



REGIONALISM IN AFRICA : AHISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

التكتلات الإقليمية في أفريقيا من منظور تاريخي

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مستخلص البحث:

هذا البحث بعنوان (التكتلات الإقليمية في أفريقيا من منظور تاريخي) يعرض البحث صورة للتطورات السياسية والاقتصادية والأمنية التي دعت دول القارة الإفريقية للتكتل في شكل مجتمعات إقليمية مختلفة . ويتناول مع التحليل الحلم الإفريقي ببناء وحدة إفريقية تقود القارة نحو النهضة والتطور والتحرر السياسي والاقتصادي ؛ كما يقدم البحث تحليلاً لنشأة التكتلات الإقليمية في فترة ما قبل الاستعمار وخلال الهجمة الاستعمارية على أفريقيا والتي أدت إلى تقسيم القارة بصناعة حدوداً سياسية بالإضافة إلى تقسيمها لغويا إلى دول فرانكفونية وانجلوفونية بحسب الدول المستعمرة لها . ويحلل البحث العوامل التي قادت إلى تطور التكتلات الإقليمية في فترة ما بعد الاستقلال خصوصا تطور منظمة الوحدة الإفريقية إلى الاتحاد الإفريقية ونشأة المنظمات السياسية والاقتصادية مثل الايكواس في غرب أفريقيا والإيقاد في شرقها وسادك في جنوبها واتحاد المغرب العربي في شمال القارة وغيرها من المنظمات والتكتلات ذات الأغراض المتعددة . خلص البحث إلى أن التكتلات الإقليمية الحديثة في أفريقيا تؤدي أدوارا مهمة في الحفاظ على الأمن والتنمية الاقتصادية بدرجات متفاوتة من النجاح في أقاليم القارة المختلفة .

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PREFACE

Undergraduates, seduced as always by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. Perhaps, in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at the present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness.

Hugh Trevor-Roper Professor of History, Oxford University, 1965. The above-mentioned statement suggests that there is no history of Africa but the history of the white man in the continent and his aftermath. This suggestion has been strongly contested by many African scholars and African advocates¹. Rather, Europeans are accused of disrupting the flow of history in the continent and that modernization in all its aspects, including the nation-state, has been imposed on the African people. Henceforth, the outcome of this process is the route cause for African problems in today's reality.

This study is not to discuss these arguments; however, it will analyze history as an instrumental factor in shaping regionalism and regionalist options for African states. The main objective of the study is to give a clear picture of past and present regionalism in Africa and the factors affecting them. It emphasizes the creation of regions in Africa and the beginning of regional systems, since ancient times. The discussion aims at analyzing factors that have had a profound impact on African states interactions during the pre-colonial era, especially those relating to the fall of Africa into the hands of the Europeans after the scramble for Africa had begun.

The analysis concentrates on the transformation of African historical, social, political, and traditional systems into nation-states with new boundaries, new value-systems, and new inter- and intra-state relations. Following, this chapter gives attention to the post-independent politics of regionalism and sub-regionalism in Africa with special emphasis on the OAU and the formation of the African Union (AU).

REGIONALISM IN PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA

Regions in Africa

Africa is a continent with 30,233,100 square kilometers that straddles the equator, facing the Mediterranean Sea in the north and the Antarctic in the south. It has wide variety of climates and natural conditions, which has greatly influenced the life of its inhabitants. In the northern part of the continent lies a narrow strip of a fertile country that enjoys the

Mediterranean climate. Behind this fertile country lies the Sahara, the largest desert in the world. Gradually, the desert conditions give way to a great belt of savanna called the Sudanic belt that stretches across the continent. South of the Sudanic belt, along the coast of much of West Africa, the area consists of a fairly regular succession of belts of vegetation that ends at the great West African rain forest, which meets the dense forests in Central Africa to form one of the largest tropical forests in the world. The Eastern side of the continent consists largely of volcanic material, which breaks down to give a rich soil of almost unlimited depth within the triangular projection known as the Horn of Africa (Map 3.1). The southernmost part of the continent is an open savanna country with grass or bush or thorn scrub².

This brief geographical backdrop gives Africa an image of a continent with divided natural regions that are isolated from each other. However, this is not true as for centuries there were established contacts between different regions in Africa by different means. People from Northern and West Africa were brought into contact with each other through the caravan routes crossing the Sahara for trade and sometimes for war purposes. The caravan routes continue to affect social and political developments in the two regions. Along the same lines, Africa's long rivers play similar role in connecting African peoples across the tropical forests. The movements of people within the continent and, sometimes, mass migration of tribes have led to cross-cultural exchange of ideas, goods, and people³.

STATE INTERACTIONS IN PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA

One of the most unusual aspects of the continent's history demonstrates the truly remarkable ability of African peoples to resist incorporation into state political and economic organizations. Until about 2,500 years ago, virtually all Africans, except for Egypt and the Kingdom of Kush in Sudan, were able to avoid relying on the bureaucratic organization called the "state" to carry out the political requirements of their societies⁴. For the geographical reasons mentioned above, the natural conditions preclude dense settlement, growth of large towns and development of specialization and division of labor, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus over much of the continent the life of the average man has remained that of a simple peasant or a cattle keeper, who recognizes a political order no wider than that of his clan. However, this picture is usually changed when favorable conditions occurred⁵.

When the process of state formation in pre-colonial Africa started, it had been accompanied by different policies of interaction, alliance formation and groupings among these states⁶. Nonetheless, it will be unwise to point out a clear picture of regionalism that had developed in pre-colonial Africa. Most of African states at that time were self-contained with little dependence on the outside world. In addition to that, the striking regularity of the African coastline, which has relatively few bays and inlets or peninsulas reaching out to the sea, affected the relations between African states with the outside world. Except for the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, African states have not until comparatively recent times been brought into close and frequent contacts with other continents⁷.

