DEVELOPMENT FOCUS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU): LESSONS FOR THE AFRICAN UNION (AU)

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ABSTRACT

The European Union has virtually transformed into an international regional organization that caters for the economic wellbeing of member states. Having changed from its original name European Economic Community, it has embarked forcefully on programmes that project the economic survival of the community. On the other hand, it would appear the Organization of African Unity now African Union followed the E.U. only in changing its name without addressing much of the economic challenges facing Africa. The study benefits from the abundance of literature on the internet, text-books, journal articles, newspapers and archival materials. Conclusively, much as it is good to adopt E.U’s change of name there is still much to be accomplished in the areas of management, organization, goal design and commitment to achieving the goals.

Key Words: The European Union, The African Union, Development.

INTRODUCTION

One interesting and significant development of the modern state is the realization by states that collective association of states would engender world peace and security. Thus, it had been understood that the rigid adherence to the principle of balance of power as a means of maintaining world peace rather than collective association of state, is fraught with danger. The experiences of the two world wars have brought home the reality of the modern international system (Kolawole: 2003:84). Consequently nations have because of advancement in technology and communication, become so independent to the extent that citizens now see themselves both as members of their individual nations-states as well as members of the larger international human community. Indeed, it can be argued that what is meant is the acceptance rather than the realization of collective association of states as a means of preserving world peace. Thus, as early as 1805, Pierre Dubois had in his celebrated book, “The recovery of the Holy Land”, suggested the setting up an international arbitration and an international judiciary.

Furthermore, Erasmus, who lived between 1466 and 1536, had in his letter suggested the establishment of a “League of Peace”. Also the French writer, abe de st. Pierre, had in the 18th century suggested that nineteen states should federate for the maintenance of world peace. However, such suggestions did not gain acceptance until the 19th century when the concert of Europe among Russia, Prussia, Austria and Great Britain was arranged at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 as a means of preventing the revival of a Napoleonic regime in France (Khan et al: 1997: 340). Subsequently different specialized international organization started emerging. The most prominent ones among them were the Rhine Commission of 1815, the Danube Commission of 1850, the International Postal Union of 1874, the Pan-American Union of 1890 and the Permanent Court of Arbitration of 1900. It was as a result of the emergence of this international governmental organization that the League of Nations emerged in 1919.

Accordingly, the United Nations (UN) came into being in 1945 and provisions were made in its charter for the existence of regional organizations. Thus, regional organizations are voluntary organizations whose successes depend more on the willingness and commitment of their members rather than on any laid down rules since they lack the powers of legislation and enforcement.

Nonetheless, there are three broad categories of regional organizations, namely, the military,
economic and political. For example, regional military organizations are set up for defensive proposes of their members as an effective means of guaranteeing their security. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for Western Europe and North America, and the War-Saw Pact for the East European Countries belong in this category. (Khan et al:1997). Also, regional economic organizations exist for promoting trade and economic advancement among member nations. In this respect, the European Economic Community (EEC) now the European Union (EU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) for the Commonwealth countries, and the Latin America Free Trade Association (LAFTA) are primarily economic regional organizations.

Finally, regional political organizations exist for promoting political association of their members. Some of such organizations are the Organization of American States (OAS), the League of Arab States, and the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) and the Commonwealth of Nations. (Adeniran1983:140).

The formation of the African Union
The formation of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa in May 1963, by thirty-one independent African States was the crystallization of provisional attempt at forming a regional political association of African States. Kolawole (2003:86) argues that the founding fathers were divided on the form, which the organization should take; the disagreement to him was a manifestation of ideological orientation of the leaders. He further argues that the pan – African ideologues like the late Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana wanted an association that would Unify African States. However, the conservative and moderate group represented by the late Head of State of Ethiopia, Emperor Haile Sellasie and the late Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa advocated for an association that will unite rather than unify African States.

