Crises in African States the African Union Grips or Drips? The Case of Selected Countries

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Abstract

Objective: This paper seeks to locate the AU's potential to grip the African crises and preclude a drip down with the continent in failure.

Importance: The study enables the AU's leadership and member states to reflect and introspect with a view to meeting the African crises head on in preparation for a bright Africa for posterity.

Methodology: Informed by the constructivist research philosophy a content analysis is done to review selected cases.

Findings: About fifteen years after the formation of the AU it is perceived as a club of African Heads of States and government with some not legitimately elected oligarchs. While it shares a relatively similar name and structures with the EU, the AU's environment and historical background locate it in circumstances that make it completely different. Although the institution is loaded with the potential to save Africa from its political and economic conundrum there is an absolute need for inclusive triangular engagement.

Conclusion: The present scenario in which only leadership from the ruling parties discuss AU business does not provide any glimmer of hope because critical issues are overshadowed by aspects to preserve and perpetuate longevity in power. This reduces the continental body to a club of political elites seeking ways to continue in power in a veiled manner that may never extricate member states from the present sorry state in which they are.

Recommendation: The study recommends that, the political leadership, civil society and citizens in the member states must create a platform where issues are discussed openly and frankly about the direction which AU must take. The political leadership must include those from the ruling parties and opposition parties

Keywords: African crisis; African union; O.A.U; Constitutive act

Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

Introduction

The African crisis is a myriad of problems owing to unpopular governance stemming from undemocratic political systems, lack of tolerance to cultural/ethnic diversity and political pluralism, external interference, failure to deliver goods and services, diseases and hunger among a host of other issues. These problems characterize the post-colonial period with states giving priority to political party interests, the military and investing more in surveillance technologies than serving the interests of the general populace. In a bid to solve these problems, continental and regional economic communities (RECs) have emerged. Examples include: the now defunct, Organization of African Unity (O.A.U); the African Union (A.U); the Southern African Development Community (SADC); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS). Ideologies like 'Pan-Africanism' (an ideology that encourages solidarity of Africans) 'Try Africa First' (finding African solutions to African problems in the wake of conflict management), "Ubuntu/Unhu" (humanity to others) have been conceived. Despite these efforts problems have continued to afflict Africa. According to Eghweree et al. [1], "the O.A.U was seen as an old boys' club where the so-called leaders met annually to showcase their ill-gotten wealth and rival each other for the control of the African continental political body ", or its thrust was to protect each other, irrespective of the circumstances in tandem with the' principle of state sovereignty [2]. This hampered African growth [3].

However, Eregha et al. [4] holds a contrary view and argues that,' OAU was able to achieve enviable results such as the decolonization in most African countries and the liberation struggle against apartheid in South Africa'. He further argues that the shackles of apartheid were broken as a result of the tireless effort of this continental body. The establishment of the African Union to tackle developmental burdens has been welcomed with mixed feelings. At a workshop to commemorate 50 years of OAU/AU on 24 May 2013 at Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies in Tanzania, Moshi et al. [5] made the following observations; "The problems that the AU confronts are intractable and complex and they are defeating even in comparison to more powerful international players, including the UN. This means that the AU must prioritize efficiently. Its mandate is immensely broad, but its capacity for delivery is limited, and it must zero in on the highest priorities." This paper

seeks to locate the AU's potential to grip the African crises and preclude a drip down with the continent in failure. The study enables the AU's leadership and member states to reflect and introspect with a view to meeting the African crises head on in preparation for a bright Africa for posterity. The paper provides a background to the formation of the AU and a literature review. It is informed by the constructivist research philosophy and a content analysis is done to review selected cases. This is followed by a discussion of results classified as grip issues and drip factors impacting on the AU, then conclusions and recommendations.