The interesting question to be asked here is why Africa fell dramatically under Western occupation without any system that combines the powers of existing African states to defend their civilization, their homeland, or their regimes. Even during pre-colonial era, African states had never shown a collective action against invaders from outside the continent. Egypt, as the first African known state, had early shown interests in various parts of the Mediterranean Sea outside Africa. However, Egypt was less interested in its African neighbors. Despite the time when Egypt and its neighboring states, namely Kush in what is today the Sudan and Axum in Ethiopia, were admiring Christianity as the state religion, there had never been a collective action taken by the three states to defend their land against Islam. Eventually, Egypt and Sudan had fallen into the hand of Muslim conquerors while Ethiopia had been isolated from the rest of the Christian world⁸.

Further southeast, the East African coastal city-states lived largely by trading with the in-land Africa and across the Indian Ocean. This area was strongly influenced by Arab merchants and Arab refugees fleeing from political persecution during the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates in the Arabian peninsular. The Arabs introduced Islam and established a new political system in the area stretching from Mogadishu in modern Somalia to Sofala in Mozambique. There the Swahili Language was developed, a basically Bantu tongue with strong Arabic influences, which now forms a common language in much of East Africa and is widely spoken in Zaire. Again, these city states fell dramatically on the first wave after the arrival of the Portuguese to the east coast of Africa⁹. It has never been mentioned that these states were united or had formed an

alliance to drive the Portuguese back despite their sharing of one religion, one language, similar values and common history.

Similarly, the introduction of Islam into the Maghreb had promoted successive attempts that were made to bring the whole area under unified political control. However, these attempts repeatedly broke down, giving rise to kingdoms roughly corresponding to the present divisions into Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria¹⁰. Meanwhile, the established contacts between North and West Africa through the caravan routes have exercised greater impact on both sides. However, these interactions had never created a sense of a community or an alliance against other threats from within or outside the continent. Rather, it was repeatedly recorded that the two sides involved in warring courses that many times resulted in demolishing existing states, such as Ghana and Mali¹¹.

Later, when many Islamic empires, kingdoms and states had been developed in West Africa, they maintained their independence as separate entities. Although they had contacts with each other and all of them pursued Islamic teachings with its powerful spiritual and cultural unifying forces, there was no recorded attempt to create an alliance or a regional forum between the Islamic kingdoms of West Africa. Most of the time, the relations between these states remained hostile and concentrated on severe struggle for power and containment¹². The land of weaker empires or kingdoms was often incorporated into the authority of the rising power at the time. The same story can be told about states that flourished and diminished in central and southern Africa¹³. When the Europeans came, the existing states failed to fight collectively against the colonial powers¹⁴.

Although it is not easy to point out a clear picture of regionalism in pre-colonial Africa, however, it is not true to conclude that it had never existed. The great empires, kingdoms and states that had grown up in pre-colonial Africa had developed political systems to cooperate, trade, fight and interact with each other politically within the methods of that time. However, the modern day Pan-African idealism had not been expressed or may never have existed in a way that could result in creating a sense of identity between pre-colonial states in Africa. Even Islam as a common religion and ideology did not produce a unifying force among these states. Actually, the Islamic empire was fading in its center at the same time African Islamic states and kingdoms were arising¹⁵. Approaching the 18th and 19th century, Islam was not, in political and

military terms, cohesive enough to counteract the divergent interests of many Islamic rulers in Egypt, the Maghreb, West and Central Africa. The Muslim states were usually fighting against each other and sometimes came into open conflicts to defend their economic and political interests, in spite of their common ideology.

However, Islam and Muslim Merchants succeeded in linking African trade routes with the main arteries of Muslim trade. This connection brought African economy into close contacts with world changes. The newly established trade routes had linked Africa with the outside world and brought attention to its rich fullness of natural resources, especially gold. As a result inter-African trade was characterized by progress in means of communication, expansion of the commercial network, and an increase in the volume of trade. However, these economic activities had not resulted in massive interests that would lead to alliance formation, though different treaties were concluded between African states to safeguard the trade routes¹⁶. During the 18th and the 19th centuries, a large-scale shift in trade and production had been brought about by European commercial interests pressing in from the coasts of Africa. When the scramble for Africa had begun, most of these inspired kingdoms and states fell to the hands of Europeans.

THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM

After only one hundred years of European rule, the changes that affected African states were far beyond any simple analysis. The colonial impact has not only transformed the historical and political geography of Africa in few years, but it continued to affect the future of the continent. During these hundred years, the colonial states in Africa established a bureaucratic network and concentrated the political and administrative functions in the hands of colonial civil service. Backed by strong security service and military force, the colonial state was primarily concerned with issues of domination rather than legitimacy. Immediately after independence, these patterns were, in most cases, elaborated upon rather than transformed¹⁷.

The colonial impact on Africa has also affected regionalism and regional groupings in Africa, especially the diversity of the colonial experience itself. African countries had been colonized by different European powers, mainly Britain, France, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Spain. Although these powers retained many indigenous institutions inside their colonies, however, they superimposed a new administrative structure within newly delineated boundaries¹⁸. These

governments were established in the colonies mainly to secure easy access to the raw materials needed and to obtain a protected market for their manufactured goods. The cohesive social groups were separated and the cultural and linguistic impact was pervasive¹⁹, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. With the creation of these artificial boundaries the political map inherited at independence created huge differences among the various African countries in their potential for nation building, economic development and stability²⁰.