Moreso, while Nkrumah’s group wanted the submission of individual sovereignty for a larger continental sovereignty, the Sellassie/Balewa group preferred a voluntary association of independent sovereign states, (Kolawole 2003). Abe (2004:203) clarified this issue when he argues that the diplomatic scene in Africa was marked by the vision between a group of African States, which was tired by the vision of a new political map of the continent, and another group favourable to maintaining the status quo. The Organization of African Unity emerged from the compromise of the different groups when it was formally established in Addis Ababa on 25th May 1963. Its formation facilitated the eventual decolonization of the continent, as virtually all African countries are now independent nations, including South Africa that was formerly under the apartheid regime. Despite the successful battle against colonialism by the OAU, it found it difficult to achieve the same measure of success in combating conflicts as well as facing the problems of economic crisis of its members. The organization’s inability to effectively manage and resolve conflicts in the continents has increasingly led to the escalation of conflicts that have in turn produced the highest number of refugees and displaced persons in the world. Also the stranglehold that the economics of these countries is subjected to compels the need for a continental forum as a vehicle for unity. (Abe: 2004:213).

Emergence of the African Union AU
The realization by African leaders that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has outlived its importance and relevance of coping with the new challenges and demands confronting Africans in the globalizing world necessitated the setting up of the Charter review committee to chart a new course of action for the continent. For instance, it has been argued by political analysts that the lethargy in which the OAU has sunk had reached such a degree that authoritative voices are being raised to demand its renovation, a renovation to which the rebirth of Africans should consider as his deepest desire (Kodjo 1989, in Abe: 2003).

Spearheading the struggle for a continental rebirth was the Libyan leader, Col. Moammar Ghadafi, who in 1998 reportedly began promoting the idea of convening a special summit to review the 35 years old charter of the OAU. This idea was given further recognition and acceptance in July, 1999 at the 34th summit of the O.A.U. in Algiers, Algeria where African Heads of States and Government agreed on the urgency to review the OAU charter to enable it meet with new challenges so as to reinforce African Unity (Tell Magazine, 2001).

Furthermore, the idea came for discussion again on the 9th of September 1999 at the 4th Extra-ordinary summit of the Heads of state and Government that issued a declaration calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view to accelerating the
process of integration in the continent to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems facing the continent. The declaration was followed by the adoption of the Constitutional Act of the African Union at the 35th OAU summit in Lome, Togo in July 2000. A follow-up to this was the 5th Extra-ordinary summit otherwise known as Sirte II held in Libya in March 2001.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union replaces the Charter of the OAU. The AU was then expected to come into effect after two-third of member states or 36 countries ratified the Constitutive Act and a one-year transition period from 11th July 2001 to 9th July, 2002. The coming up with the Constitutive Act, African countries, in their countries, in their quest for unity, economic and social development, have taken various initiatives and made substantial progress in many areas which paved the way for the establishment of the African Union. Some of these are: the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Final Act of Lagos incorporating progressive strategies for self-reliant development and co-operation among African countries, as well as the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the Grand Plan of action on human rights. The Human Rights Charter led to the establishment of the Human Right Commission located in Banjul, The Gambia. African Priority Programme for Economic recovery (APPHER) an emergency method designed to address the development crisis of 1980’s in the wake of protracted crisis of famine that had engulfed the continent and the crippling effect of African external indebtedness (Onwuka 1996).

The Africa Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for socio-economic recovery and transformation (AAF_SAP) came up in 1989. It constitutes a basis for construction dialogue between African countries and their development partners in the implementation and financing programme charter on popular participation adopted in 1990. It serves as a testimony to the renewed determination of the OAU to endeavour to place the African citizen at the center of development and decision making. The treaty established an African Economic Community (AEC) in 1991 commonly referred to as the Abuja treaty. It seeks to create the AEC through six stages culminating in an African common market using the regional economic committees as building block. The treaty has been in operation since 1994.