Background to the Study

Earlier, Farmer et al. [6] had argued that, while Pan-Africanism has remained a catchphrase after decolonization, as is articulated in the Charter of the AU placing emphasis on the ideals of African cooperation and unity, the Charter does not show how this ought to be achieved. African states have failed before to institutionalize African cooperation during the life span of the O.A.U. The debate between the Casablanca and Monrovia groups is testament to this failure. But others have regarded the A.U. as a renewed vigor in the 21st Century, Joy et al. [7] and an offer of unprecedented opportunities for Africa to address the challenges that have saddled the continent since most countries attained independence [8]. On paper, the A.U. and initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) appear to be committed to advancing, economic development, respect for human rights, preempt conflict and deal with states seen to abuse their power. Despite these commitments, a number of African states such as Zimbabwe runs short of complying with the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the A.U. for instance, to uphold democratic principles, respect for human rights and the rule of law. From the foregoing, it is indisputable that the AU is faced with many operational hurdles that are political, economic and social in nature.

Literature Review

This section is reviews extant literature from two perspectives. First, it gives an overview of the birth of the African Union (AU). Second, the framework of analysis of the AU after its formation.

An overview of the birth of the AU

Sesay & Omotosho [9] opine that, the decline of interest in the African continent by super powers occurred at a time when turmoil was raging in some of Eastern Europe's

former communist states. As a result, their attention was focused on Europe turning a blind eye to Africa. This happened at a time when Liberia had a brutal civil war at the close of the 1990s and expected America their so-called 'step-father' to intervene and bring the bloodshed to a halt [9]. Unfortunately and expectedly, Washington pronounced loudly Sesay et al. [10] and Sesay et al. [11] that it was an 'African problem' that required an African solution. Liberia had to solicit the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) intervention force to restore peace in the country.

The super powers' interpretation of the concept of 'Try Africa First' manifest in two forms as provided for by the international law. First, Article 52 of the United Nations Charter provides that regional arrangements must engage fully in managing local conflicts. Implicitly, the OAU now AU was obliged to intervene as the war occurred in its area of jurisdiction. Apparently, the OAU stayed in the background arguably providing some form of diplomatic backing to Nigeria the lead regional state, ECOMOG and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), leading to the culmination of general elections won by Charles Taylor in July 2007. Second, RECs like SADC, ECOWAS and the East African Community (EAC) were destined to bring local conflicts to an end in case OAU/AU failed. In 1990, the RECs managed to calm the conflict in Liberia and also quelled the strife in Sierra Leon in the mid- 1990s. It appears the call for 'African solutions to African problems' by African leaders vindicated the reluctance by the super-powers to scale down their engagement in African problems [9]. The timid approach in Rwanda before the 1994 genocide shown by the United Nations (UN) and the deployment of a few UN peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) revealed a stance for the inaction by the West and the International Community that 'African solutions to African problems'. Under the circumstance, it becomes imperative that the AU as a supranational body must fill the gap in the 21st Century. However, pertinent questions arise: Is Africa able to stand alone in the light of globalization? Are African leaders sincere and capable of solving African problems on their own? These questions call for Africa's economic situation analysis and political situation analysis before begging for answers.

The questions raised above bring to the fore the Casablanca and Monrovia issue. According to Makinda & Okumu [12], the Casablanca group was made up of seven states namely, Morocco, Mali, Libya, Ghana, Guinea, Egypt and Algerian provisional government. This group believed that, the most effective way to guarantee protection to the newly independent's political, social and economic interests was political unity [13]. Kwame Nkrumah

former president of Ghana in the group believed that Africa had to unite in order for development to succeed. Africa had to unite economically and politically or the continent risked being corrupted and exploited by neocolonialism international forces. In his book (Nkrumah, 1963: xvi) argued that, "colonial powers do not willingly retire from political control over any given land", and that would result in the exploitation of Africa's people and resources. For him, neocolonialism has the potential to fragment Africa through artificial divides among the African people in a bid to "create schisms and rivalries which they hope to exploit after they have gone" (Nkrumah, 1963:57).