Thus, Africa had been fragmented rather than integrated by these forms of macro regions that depended on the forms of exploitation of African resources. The colonial system profoundly reordered economic as well as political space, where they viewed their African domains as private reserve. Metropolitan capital enjoyed privileged access while other capital was viewed with reserve and most of the time with hostility. The exclusive linkages and direct relations between each colony and its colonizer had resulted in tying African territories to metropolitan economies as subordinated appendages. The infrastructure of colonies, especially communications systems, was shaped by the vision of integrating African states to European powers rather than connecting Africa together. Road nets ran only from the centers of production to the ports and colonial capitals²¹. Moreover, the dependent linkages were extended beyond independence from colonial rule, especially in the area of defense. Military intervention by French troops to protect a friendly African regime was a usual feature even today. Although over time these exclusive linkages have been decreased, the dependency patterns of relations were so pervasive that they have been difficult to disentangle. The rift between African states was wide enough that after independence most regional integration schemes involving states once under different colonial jurisdictions had had only limited success²².

Despite this picture of fragmentation, the colonial rule played a significant role in building new regional identities in several parts of the continent. Notably, the French and the British chose to administer groups of their colonies in a single administrative unit. France had administrated its colonies within the framework of the French West Africa (AOF)²³ and the French Equatorial Africa (AEF)²⁴ that were formed at the beginning of the colonization era. Throughout the period of colonization these French territories were administrated in a regional base with a centralized system of tax collection and fiscal redistribution within the territories of the AOF and the AEF respectively. Although the federal arrangements

were dissolved pending independence, however, various Francophone states had formed joint institutions in order to complement existing bilateral agreements with France²⁵.

In the British orbit another similar regional experience had been exercised by former British colonies of East Africa. Earlier, the British had established the Conference of East African Governors in 1926 to assist in the administration of the three colonies of Kenya, Uganda and the then Tanzania. Then the colonial power put the three colonies under the British East African High Commission in 1948 and started administering the territory on a regional basis²⁶. A similar experience occurred in the British colonies in Southern Africa with the formation of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland during the years from 1953 to 1963. The federation was initiated by the British and consisted of countries that are known today as Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. The two colonial administrative units in Eastern and Southern Africa had contributed in varying degrees to the formation of new regional identities.

Generally speaking, colonial period has created a new Africa by disrupting pre-colonial and traditional boundaries, common languages, value systems, economic activities, external linkages, societal groups, and political regimes. Interestingly, this process created many artificial regions that had been drawn along former colonizers, linguistic barriers, economic activities, and the link to the outside world. The colonial era had also influenced the creation of a common sense of belonging to black, oppressed, and freedom fighters' community that encompassed the whole continent during the struggle for independence. Nonetheless, colonialism awakened national identities and prompted African states to jealously guard their newly gained sovereignty.

POST-INDEPENDENCE REGIONALISM

The whole notion of the urgency of regional and ultimately continental unification of African states has been endorsed long ago by series of pan-African conferences beginning in 1900 and which continued to be the spirit during the post-independence years. The route for racial identity of black African people was first nurtured in North America in nineteenth century in a call for a Pan-African movement²⁷. This movement was famous for a series of conferences that were held during 1900 and 1945, which called for the end of colonial system in Africa and the dismantling of the colonial boundaries in order to create a united Africa. By the fifth conference of these series, which was held in Manchester in 1945, the

Pan-African movement took root in the African soil and has been linked since then with the nationalist movements in Africa²⁸.

Many political unification attempts took place after independence in many parts of the continent in order to form regional political unions. Only a few cases have been successful and this would include the union of Ghana and British Togoland in 1957, Italian and British Somaliland in 1960, Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon in 1961 and Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964. On the other hand, failure to achieve lasting political union included the Mali federation, the Ghana-Guinea-Mali union, the East African federation, the Greater Maghreb and the United Arab Republic. Another confederal arrangement between Senegal and Gambia was established in 1981 but collapsed in 1989²⁹.

Along the same lines, functional regional organizations have been formed during the years after independence for economic, security and other objectives. Interestingly, the first wave of these organizations was formed among the member states that were colonized by a single colonial power. The regional groupings formed among Francophone states in Africa have been influenced heavily by the close linkages which these states maintained with their ex-metropolitan power through different agreement of defense, economic cooperation, monetary systems and aid.

Shortly before independence, Cote d'Ivoire, the richest among (AOF) countries, formed the Conseil de l'Entente, which was aiming to establish a "Franco-African Federation" together with Niger, Dahomy and Upper Volta in 1959. After independence, the council became the basic ground for launching many of francophone groupings. Firstly, the former French colonies in West Africa formed the Union Africaine et Malgache in 1961, which had been transformed into the l'Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache (OCAM) in 1966. Membership of the OCAM retained old frontiers of the AOF and AEF with hardly any change. Interestingly, the organization had been joined by French speaking former Belgium colonies that include Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi.

After 1969, many countries opposed the cooperation agreement opting for independence instead of a federation. In 1972, both Madagascar and Mauritania left the organization. Shortly after this, many other countries, including Zaire, Congo, Cameroon, Chad and Gabon made successive defections from the organization affecting the whole francophone regionalism in Africa. The organization had been

transformed into an economic organization in 1978, but it did not survive and OCAM was finally dissolved in 1985³⁰.