The mechanism of conflict prevention, management and resolution set up in 1993, is a practical approach of the determination of the African leadership to find solution to conflict, promote peace and stability in Africa. Cairo Agenda for Action (1995) is another programme for social development. African composition on African’s debt crisis, a strategy for addressing the continents external debt crisis, Algiers decision on unconstitutional changes of government in 1999 and the Lome convention on the framework for an OAU response to unconstitutional changes of government are attempts at refocusing Africa. The solemn declaration on the conference on security, stability, development and co-operation in the year 2000 establishes the fundamental principles for the promotion of democracy and good governance in the continent. (Onwuka, 1996:296).

The European Union

The attempt to form a common market in Western Europe led six countries in the region namely Belgium, Federal republic of Germany, France, Holland, Italy and Luxembourg, to establish the European Economic Community in 1957. This integrated economic arrangement was designed to defend the interest of industrial monopolies and financial oligarchs of the six countries. It resolved that countries and territories, which had special relations with them, would be associated with the European Economic Community (EEC) (Gambari 1980:115).

Britain’s first application for membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1961 had a direct impact on the negotiations for the first Yaounde Convention. Longer term implications, however, stemmed from the suspicions of the community’s intentions which grew out of the rather clumsy encounters between the six and Commonwealth Africa during the 1961-63, negotiation for British membership (The Times, 5th September, 1962). The Treaty of Rome set forth the goals of integration. The primary objective of the EEC is the establishment of a common market and progressive approximation of the economic policies of the member countries. The principal aims of the treaty were to preserve and strengthen peace; to create a region with the free movement of goods, people, services and capital through the elimination of various obstacles. Ultimately to form a political union/economic integration was thus perceived to be a major instrument for fostering unity in the region and improving the material and social condition of the people (Obadan, 1992).
The big move towards the creation of a European Union was made in March, 1985, when the European council (the decision-making organ) comprising the head of government and state called upon the European commission, to draw up a table of programme with a specific time-table for the complete removal of all existing barriers impeding the free flow of goods, services, capital and labour among member countries. Consequently in June 1985, the Commission issued a white paper, officially known as completing the internal market (Bhatt 1989:40). The white paper established the programme to create a single European market place for goods and financial services. It lists 300 legislative proposals or draft directives designed to eliminate physical, technical and fiscal barriers. The Single European Act (SEA), which was signed in February 1986, and effective in July 1987 adopted the white paper, amended the Treaty of Rome and set 1992 as the completion date of the internal market (Bhatt 1989:50).

**Main Objectives of the European Union**

The goal of the European Union is to create a single economic and financial area or union. This would be an indicator of the major determination and commitment of European leaders to transform their vision into a reality by building a secured future for a single European home (Salim. 1990). The important objectives of the proposal for a single market are:

i. Removal of all internal border controls especially eliminating delays at frontiers for customs purposes and related administrative borders for companies and public administration.

ii. Elimination of technical barriers to trade by applying the principles of mutual recognition standard with respect to health, safety, consumer production and the environment. The principle states that if a product is good enough to be offered to one European Community (EC) country and meets minimal EC requirement then it is good enough to be offered in all EC countries (Salim, 1990).

iii. Opening up government procurement to competitive bidding.

iv. Recognition of professional qualification within the community

v. Harmonization of direct taxes (e.g. value added taxes); and

vi. Liberalization of capital movements and the related liberalization of financial services.

This therefore implies that the main objectives to be realized at the formation of European Union are (a) Good market integration and (b) financial market integration (Obadan 1992:10).

**A Comparative Analysis of the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU)**

First and foremost, the objectives of both regional organizations are not the same. While the European Union (EU) is mainly to enhance the reconstruction of the entire Europe, the African Union (AU) has the primary objective to reconstruct the whole of Africa. To buttress those points, the seeming upheavals in Europe, after the first and second world wars that heightened and created a lot of economic problem all over Europe and an interim measure to resolve this crisis and create at least a balance of power, than the whole of Europe, aroused the need for the reconstruction of European Union (EU). While the African Union (AU) was aimed at creating a new Africa in a New International Economic Order (NIEO) to be able to meet up with the challenges of Globalization and compete favourably in the international environment. These two positions remain unequivocal for both regional economic organizations. While the European Union (EU) according to Gary Marks (2004) is the most complex institutionalized and authoritative supranational economic organization, which has fully achieved the full benefits that accrue to economic integration, the African Union (AU) on the other hand, has not completed let alone fulfills the requisite demands of economic integration at all.