Although he acknowledged diversity in race, language and culture, Nkrumah argues that being African took precedence before any of these aspects of identity. As such; the collective security of Africa was paramount to that of individual states. The Casablanca group was influenced by Nkrumah's beliefs hence the group upheld the notion that political unity was of paramount importance for an independent Africa. Williams et al. [14] Contends that the Casablanca group called for the establishment of 'The United States of Africa' in which sovereignty would be pooled, with a central government in place. For the Casablanca group individual sovereignty of states was not a priority but viewed solidarity as the most effective way to develop and achieve the goals of Pan-Africanism. According to Makinda & Okumu [12] the Monrovia group was made of fourteen countries namely, Togo, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and Senegal. This group was more concerned with the protection of states sovereignty although equally concerned with the need for African cooperation. It argued that a political union to include all African states was not sensible as there were several states that were still under colonial bondage. Ramutsindela et al. [15] observes that, the group was also opposed to a political union because for many, political independence had just been achieved and sovereignty was under threat from both internal and external forces. As noted by Farmer et al. [6] the two groups were kept apart by the principle of sovereignty although both remained committed to the values of Pan-Africanism. Further, both groups had the desire to improve Africa's economic situation and forge economic cooperation.

For that matter Murithi et al. [16] posits that, when the OAU was inaugurated in 1963, the Monrovia group's principles prevailed and despite Nkrumah's warnings of neo-colonialism, the territorial integrity of each sovereign state was preserved by the OAU. The residual influence of colonialism had an effect on the way many African leaders were resolved to safeguard and consolidate their hard-

won independence and territorial integrity [17]. The principle of sovereignty even influenced the structure and policies of the OAU. While Article 2(1) of the Charter of the OAU described the purposes of this organization, and its first two points focused on Pan-African values of unity and cooperation among states, the third point was entirely state-centric. It emphasized that the purpose of the OAU was 'to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence. Further, the commitment to sovereignty was elaborated in Article 3 of the Charter. Here, the principles of non-interference were stated and the respect for each state's inalienable right to independent existence. The underpinnings of the Monrovia group's conception of sovereignty were manifest in the OAU's Charter.

Farmer et al. [6] Laments that, although the OAU meant to strengthen African cooperation and development to improve the quality of life for Africans, the way in which sovereignty was institutionalized prevented these aims from being realized. As a result Corinne et al. [18] the principle of non-intervention meant civil wars could not be dealt with and despotic leaders remained in power violating human rights. The OAU's self-imposed ban on peacekeeping made the situation worse [19]. The OAU thought it was the UN which was obliged to act in protection of human rights, yet politics of the Cold War blocked the Security Council from acting. Civil wars raged on in several African States with no interference from the UN and the OAU. Examples include Rwanda, Central African Republic, DRC, Burundi and Sierra Leone. In September 1999, it was decided that the OAU be dismantled. By July et al. [7], the legal document outlining the institutional design and purpose of the AU, the Constitutive Act, had been signed by all interested states [16].

The AU was inaugurated in 2002 sharing some of the features of the OAU (such as the assembly of heads of state and government having final decision making powers). Note that, the AU looks quite different from the OAU in many ways. The new institutions of the AU include: the Peace and Security Council, the Pan-African Parliament, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) and the Court of Justice. Perhaps, the different institutional design of the AU is a demonstration of the differences in ideologies between the OAU and the AU. As opposed to the OAU, the AU entrenched the notion that sovereignty is not a privilege that all states deserve. Instead, it is a responsibility and which can be lost if a government fails to meet these responsibilities. This is well stated in the fourth section of the Constitutive Act; (h) the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes

against humanity. Powell & Tieku [20] argue that unlike the OAU, the right for the AU to intervene in a state's domestic affairs enables it to "bring Africa closer to a more inclusive peace."

A framework of analysis for the AU

Aghweree et al. [1] argues that, it is critical to make an analysis of the African political elites and their role in order to understand the regional political grouping in the continent. From the political science and sociological perspective, the elite theory seeks to provide an explanation and description of power relationships in a given society. The elite theory's thrust is on the will of the few powerful well-to-do people who are privileged to determine policy direction in a group or for a country. The AU as a political supranational organization was fashioned principally by the African elitist's quest for political dominion at continental level [1]. Aghwere's argument seems to be based on the futile effort of the late Gadhafi of Libya to advocate for the United States of Africa (USA) and the disbanded quest of late Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, under the guise of Pan-Africanism, to create the same USA lobbied by the Casablanca group.