On the other hand, the newly independent former British colonies of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda signed an agreement in 1961 establishing the East African Common Services (EACASO). This service was created mainly to maintain the common services of railways, harbors, posts and telegraphs, airways and currencies left behind from the British in each former colony. A negotiation had been held unsuccessfully between 1963 and 1964 to establish the East African Federation. Meanwhile, an agreement was signed in Kampala in 1964 to redress the imbalance of trade between the three countries.

Finally, the three countries signed the Treaty for East African Cooperation in Kampala in 1967, which marked the establishment of the East African Community (EAC) between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Analysts recognized this regional grouping as the most ambitious project for regional integration in Africa and anticipated major success for the group³¹. Unfortunately, the community broke up in 1977 after only ten years of existence that was marked by sharp ideological differences between Tanzania and Kenya and personal animosity between Nyrere of Tanzania and Amin of Uganda. It could be argued here that the EAC might have a better chance of survival if its membership had been expanded to include other states in East and Central Africa, which would ease the sharp ideological differences and the animosity between regional leaders³².

In the North of Africa the experience is different. Rather, than having originated from colonial experience, the idea of a unified northern Africa was first voiced by Arab nationalists in the 1920s and subsequently received widespread support throughout the turbulence of World War II and the independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s. The first Conference of Maghreb Economic Ministers, which took place in Tunis in 1964, established the Conseil Permanent Consultatif du Maghreb (CPCM) between Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, to coordinate and harmonize the development plans of the four countries as well as interregional trade and relations with the European Union. However, for a number of reasons including territorial disputes, political rivalries and ideological differences, the plans never came to fruition. The Maghrebi movement regained momentum following the 1987 rapprochement between Algeria and Morocco. Meeting together for the first time in June 1988 at Zeralda, Algeria, the leaders of the five

Maghrebi countries appointed a commission and five sub-committees to draft a treaty that would encompass the "Greater Arab Maghreb". After intensive negotiations, the treaty was signed on 17 February 1989, following a two-day summit at Marrakech, Morocco, with formal ratification following shortly thereafter. The treaty provides for membership by other African and Arab countries. The AMU aims to safeguard the region's economic interests, foster and promote economic and cultural co-operation, and intensify mutual commercial exchanges as a precursor for integration and the creation of a North African Common Market. Common defense and non-interference in the domestic affairs of the partners are also key aspects of the AMU Treaty³³. The AMU is currently dormant due to the renewal of older disputes between the leaders of the Maghreb countries.

Another regional grouping between African states, once under different colonial rule, has been formed in Central Africa. At a summit meeting in December 1981, the leaders of the Central African Countries agreed in principle to form a wider Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) subsequently established on 18 October 1983. Its member states included Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Mauritania, Gabon, Congo, Mali and Senegal as well as Sao Tome and Principe. ECCAS aims to promote regional economic co-operation and establish a Central African Common Market. The organization began operations in 1985, but has been inactive since 1992, mainly due to the non-payment of membership fees by the member states³⁴. The region was plagued by civil wars and conflicts between its own member states. The crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo was a divisive factor in ECCAS since Rwanda and Angola back opposing sides. Presided over by President Pierre Buyoya of Burundi, the second Extra-Ordinary Summit of ECCAS was held in Libreville on 6 February 1998. The summit was convened to re-launch the activities of ECCAS and the Heads of State present at the summit committed themselves to the resurrection of the organization. Angola, which has had observer status since the organization was formed in 1984, also indicated in that meeting that it would become a fully-fledged member in 1999. At a summit conference of the United Nations' Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which took place in Yaoundé on 25-26 February 1999, member states decided to create an organization for the promotion, maintenance and consolidation of peace and security

in Central Africa, which would be called the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX)³⁵.

Most of these regional experiences faced similar problems and challenges that influenced their outcomes or contributed to their demise. Differences among governments of member states, beside internal problems, which the countries in the region are facing, prevented any consensus to take place on many important issues that would enhance the achievement of the regional grouping objectives. The absence of a regional leading state or an external power interests hindered the development of the regional groupings. The feuding among member states heightened by different regimes that were newly independent and jealously guarded their sovereignty.

Several years after independence, African states started to form regional groupings that were more economic-oriented. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) was founded in 1993 as a successor to the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA), which was established in 1981³⁶. COMESA formally succeeded the PTA on 8 December 1994. The establishment of COMESA was a fulfillment of the requirements of the PTA Treaty, which provided for the transformation of the PTA into a common market ten years after the entry into force of the PTA Treaty. COMESA is the largest regional economic community in Africa with twenty African states in its membership. In October 2000, the COMESA Free Trade Area (FTA), the first of its kind in Africa, was launched. Nine member states, including Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe, were in the first wave of the twenty-country's body to join the FTA³⁷.

The forming of the COMESA Free trade Area is the last culmination of a wave of changes that reshaped the politics of regionalism in Africa. Gradually after independence the linkage between the colonial powers and their former colonies has loosened. France found that supporting the franc zone is more expensive and less profitable than it was. The gradual loosening of ties with France opened up the possibilities of closer ties between francophone and Anglophone African states.

In 1975, African states in West Africa came together to form the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Whilst, the changing of global politics and the end of the Cold War brought together the countries in the Horn of Africa to develop and reinstate the Inter

Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Along the same lines, the ending of apartheid in South Africa in 1994 has led the region to come together and reestablish the Southern African Development Community (SADC). However, it would be helpful for the subsequent analysis to consider briefly the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in order to shed some light on pan-African regionalism.

THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

The Foundation

The Pan-Africanism was believed to guide African states towards unity after independence as advocated by Nkrumah and other African leaders³⁸. Unfortunately, the ideal of Pan Africanism soon evaporated amongst leaders of newly African sovereign states. This phenomenon appeared clearly during 1960 when some twenty African states, mainly French speaking African states and Nigeria, gained their independence. While fighting a common enemy during colonial period was a motivating factor towards unity among African states, it appeared that the newly independent states were concerned primarily with preserving their sovereignty.