In fact the economies of member states of the African Union are far from being developed as a result of their deep entrenchment in the international capitalist system of the world. Besides they are engrossed in south-south coalition, which has not yielded very positive results. For instance Nigeria and other African states have spear headed discussions with the group of 77 as to benefit from these economic grouping but all their efforts have been abortive. Furthermore, having also implemented policies advocated by Rostow whose, in-ward-looking development tendencies had necessitated member states of the African Union (AU) to
embrace on economic self-reliance programmes, the Structural Adjustment Programmes, and a host of other programmes, have not made much progress on the economies of these countries. Rather, they remained under-developed and backward (ibid 1992:80-81). While the member countries of the European Union (EU) are already blazing the trail of Globalization and in this era of a uni-polar world system, have very significant progress the European Union member countries have made very significant giant strides in their economies, the financial and market integration have propelled these countries and make them highly developed and highly industrialized. They have to a large extent produced highly sophisticated goods which can penetrate any part of the world. These obviously are the gains of economic integration of the European Union (EU).

The organs of the European Union (EU) are as follows: the European Commission (EU); the Heads of state and government i.e. (Decision making organ of the European Union (EU)). It also has a unified financial institution that regulates a common currency amongst member states of the European Union (EU).

Finally, while the European Union has made giant strides in economic development and in other spheres of development, the African Union (AU) is yet to witness little development since it just started embarking on the full economic integration of its union. Nevertheless, the European Union (EU) still engenders negative development in the African countries. For instance, the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) relations has induced very negative indices in the development, on third world with regards to the center-periphery thesis of (Frank 1972:125). It is very apparent that the African Union (AU) being in the periphery has never witnessed development except it is tele-guided by the center. Hence, the EU/ACP relations remain elusive and in fact it is a mirage as the core of the countries in the center are always at a beneficial advantage. Just as the piper dictating the tune, they always control whatever, happens at the periphery.

Onwuka (1989:15) argues that the relation between the European Union (EU) and the African countries is based on an international division of labour where the African countries always played a subservient role vis-a-vis the developed world. To buttress this point, Galtung (1996:278) argues that the ludicrous effects on the third world of the European Community (EC) relation cannot be debated. The basis of the European Community is a system of selective preferences for the associated states, as opposed to other developing countries. The relationship between the European Union and the center must be viewed as a mere extension in time of the particular relation, which existed between colonized countries and the metro pole. The relationship had refused to disappear and there exists a wedge driven between underdeveloped countries that have selected different paths as their basic pattern of economic development.
Furthermore, the same can be said of the third world as a whole. The Yaunde agreement by and large tends to freeze the status quo, it gives no impetus in the direction of solidarity, on the contrary it plays up to the shorter, interest of each dwelling nation, including the association states for this reasons, the associated states have tended to be allies of the regionalities in the European Community (EC) the old mother countries.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Hence, one can argue that relations between the European Union and their African counterpart had been based on dominance, which exudes the concept of penetration and dependency on a continued relation with them. Thus, one could conclude that the European Community is certainly pursuing the same old policies with new means because the old colonial policies had left the colonized societies penetrated and fragmented. In the final analysis, in comparative terms, the European Union (EU) has had far better economic and feasible development while the African Union (AU) still grapples with the issue of development even with its ties with the developed economics like the European Union (EU). It has only been short-changed hence with the issue of AGOA and NEPAD probably; it could likely follow the prescription of the modernization school, thus following tele-guided developmental strategies.

**References**