In that vein, critics have dismissed the Constitutive Act as utopian Adejo et al. [21] while others hold the view that it does not present a new agenda for Africa. Thus, the Constitutive Act appears to be only a declaration of intention with no corresponding aspirations of Africans. The distrust prevailing in some quarters of collective effort on the continent is not encouraging for the African Union. Some African leaders are obsessed with state-centric tendencies and regard sovereignty from an exclusive angle to the detriment of international affairs. This attitude may be interpreted to mean that the 16 principles listed in Article 4 of the Constitutive Act is an ambitious wish list, particularly the desire to develop a common defense policy and the "right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly of the Union in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity". It could have been deliberate to ensure the Constitutive Act does not make reference to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) which is a tried and tested primary instrument for dealing with emergencies referred to in Article 4(h) of the Act. In a typical state-centric manner, Article 4(g) annuls Article 4(h) by asserting "non-interference by any member state in the internal affairs of another". Hence, Mulikita et al. [22] concludes, a state that is guilty of the type of gross human rights violations as outlined in Article 3 (on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the promotion and protection of human and people's rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and People Rights)

and Article 4(h) can legally block Union intervention. Also, Article 30 provides that, governments that get into power through unconstitutional means will not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union. Paradoxically and contrary to that provision, Zimbabwe's Zanu-PF ruling party staged a soft coup in November 2017 led by the military and the new leader Emmerson Mnangagwa was allowed to attend the AU's meeting. For that reason among others, Cilliers et al. [23] argues that the Act does not provide extensive principles for democratic governance, or define unconstitutional changes. The act is silent on the punitive measures that the AU would take in response to such developments. These contradictory statements provide the ambivalent attitude towards the national sovereignty issue by African states [21]. As argued by Cilliers et al. [23] this attitude reinforces the notion that the AU is giving the OAUa 'fresh coat of paint' without renovations to the inner structures.

African Heads of States must seriously consider how the union will be funded, more so the Pan-African Parliament. The OAU had an annual budget of US$31million per year and the AU being a bigger project needs a large amount. By mid- 2000, only 17 of the 53 member states of the OAU were up to date in the settlement of their financial obligations to the regular budget. One wonders if the additional obligations will be met against Africa's poor performing economies. Gawanas et al. [24] argues that the AU has deployed sanctions effectively against any country that grabs power through unconstitutional means. This means military coups and takeover of power from democratically elected governments are becoming history in Africa. However, recent events have shown that democracy still remains weak, for instance in Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe, Mauritania and Madagascar. For good governance and a fight against corruption, the AU adopted the Charter on Democracy, Governance and Elections and the Convention on Combating Corruption. The members of the advisory board to implement the Convention were duly appointed in 2008. The establishment of Pan-African Parliament (PAP) helps to promote democracy and improve visibility of the AU. The African Court was established in 200, a notable development in governance, human rights and democracy. Questions have also been asked if there is political will to make the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) a success [25,26]. However, by partaking in the APRM, member states have subjected themselves to public scrutiny and accountability.

Research Methodology

This study is informed by the interpretive/constructivist paradigm and adopts a qualitative methodology through a content analysis of events in Africa in order to address the research problem. Selected cases are reviewed to establish findings as facts and not the researcher's opinions. The analysis traverses the AU's strengths across the continent and examines its weaknesses in selected countries. Findings, conclusions and recommendations are given.

Discussion of Results

The research findings are classified into two categories namely the 'grip' and the 'drip' aspects of the African Union as a continental body.

The grip

The grip and strength of the AU lies on a long history of efforts to promote African unity and a profound desire for political, economic, and social unification in the continent [5]. The predominant quest for unity is invariably the strongest factor in support of the much needed success of the AU. It appears to be the only asset that can be used for unification of the continent. The AU is poised to become a formidable force to reckon with if its leadership shows concern and commits itself to Africa and legacy. It appears to have all the elements of changing the game. Sesay & Omtosho [9] argue that, on paper, the AU's Peace and Security Council fabric appear to provide Africa with opportunities for effective conflict management and prevention. Their argument is based on the fact that, the AU stands to be the most credible political organization to which heads of states remain repositories of the highest political authority. It is assumed that this gives them enough respect to broker peace on disputants in conflict situations. The African Peace and Security Architecture situated in the AU presents its staff with the local ownership of the peace and security initiatives and this is likely to motivate them as failure will not be an option. Former Nigerian President Olusegun & Obasanjo [27] had this to say about the AU; "it has rightly been seen as a necessity rather than a choice. It has been seen as an essential instrument for faster collective growth and prosperity for the people of this continent."