When African states started to pursue their foreign policy after independence, many divisions emerged between African countries over the Congo crisis, the war in Algeria, and over Morocco's claim to Mauritania. The divisions were based either on ideological grounds or on personal antagonism to the pan-African movements. Generally, the leaders did not agree to the sort of unity to be achieved or to the means to be adopted. Understandably rival groups surfaced in the African political scene aiming at power consolidation and hegemonic struggle. The result of this struggle took the form of two rival diplomatic coalitions mainly between moderate and radical African leaders³⁹.

The radicals who had advocated the pan-African movement, called for a super-state with its own army, parliament and government. The moderates, however, advocated a more modest scheme calling for a loose association of sovereign authorities. A reconciliatory conference was held in Nigeria in 1962 in order to bring the two groups together. But the radicals boycotted this meeting, which in turn backed the moderate calls and supported their stand in several issues regarding the Congo crisis, the war in Algeria and the unity of the African states. Finally, a summit was held in Addis Ababa in May 1963 and was attended by thirty-one independent African states. The conference was held to prepare a charter for an Africa-wide international organization.

At the conference the moderates outnumbered the radicals and their views on respect of sovereignty, condemnation of subversion and non-interference in internal affairs had dominated the scene⁴⁰. However, a compromise was finally reached and the radicals were appeased by a clear affirmation in the charter that absolute priority must be given to assisting the liberation movements in Southern Africa⁴¹. The two groups, radicals and moderates, were disbanded after the leaders of independent African states signed the OAU Charter and established the Organization of African Unity in 1963⁴².

The formation of OAU came as a response to the new reality of African independent states who were faced with many domestic and external challenges. Thus, the OAU was firmly rooted in the ideal to protect member states' sovereignty and territorial integrity. The newly independent African states were in a dire need for external recognition in the face of domestic disputes not only to its legitimacy but also to its own existence. By sanctioning colonial inherited frontiers, the OAU assisted African regimes to survive ethnic conflicts and secessionist claims.

The Activities of the OAU

Since its formation in 1963, the OAU registered some modest successes. However, if the organization is measured by a yardstick of concrete achievements, then it would be judged a failure. Overall, the OAU played an important diplomatic role in African relations within the continent and with the outside world. It provided a meeting ground for African leaders and had become an agent for interstate communications, which is able to disperse legitimization for policy decisions. Gradually, the OAU had become a platform to voice African collective ideas on development, apartheid, and the new international economic order.

One area that witnessed an amount of success for the OAU is the liberation struggle against colonization. The formation of the OAU signaled an end to a turbulent phase of multiple rivalries among different diplomatic coalitions that was formed by African states. The transcendent unifying principle at that time was the opposition to both colonialism and racism. Nyerere stated that Africans all over the continent, without a word spoken, either from one individual to another, or from one African country to another looked at the European, and looked at one another and knew that in relations to the European they were one⁴³.

In 1963, the founding fathers of the OAU adopted a resolution on decolonization and established the Liberation Committee in order to concert and coordinate their efforts to accelerate the unconditional

attainment of national independence by all African territories still under foreign colonial domination. Hence, the OAU anti-colonial role provided a continental focus for African liberation diplomacy. The OAU also played a significant role in assisting the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. The abolishing of the apartheid regime of South Africa during early 1990s marked the last achievement of independence in the whole African continent⁴⁴.

It has been argued that African problems, which range from desperate poverty, ethnic and tribal conflicts, corruption, unstable and dictatorial leadership, and continuing interference by major powers during and after the Cold War could not be resolved by the OAU. However, the organization had reduced the danger of losing the very foundation of many African states and countries due to widespread conflicts and struggles for power. In this regard, the OAU had itself involved in solving inter-states disputes, civil wars, and secessionist moves⁴⁵. These engagements includes the efforts of the organization to solve Algeria-Morocco border dispute⁴⁶, Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia borders disputes, Nigerian Civil War, the Western Arab Sahara dispute⁴⁷, Chad Civil War, Sudan Civil War, and recently the crisis in the Great Lakes region and Zaire conflict. In all these cases the OAU adhered to its principles of territorial integrity of African states and the peaceful settlement of disputes⁴⁸. In addition, the OAU held many conferences to solve tragedy of African refugees and to draw the world attention to it⁴⁹.

The OAU played a significant role in promoting sub-regionalism in Africa and for this matter the organization coordinated its efforts with UN agencies such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Since the early 1960s, member states were encouraged to combine their economies into sub-regional markets that would ultimately form one Africa-wide economic union. In 1980, the OAU adopted the Lagos Plan of Action as a major step towards establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). The AEC Treaty (more popularly known as the Abuja Treaty) came into force after the requisite numbers of ratification in May 1994⁵⁰.

The endorsement of sub-regional organizations by the OAU as means for economic development and recently peacekeeping mechanisms has significantly resulted in a proliferation of the number of sub-regional organizations with which the OAU must interact. However,

the OAU recognized only five main sub-regions in Africa and only one corresponding organization for each area. These organizations are:

- The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the East;
- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the West;
- The Arab Maghrib Union (UMA) in the North;
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the South; and
- The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the Central African sub-region.

