope of the OAU from the 1960s to the 1970s. Attempts made to initiate the autocratic development in the 1980s through the Lagos Plan of Action and the counter diplomatic plans by the Bretton Woods institutions as orchestrated by the Western political actors. By the turn of events in the 1990s and following the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, the OAU member realized that having ended colonialism and racial discrimination across Africa, there was need to pursue vigorously an integration process that is capable of igniting socio-economic development and free the continent from the immanent stranglehold of poverty and crippling underdevelopment. That led to the launching of the African Economic Community (the Abuja Treaty); a phased integration project to fast track the economic development through the instrumentality the existing sub-regional economic groupings (RECs). The OAU was still brooding over the AEC until the fall of the Soviet Union leading to collapse of the Eastern bloc raised yet another milestone in the global system as it ushered in the triumph of liberalism

and globalization. This was a period when information technology held sway at a breakneck speed while Africa was left behind with little or nothing to bargain with. Given the demands of corresponding political liberalism of the period, non-state actors began to exact their demands upon African dictators, leading to internal insurrections which the instrumentality of the OAU could not handle owing to its principles of non-interference in domestic affairs of its members. In this milieu, the former Western powers that used to act as protective shield to the sit-tight African leaders were no longer at their beck and call due to the collapse of the East-West divide. It became obvious that there was a need to dissolve the existing OAU and fashion out a more robust institution that is capable of accommodating the new challenges thrown up by the forces of globalization and functionally fast track African integration project in the twenty-first century. These factors put together led to the formation of the African Union with a more robust Constitutive Act in 2002.

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