This undoubtedly motivated the founding fathers of the AU for Africa. To them, "developing Africa and bringing about her political unity, was a sacred task all Africans must support by supporting the AU framework". Thus far, there are great expectations from the people of Africa on the AU to provide the continent with an opportunity to grip the multifaceted challenges posed by globalization in a changing world. To meet the expectations, the African Peer Review was put in place as an inter-governmental checking mechanism. This alone is a giant step taken by the AU to break new grounds when mirrored against what

the OAU Charter provided for [1]. If successful, the interventions would be sustainable by virtue of being indigenous. External third party interventions can be manipulated as was the case under the OAU. Despite the similarities of AU objectives to those of the OAU there is more emphasis the economic and political integration of Africa. This encompasses popular participation, human rights, promotion of democracy and solidarity. The objectives are articulated in the Constitutive Act and practically enforced though with limitations in case of electoral fraud and reluctance to leave office by the in cumbents. To its credit, the AU has decried coup d'états and even suspended the membership of states where illegal seizures of power have been witnessed except in Zimbabwe. Plausible peace and security initiatives have been taken in Africa's troubled spots and designated the African Diaspora as the sixth region of the pan-African institution worldwide. Kumar et al. [28] corroborates, "The provisions and structures made in the Constitutive Act of the AU are encouraging and signify determination and commitment for strengthening the democratic system and promoting the prospect of good governance."

Gelot et al. [29] argues that, many observers have been impressed by the AU's policy expressions of pan-African politics particularly in environmental issues, economic development, peace and security, democratic governance, human rights and refugee matters. Gelot contends that, the AU's initiatives in mediation and peacekeeping have instilled a sense of hope and optimism for the continent's transformation. These initiatives include the deployment of peacekeeping missions to Burundi, Somalia, Darfur, Mali and facilitating the high level African Union High Level Panel (AUHIP) mediation between Sudan and South Sudan on issues of the post-independence period. The peace and security organs value human well-being over state sovereignty while the Constitutive Act endows the AU with the right 'to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances'. Notably, the AU's policy language is rich with a 'progressive' terminology [29]. The terminology like government accountability, partnerships and engagement with donors, people-centred policies, responsible sovereignty, and global governance institutions are inspirational and give hope to the Africans.

Zimbabwe, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Togo, Somalia and Central African Republic (CAR) are obvious beneficiaries of the AU's Constitutive Act. In 2008, Robert Mugabe was compelled through the AU and SADC into a government of national unity with Morgan Tsvangirai the opposition leader. This arrangement restored peace without a conflict escalating into a civil war. The unity government offered Zimbabwe an opportunity to write a new Constitution. Since then, there has been a measure of stability. In another case, the United Nations and African peacekeeping force, the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) intervened and ended the six-year war in Darfur. In Sudan, a panel led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki assisted to bring the first democratic elections in 24 years and later a referendum on southern secession [30].

In the Comors, the AU imposed travel sanctions in October 2007 and took a bold step in October 2007 on Anjouan's Bacar and other government officials. It also froze their foreign assets and proposed fresh elections. In Guinea, after the assassination attempt on Camara on 3 December 2009, he was convinced to urge Guineans to put aside ethnic differences and support the transfer to democracy. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) an organ of the AU, has made crucial political strides in response to peace and security challenges in Africa. Most of these responses have been directed to the areas of condemning violence and the use of political and economic sanctions against unconstitutional changes of government. Examples cited by Oluwadare et al. [31] include, the coup d'état in the Central African Republic (2003), Guinea Bissau (2003 and 2012), Sao Tome and Principe (2003), Togo (2005), Mauritania (2005 and 2008), Guinea (2008), Madagascar (2009), and Niger (2010), the post-election crisis in Cote d'Ivoire (2010-2011), and the post-election violence in Kenya (2013) The PSC managed to authorize peace operations in Burundi and Somalia.