On the contrary, the OAU had been facing many difficulties since its formation in 1963. Significant failures were due to the organizational structure itself that worked against swift decision-making. Many other problems stemmed from insecure financial resources, lack of a groundswell of a popular support, and the tendency to make economic plans without any realistic prospect of fulfilling them. The OAU suffered, too, from excess of politics as the organization was used as an instrument to rally support to certain decisions or power struggles between member states. The principles of OAU were mostly dishonored by member states, especially with regard to respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in internal affairs of fellow African states. Furthermore, the principle of non-alignment had never been strictly applied. While Marxist regimes in Ethiopia and Angola had relied heavily on Cuba and the Soviet Union for military support, other French-speaking African countries had retained close economic, monetary, and military relations with France. United States, as well, had played a crucial role in supporting many regimes in African in favor of its own interests⁵¹.

The post-Cold War era, however, brought different challenges to the African continent and to the OAU. African politics changed dramatically due to enormous pressure from the international environment, including the reality of Africa's marginalization and the forces of globalization. Adding to that, domestic factors, such as debt, internal conflicts, deteriorating economic conditions, HIV/AIDS and human insecurity in general, have geared the continent towards major changes and transformations⁵².

The OAU did not change its charter, but a shift in its focus and programs took place at the beginning of the 1990s. Despite restating the

OAU principle of non-interference in internal affairs of member states, the organization created a Division for Conflict Management in 1992. At the 1993 OAU Summit in Cairo, new OAU Central Organ and the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution were established and charged with the task of dealing internal conflicts in the region⁵³.

The new Organ and Mechanism were a shift from an *ad hoc* to systematic approach to conflict resolution. The result of these new directions in OAU programs was its involvement in conflict management in the Lakes region. In Rwanda the OAU played a prominent role in efforts to reach a settlement between the government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (PRF) and that culminated in the Arusha peace process which started in 1993. Similarly, the OAU deployed an observer mission in 1994 to Burundi and effectively instituted sanctions against the military regime after the coup of July 1996. The same role has been extended by the OAU to different conflicts in West, East and Central Africa⁵⁴.

The change from mediation and arbitration into direct involvement in conflict resolution by the OAU had not been prompted only by the magnitude of these conflicts that threatened to destabilize neighboring countries. It has also been influenced by the encouragement of Western countries and the USA, who at the time were disengaging from Africa and other Third World countries. French President Francois Mitterrand and other Western leaders vigorously called for Africans “to resolve their conflicts themselves and organize their own security”⁵⁵.

In addition to finding African solutions to African problems, the OAU was adapting to the post-Cold War environment and transforming itself into more useful and relevant organization. This was especially true with a number of African states still trying to deal with the outcome of failed nationhood and others consumed by civil and secessionist wars. The nationalist rhetoric and radical political regimes with their anti-capitalist economic policies proved to be costly and plunged African economies into crisis. This trend was coupled with wide corruption and mismanagement that prevented any viable development projects from yielding positive results. With dwindling economic aid and assistance from the Soviet Union, most African countries were compelled to reform their economies during mid-1980s, in order to receive economic aid from international monetary institutions such as the IMF⁵⁶.

During early 1990s, African countries were appealing to Western countries, the US and international donors by adopting political and economic reformation. The OAU focused its program into promoting good governance, democracy and development among African countries. From 1990 to 1996, around thirty-three free elections have been held in Africa leading to democratic governments⁵⁷. The OAU declared its denouncement to any military coup that would take place in the continent and threatened to impose sanctions and non-cooperative stand against any country that would go that far. The establishment of the war crimes tribunal for Rwanda after the notorious genocide in 1994 has been a major development to the overall human rights situation in Africa. This comes as a concluding remark to the efforts of the OAU in this field since it had adopted the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 1981⁵⁸.

Nonetheless, the OAU was keenly aware of its own limitations in the face of changing international environment and changing patterns of interactions within the African continent. Four decades since independent, African states come to realize that the OAU is well short of meeting challenges and pressures unleashed by the international environment and the forces of globalization. The continent is increasingly put in a peripheral role in the global economy due to the decline in the continent's share of official development assistance and its shrinking share of foreign direct investment⁵⁹. Other factors including debt, internal conflicts, HIV/AIDS, national and international terrorism and human insecurity had also contributed to the marginalization of the African continent. Although conflicts are not new in the African politics, they have become so widespread in the last two decades. The overall impact of these factors resulted in reordering the foreign relations of the continent towards new regional initiatives and collective actions that encompasses the whole Africa⁶⁰. The whole process culminated in the establishment of the AU at the beginning of the new Millennium.

THE AFRICAN UNION

The Foundation

As early as 1979, the Committee on the Review of the Charter was established to amend the OAU Charter in order to streamline the Organization to gear it more accurately for the challenges of a changing world. Despite numerous meetings, the Charter Review Committee did not manage to formulate substantive amendments. In July 1999, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Algiers accepted an invitation from Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi to the Fourth Extraordinary Summit in September in Sirte. The purpose of the Extraordinary Summit was to amend the OAU Charter in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the OAU. This Summit concluded in September

1999 after adopting the Sirte Declaration,⁶¹ aimed at effectively addressing the new social, political and economic realities in Africa and the world. To achieve these aims the Summit decided to establish an African Union (AU) in conformity with the ultimate objectives of the Charter of the OAU and the provisions of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community⁶².

The Declaration of the Sirte Summit had signaled the end of forty-years of collective African actions within the OAU and paved the way for the beginning of new era of the African Union. The Declaration was followed by summits at Lomé in 2000, when the Constitutive Act of the African Union was adopted, and at Lusaka in 2001, when the plan for the implementation of the African Union was adopted. The African Union was launched in Durban on July 9, 2002, by its first president, South African Thabo Mbeki, at the first session of the Assembly of the African Union. The second session of the Assembly was in Maputo in 2003, and the third session in Addis Ababa on July 6, 2004⁶³.