According to Moshi et al. [5], "It is envisaged that in achieving its objectives the AU would establish a Common Parliament, a Court of Justice, a Central bank, and eventually a Common currency, like the European Union". This move will lead to a better Africa. It is also hoped that, the Pan-African Parliament will provide people with opportunities to actively participate in the running of the continent's affairs and that the African Court of Justice will foster respect for human rights. The court will ensure that justice is meted out to perpetrators of war crimes and violators of human rights. It is expected that the establishment of an African common market, currency, and central bank, will get rid of hurdles to the economic integration of the continent. If achieved, these noble objectives will lead to the continent's economic prosperity and improve the living standards of Africa.

The drip factors and hurdles ahead of the AU

The AU has an innovative structure for peace keeping, peace-making and peace-building in the form of the Panel of the Wise, the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Continental Early

Warning Systems (CEWS). Some of these structures are not fully operational to enable a meaningful evaluation of their impact to the continent. Before the AU came into existence, a number of treaty commitments like the 1991 Abuja Treaty which gave birth to the African Economic Community (AEC) were made but there effect was never realized. Likewise, there is fear that some of the innovative structures of the AU may never see light of the day. Put it, "There is a danger of the AU becoming yet another thicket of treaties and constitutional blueprints, with too little attention paid to making the institutions actually work." This happens because states tend to be pre-occupied by their sovereignty, and only serve a private interest in the AU as 'any other business.' Yet, a powerful AU requires a sizeable ceding of national sovereignty by all committed member states in preference to the long term gains of the continent. Heads of States must abandon the ceremonial, historical signing of agreements without the intent to abide by them. It is hoped that the AU Constitutive Act was not signed in this manner [5]. Raises pertinent questions when he argues that the status of the AU is not clear, "Is it supranational organization or a multilateral organization or is it a combination of the two? A close scrutiny of the provisions of the Constitutive Act clearly indicates that the AU possesses supranational powers. However, governments have consistently asserted that it remains an association of sovereign states". The Madagascar and Zimbabwe issues serve as examples, if article 25(4) of the Constitutive Act was invoked, then Andry Nirini Rajoelina who staged a coup to an elected leader, Marc Ravalomanana, could have been tried before the AU court as stipulated in article 25(5). Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa who staged a coup to an elected leader, Robert Gabriel Mugabe could have been tried before the AU court as stipulated in article 25(5). In particular**,** the Maputo Political Accord on Madagascar of 9 August 2009 was in contempt of the Constitutive Act. The fact that, Rajeolina went against the Maputo Agreement and no sanctions have been imposed on him may be worth contemplating. It is therefore not clear as to why such a provision was articulated in the Charter. Answering those questions is problematic due to the AU's perceived or real incapacity to enforce its decisions with the cynicism held by many member states.

The continental body faces a complex terrain with regional RECs like SADC and ECOWAS that have ambivalent mandates and overlapping membership. Some are economically powerful like ECOWAS which is believed to be better funded than the AU. Such RECs have the potential to compete or clash with the AU in some unclearly defined operations. Just like other multinational institutions, firing an employee for being corrupt or ineptitude can be extremely difficult. The move can run into political objections from member states whose interests often appear to be more of having their person at work than making the organization function effectively. Financing the AU remains a challenge which the organization has to grapple with. Apart from the deficit which the Union inherited from the OAU, it needs money to fully operation alize its structures and organs in order to fulfill its mandate. Coupled with the shortage of funds is the inability by some member states to pay their contributions. A case in point is Somalia. But for others it may be just reluctance to pay putting other priorities on top of the AU, for instance on RECs hence the argument, "In the first place, African leaders have a habit of signing a lot of agreements to which they are not fully committed in practice" [32].