The AU covers the entire continent except for Morocco, which opposes the membership of Western Sahara as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. However, Morocco has a special status within the AU and benefits from the services available to all AU states from the institutions of the AU, such as the African Development Bank. Moroccan delegates also participate at important AU functions, and negotiations continue to try to resolve the conflict with the Polisario Front in Tindouf, Algeria and parts of Western Sahara. The AU Constitutive Act declares that it shall "invite and encourage the full participation of the African diasporas as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union". The African Union has defined the African Diaspora as "consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union"⁶⁴.

The AU is not thought to be the continuation of the OAU under a different name. Rather, it will have the capacities built into it to improve the economic, political and social development of the African people. Modeled after the EU, the AU aims to promote unity on the continent, contain, terminate and prevent the occurrence of conflicts, create a larger African market to make the continent more competitive in the international economy, and to address Africa's severe problems ranging from debt to corruption and HIV/AIDS. The whole notion of the new objectives for Africa is to strengthen intra-African ties and to increase self sufficiency of the continent⁶⁵.

The birth of the AU goes hand-in-hand with the launch of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, popularly known as NEPAD. The

initiative was launched in July 2001 with a mission to establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations. In addition to that, NEPAD is to promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as integration of African economies. As part of NEPAD, African leaders have made a commitment to seek the end of conflicts in Africa and improve political, economic and corporate governance to foster a better climate for transformational development. At the heart of NEPAD and as an instrument to implement the initiative, African leaders launched the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which is designed to monitor progress in improving political, economic and corporate governance. The peer group process began in late 2004 in Ghana, Mauritius, Kenya and Rwanda and consequently a number of 24 African countries have agreed to undergo peer review⁶⁶.

The activities of the AU

The AU fell short of the Pan-African Leaders' vision of a United States of Africa and also of President Gaddafi's projected single army for Africa, AU Chairman with presidential status and greater powers of intervention in member states. Nonetheless, the new organization has a new mandate that by far exceeded the OAU Charter and its call for non-interference in internal affairs of African countries. The OAU Charter clearly stated that the organization has the objective of defending sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of member states. On the contrary, the AU Constitutive Act extends the right of the Union to intervene in member states in certain conditions as stated in article 4(h) which reads: "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"⁶⁷.

In fact, the AU Constitutive Act has laid ground for a new security structure for Africa. Although peace and security continued in the past to be recognized as urgent challenges to African countries, only recently that peace and security gained marked profile as political priorities for concrete political approaches inside and outside the continent. These changes not only attracted more external assistance, but also prompted Africa to develop its own dynamics through the AU and its initiatives. The AU is now seen as constituting realistic African reform program that is designed to set new African political accents and at the same time to consciously seek support from abroad⁶⁸.

Interestingly, the establishment of the AU was accompanied by an altered outside perception of Africa's growing significance to international politics. As Kingebiel called it, Africa is currently experiencing a "geostrategic renaissance"⁶⁹. The continent role in international role is attracting more attention and considerations by outside actors than it did at the end of 1980s, after the end of the Cold War and during the 1990s. The US Africa Policy Advisory Panel stated that Africa has assumed a new, strategic place in US foreign policy and in the definition of vital US interests. This shift moves the

US away from the past habit of treating Africa as a humanitarian afterthought and begins to reverse a decade-long decline in the US presence and engagement in Africa⁷⁰.

At the international level, the UN Security Council has begun to renew its peace related efforts in Africa, mainly in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, the DRC and Liberia, to cite just a few. This juncture came despite a series of disappointing and problematic missions during the 1990s, especially in Angola, Somalia and Rwanda. Similarly, there appears to be growing tendency by Western countries to adopt joint approaches involving foreign policy, security and development policy with a view to building and supporting the new African peace and security structure. Major international actors, especially the G8 and the EU started to accord Africa a higher level of significance on the international agenda⁷¹.

The shift in policy has been influenced by different factors internally and externally. It is associated only in part with the ongoing efforts to reduce poverty, such as the UN Millennium Development Goals⁷². But it has far more to do with new political priorities in international relations. The US war on terrorism, within which Africa has come to play an important role, is significantly elevating Africa's prominence. As stated in the US national Security Strategy (September 2002), important considerations has been drawn around the supposed link between fragile states and international security and terrorists' threats. From late 1990s, roughly one third of African states are regarded as being unstable that they are unable to exercise effective control over their own national territories and borders. In addition to harboring terrorists and provide training grounds for them, aggrieved communities in these failed states may render support to terrorists groups that claim to represent them⁷³.

Moreover, Africa became a region of growing importance as a world oil supplier. The US, as well as other countries such as China, is increasingly coming to view parts of the continent from the angle of energy security. The US currently imports 13-14% of its oil from African countries, a figure that is expected to rise to roughly 20% in ten years. China is now importing 30% of its oil from Africa, compared with 47% from the Middle East. In the first ten months of 2005, Chinese official sources say, Chinese companies invested a total of \$175 million in African countries, primarily on oil exploration projects and infrastructure. On January 9, state-owned Chinese energy company CNOOC Ltd. announced it would buy a 45 percent stake in an offshore oil field in Nigeria for \$2.27 billion. China already has a significant presence in many African countries, notably Sudan, Chad, Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Republic of Congo⁷⁴.