Further, dissatisfied members may pull out of the integration if they believe that maximum benefits are not accruing in their favor. In the long run, continued financial crisis may cripple operations drip by drip. The European Union (EU) unlike the AU started with very few countries (six countries) that had strong economic bases. In 2004, the highest economic size was about US\$165 billion (South Africa) with the lowest being Guinea-Bissau sitting at US\$0.3billion. Such economic disparities impact negatively on the AU. For the AU with 53 countries (each with its own its interest, according to neo-realist theory) that have dripping economies the financial challenges appear insurmountable for now. Decision-making by consensus from such a group may not be easy especially on very critical issues. The current state of affairs in which 98 per cent of the AU's funding comes from external sources is not healthy. In the area of elections Melber cited in Kumar et al. [28] concludes that, "The assessment of the AU on the recent elections held in Cameroon, Malawi, Nigeria and Zimbabwe has not been encouraging as it has described those elections as 'free and fair' while most of the international observers have critical views on these elections. The role played by top leaders of the organizations does not seem to be impartial." These sentiments inform the AU to re-visit its approach on these sensitive areas which have a potential to trigger civil wars and political instability. On electoral matters Nzongola-Ntalaja et al. [32] made the following observation about the AU, "Unfortunately, its electoral observers tend to be too quick in accepting official electoral results, even in areas where more impartial observers have serious reservations with the electoral process". About fifteen years after the ecstatic formation of the AU, there is not much that has changed on the continent especially with respect to states governance and leadership. Conflicts still afflict African societies, for instance Boko Haram in Nigeria while poor leadership and its effect on governance manifest in the majority of the AU member states. The effect of NEPAD as driven by AU is yet to bear tangible

fruits and the APRM appears to meet resistance as leaders defend the status quo in defiance of the APRM recommendations. Akokpari et al. [33] Posits that, "The lack of compulsion is certain to keep countries such as Libya, Zimbabwe and Swaziland, the current epicenters of human rights abuses in Africa, and those with dubious human rights records out of the APR project for fear that it could be used by the AU as a tool for meddling in their internal affairs". There is continued subversion of democracy as leaders consolidate their power often through electoral fraud, intimidation, coercion and abuse of state resources.

Summary of main findings

Aspect of Analysis	Grips (positives)	Drips (negatives)
Political	• Quest for unity is invariably the strongest factor. • AU appears to provide Africa with opportunities for effective conflict management and prevention (Sesay& Omtosho, 2011). • The AU stands to be the most credible political organization to which heads of states remain repositories of the highest political authority. • An essential instrument for faster collective growth and prosperity for the people of this continent (Olusegun Obasanjo in 2001:6). • The AU has decried coup d'états and even suspended the membership of states where illegal seizures of power have been witnessed. • The Peace and Security Council (PSC) an organ of the AU, has made crucial political strides in response to peace and security challenges in Africa (Oluwadare'2014).	• The Madagascar and Zimbabwe issues serve as bad examples by the AU. • If article 25(4) of the Constitutive Act was invoked, then Andry Nirini Rajoelina who staged a coup to an elected leader, Marc Ravalomanana, could have been tried before the AU court as stipulated in article 25(5). • Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa who staged a coup to an elected leader, Robert Gabriel Mugabe could have been tried before the AU court as stipulated in article 25(5). • The fact that, Rajeolina went against the Maputo Agreement and no sanctions have been imposed on him maybe worth contemplating. It is therefore not clear as to why such aprovision was articulated in the Charter. • Answering those questions is problematic due to the AU's perceived or real incapacity to enforce its decisions with the cynicism held by many member states.
Economic	• There is more emphasis the economic and political integration of Africa. • The Constitutive Act of the AU is encouraging and signify determination and commitment for strengthening the democratic system and promoting the prospect of good governance. (Kumar, 2009:26). • Many observers have been impressed by the AU's policy expressions of pan-African politics particularly in environmental issues, economic development (Gelot, 2013). • In achieving its objectives the AU would establish a Central bank, and eventually a Common currency, like the European Union (Moshi ;2013:51)	• The current state of affairs in which 98 per cent of the AU's funding comes from external sources is not healthy. • Like the African Economic Community (AEC) was made but its effect was never realized. Likewise, there is fear that some of the innovative structures of the AU may never see light of the day. • The status of the AU is not clear, "Is it supranational organization or a multilateral organization or is it a combination of the two? A closes crutiny of the provisions of the Constitutive Act clearly indicates that the AU possesses supranational powers. However, governments have consistently asserted that it remains an association of sovereign states". Moshi (2013:56). • The continental body faces a complex terrain with regional RECs like

		SADC and ECOWAS that have ambivalent mandates and overlapping membership. Some are economically powerful like ECOWAS which is believed to be better funded than the AU. • Financing the AU remains a challenge which the organization has to grapple with. Apart from the deficit which the Union inherited from the OAU, it needs money to fully operationalize its structures and organs in order to fulfil its mandate. • Coupled with the shortage of funds is the inability by some member states to pay their contributions. • The effect of NEPAD as driven by AU is yet to bear tangible fruits and the APRM appears to meet resistance as leaders defend the status quo in defiance of the APRM recommendations. (Akokpari 2003:14)
Social	• Social unification in the continent (Moshi, 2013). • Provides the continent with an opportunity to grip the multifaceted challenges posed by globalization in a changing world. (Eghweree,2014:223). • The AU's policy language is rich with a 'progressive' terminology (Gelot, 2013).	• The Continental Early Warning Systems (CEWS)'s structures are not fully operational to enable a meaningful evaluation of their impact to the continent (Moshi,2013). • States tend to be pre-occupied by their sovereignty, and only serve a private interest in the AU as 'any other business.' • In the first place, African leaders have a habit of signing a lot of agreementsto which they are not fully committed in practice (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2014:43). • Dissatisfied members may pull out of the integration if they believe that maximum benefits are not accruing in their favour. • Conflicts still afflict African societies, for instance Boko Haram in Nigeria while poor leadership and its effect on governance manifest in the majority of the AU member states.
Legal	• The African Peer Review was put in place as an inter-governmental checking mechanism. • Zimbabwe, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Togo, Somalia and Central African Republic (CAR) are obvious beneficiaries of the AU's Constitutive Act (Vunyingah, 2011). • In achieving its objectives the AU would establish a Common Parliament, a Court of Justice like the European Union (Moshi,2013:51).	• There is a danger of the AU becoming yet another thicket of treaties and constitutional blueprints, with too little attention paid to making the institutions actually work. Moshi (2013:55). • In particular, the Maputo Political Accord on Madagascar of 9 August 2009 was in contempt of the Constitutive Act. • There is continued subversion of democracy as leaders consolidate their power often through electoral fraud, intimidation, coercion and abuse of state resources.

Table 1: The summary of findings is tabulated.

Conclusions

About fifteen years after the formation of the AU it is perceived as a club of African Heads of States and government with some not legitimately elected oligarchs. While it shares a relatively similar name and structures with the EU, the AU's environment and historical background locates it in circumstances that make it completely different. Although the institution is loaded with the potential to save Africa from its political and economic conundrum, there is an absolute need for inclusive triangular engagement. The present scenario in which only leadership from the ruling parties discuss AU business does not provide any glimmer of hope because critical issues are overshadowed by aspects to preserve and perpetuate longevity in power. This reduces the continental body to a club of political elites seeking ways to continue in power in a veiled manner that may never extricate member states from the present sorry state in which they are. The involvement of civil society is meant to neutralize political sentiments while representatives of ordinary citizens contribute the inner feelings of the general populace.

Recommendations

The political leadership, civil society and citizens in the member states must create a platform where issues are discussed openly and frankly about the direction which AU must take. The political leadership must include those from the ruling parties and opposition parties. The activities of the Union must not be shrouded in secrecy as it appears to be. This may be achieved through incorporating the provisions of the Constitutive Act and the AU structures in the educational curriculum for the institutions of higher learning in all member states. Organs for research and development (R&D) as well as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) could be put in place and present findings at each AU summit to promote innovation and change. The issues of funding that appear to cripple AU operations among other bottlenecks discussed may become a thing of the past and project the AU as a continental body truly seeking the integration of states and economic emancipation. The Constitutive Act should make provisions for terms of office bearers and mechanisms for independent performance reviews of each African Union organ.

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