Despite all the attention and consideration for Africa's security and stability, Western countries continue to show certain reluctance to engage themselves directly with peace operations in the continent. Berman notes that despite Washington professed 'partnership' with Africa, the initial US capacity-peace keeping program to develop African peacekeeping capabilities was essentially a product of its policy of disengagement⁷⁵. Supporting African initiatives, especially the AU, would not only facilitate peace and security in the continent without direct interventions from Western countries. It will also eradicate many indirect threats faced by US and Europe, as well as, protecting their concrete interests in raw material and energy.

The AU, on the other hand, provided African countries the opportunity to capitalize on the international community's newly found interest in Africa. To an extent, it is inevitable in the post-Cold War and now the War on Terrorism context that African countries fear their continent might be pushed even further to the margins of the global agenda. To ensure its relevance, the AU demonstrates Africa's commitment to the 'global war on terrorism' by adopting the AU Plan of Action which is premised on the need to strengthen the capacity of African states through intergovernmental cooperation and coordination. The AU Plan of Action is to give effect to the AU's own regional instrument, the Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, which has been adopted by the OAU in 1999⁷⁶.

Furthermore, the AU member states indicated their willingness to take risk for peace and accept their share of responsibility for ensuring stability and development in Africa. The AU established the Peace and Security Council that is working as the decision making institution and the sole authority for deploying, managing and terminating AU-led peace operations. In addition to that, the AU started a process to establish an African standby force, which by 2010 would be able to respond to requests for AU, UN or regional monitoring, peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions⁷⁷.

The proposed force gained tremendous support from the international community, especially Western countries. The G8 leaders called for the development of a joint AU/G8 plan to mobilize technical and financial assistance. Western countries have also undertaken various programs to develop African peacekeeping capacities. These programs include the French Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacities Program, the British African Peacekeeping Training Support Program

and the American African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance⁷⁸.

Nonetheless, AU initiatives for common African defence and security policy are not aimed solely at engaging international donors and generating aid and assistance. By solving inter- and intra-African conflicts, the AU works as buffers against outside interventions⁷⁹. These policies are now on trial in many African countries, such as in Sudan's recent Darfur Crises and Somalia.

The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) originally founded in 2004, with a force of 150 troops. By 2005, the numbers of AMIS increased to about 7,000 troops to guard the fragile Cease-fire agreement that has been signed between warring factions in Sudan in April 2004 and later reinforced as a peace agreement in 2005. Deteriorating situations in the region led the US to increase pressure in order to authorize a UN peacekeeping operation. However, Sudan refused to allow any external military force other than AMIS in its Darfur region. The AU's Peace and Security Council is rendering its support to Sudan government in its decision, while calling on AMIS to expand duties and numbers in order to hold the peace process on the ground intact⁸⁰.

Apart from security and conflict resolutions, the AU embarked on extensive economic development programs through its NEPAD initiative. The initiative has set three key goals to be achieved that range from promoting accelerated growth and sustainable development, eradicating widespread and severe poverty to halting the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process. To achieve these goals, the NEPAD document highlights the following ways:

- Restoring and maintaining macroeconomic stability, especially by developing appropriate standards and targets for fiscal and monetary policy policies, and introducing appropriate institutional framework for achieving these goals;
- Instituting legal and regulatory frameworks for financial markets and auditing private companies and public sector;
- Revitalizing and extend the provision of educational technical training and health services, with high priority given to tackle HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases; and
- Building capacity of states in Africa to set and enforce the legal framework, as well as, maintaining law and order⁸¹.

The initiative of NEPAD is now an integral part of the AU. It garnered wide support from international donors, especially Western countries, because of its call for democracy, human rights protection and

good governance. The AU is believed to strengthen African negotiating capacity with international institutions and Western countries for greater economic assistance, debt relief and greater share for the continent in the global market⁸².

Generally speaking, the AU represents a bridge and a buffer zone between African states and the international community specially Europe, US and other donor countries. To reach out to the international community, African leaders developed initiatives for economic reform and market liberalization, eradication of corruption and mismanagement, and advocating democratic rules. Such juncture may guarantee increased aid, fund and support for African development projects and initiatives, such as NEPAD. Only time will reveal whether Africa can overcome internal foes and external pressures to realize a continental regional scheme that works to enforce African people's dreams for unity, security and development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The development of state formation in pre-colonial Africa had been accompanied by different policies of interaction, alliance formation and groupings among African states. Nonetheless, most African states at that time were self-contained states with little dependence on the outside world. Although, trade routes and cultural interactions were maintained throughout the continent, most of the time, the relations between these states remained hostile and concentrated on severe struggle for power and containment. The land of weaker empires or kingdoms was often incorporated into the authority of the rising power at the time. Interestingly, despite sharing common history, language, religion and sometimes economic interests, African states failed to collectively defend their homeland against European invaders when the scramble for Africa started.

Dramatically, the pattern of interactions had been changed after independence. The colonial system, profoundly, reordered economic as well as political space in Africa. As a result, artificial regions were created along the metropolitan needs in the continent. Many regional groupings were created after independence along these artificial boundaries. However, these groupings collapsed because they did not serve the needs of newly sovereign regimes in Africa after independence. Far from the ideal of pan-Africanism and the politics of the OAU, a need for new pattern of regional groupings came out to reality during the post-independence era due to many changes in the international and domestic

political environment. The sovereign African regimes, in their struggle for regime survival and power struggle, have engaged in regional groupings beyond the artificial regions created by the colonial powers. Although the creation of the AU signaled a continuation of the old pattern, a revised regionalism stems to reality in the context of functional regional organizations. These organizations registered mixed results and many of them faded away. Among these organizations, some has registered somewhat successful examples such as IGAD, EOWAS and SADC.

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