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Beyond Decolonisation: Insight into Africa's Institutional Cooperation and Integration

By

Charles Osarenomase Osarumwense

Department of History and International
Studies Faculty of Arts, University of Benin

Benin City, Nigeria

+2348023522681

osarenomase.osarumwense@uniben.edu

Emmanuel Toby

Department of History and International
Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin

Benin City, Nigeria

+2349059866366

emmanuel.toby@uniben.edu

*Corresponding author: Charles O. Osarum

ABSTRACT

With Africa's decolonisation in the late 1950s, African states were born into a system of global interdependence. As a result, the need for cooperation and integration becomes imperative. It has been argued that despite Africa's institutional cooperation and integration the continent has remained the least developed and integrated. This paper x-rays how Africa's institutional cooperation has helped to facilitate Africa's economic development. In discussing Africa's institutional cooperation and integration, two perspectives were put into focus (1) Africa's

institutional cooperation at the global level and (2) Africa's institutional cooperation and integration at the regional level. For a clear conceptual analysis, the paper adopts the historical and analytical research methods. It utilises primary and secondary sources of information collected from libraries, archives of multilateral agencies as well as oral interviews. For what has been done so far in this research, findings reveals that Africa's institutional cooperation either in the global or regional level has helped African states to forge a common course of economic development. Findings have also showed that through institutional cooperation African states have been able to partner with advanced economies of world to facilitate economic development. The paper concludes that for Africa to achieve a greater measure of economic development, African leaders should be fully committed to economic development by exploiting the gains in institutional cooperation.

Keywords: *Decolonisation, Economic development, Institutional cooperation, Regional cooperation and Integration*

1. INTRODUCTION

...Convinced that the continued existence of colonialism prevents the development of international economic cooperation, impedes the social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples and militates against the United Nations ideal of universal peace... All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. (UNGA, 1960)

Also, the General Assembly Resolution 1904 (XVII), affirmed the necessity of the speedy elimination of racial and colonial regimes in Africa and urgent need toward Africa's decolonisation. (Publication of the UN Department of Political Affairs, 1974). It was against this background that many African states began to gain independence from their various colonial authorities. This development marked a phase in

the history of African people. British and France were at the lead in territorial aggrandisement in Africa as they began relinquishing political, social and economic powers to their colonies. African people began to take charge of their political and economic affairs. The relationship between Africa and their colonial authorities did not end with Africa's attainment of statehood. They began to institute measures aimed at economic development through institutional cooperation and integration to facilitate and strengthen development in all its ramifications. Achieving economic and political development through institutional cooperation, many African states at independence joined the United Nations Organisation (UNO) and also began to establish regional cooperation such as Organisation of African Unity OAU now African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Economic Cooperation (SADEC) among other. They also began to seek financial assistance from world monetary bodies for economic and infrastructural development.

The institutional cooperation that follows after decolonisation gave to African states the status to become part of the international system. International system is a system of global interdependence where states cooperate aimed at meeting their national interests. National interest implies what is best for a country under a given circumstances (Kousoulas, 1982). Through institutional cooperation, African states have been able to achieve some measures of economic development irrespective of the challenges. The challenges of economic development and nation building faced by African states after independence necessitated the establishment of institutional cooperation that will further facilitate Africa's development and integration. The search for external cooperation and resources to maintain domestic power structures was central to the foreign policy of majority of African States in the post-colonisation era (Clapham, 1996). Understanding Africa's institutional cooperation and integration, one has to look at the circumstances under which African states emerged and factors that propel institutional cooperation at the global and regional levels.

2. DECOLONISATION AND THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL

Africa's decolonisation was a turning point in African history. The call by African nationalists to end European domination in Africa was intensified immediately after the independence of India and other colonies in Asia (Birmingham, 1995). With the victory over European rule and the emergence of independence African states, Africans began to exercise control over their affairs and this was achieved through the process of cooperation with their former colonial authorities. Development through institutional cooperation was critical to Africa at the formative stage. Independence Africans leaders had to cope with the challenges of nation building, national unity, underdevelopment, political instability and dependence on the former colonial masters (Falola, 2002).

The Cold war rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union no doubt influenced the pattern of Africa's institutional cooperation in the sense that African states have to declare a policy of political neutrality in Non-alignment for the sake of political and economic survival. African states had to find their feet in an unfamiliar environment, within which a highly unequal division of global power and wealth placed them at the very bottom of the heap (Clapham, 1996). To be able to measure up with advanced economies, institutional cooperation became fundamental to African leaders. The European power politics and Africa's inability to compete with the game nations play (international Politics), forced Africa states to adopt institutional cooperation in a bid to achieve economic and industrial development.

The post-colonial institutional cooperation between African states and their colonial authorities placed emphasis on security, economic and political development. African leaders needed security, and economic stability in a system of global competition. It was security of a particular kind, and both its costs and its benefits were unevenly distributed (Halliday, 1994). Economic development was a major foreign policy goal of African leaders in the post-decolonisation period. One of the consequences of the end of the Cold War is that, through regional or sub-regional movements, states seem to be prepared to collectively promote their national interests. Africa came out of the Cold war extremely weak

in economic, institutional building, and political stability (Ojedokun, 1972). Hence collective cooperation and integration was needed to heal the wound.

2.1. Africa's International Cooperation at the Global Organisations

After independence, African states were welcomed into the global institutions like the United Nations Organisation (UNO) and other specialised agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, among others. The UN is the world vehicle for international cooperation. It has assisted African states in coordinating developmental assistance of all kinds to enable Africa help themselves. At the time when the UN Charter was drafted, there were few independent African states. However, as African countries decolonized throughout the 1960s, the status of Africa at the UN started to change (Africa and the UN FES Conference Report June, 2011). After decolonisation, many African states joined the UN and began to participate in the activities of the Organisation. This participation gave African leaders the opportunity to use the UN platform to canvas for economic and political wellbeing of African states. To date, African states form the largest regional grouping at the UN. African leaders have succeeded in questioning or challenging some global issues affecting African states on the floor of the United Nations. For example, some African leaders in the floor of the United Nations conversed for the total freedom of African states from colonialism and racism. This paid off with the independence of South Africa and Namibia in 1990 and 1994 respectively. Africa's participation in activities UN has also increased the call for Africa's representative in the security council of the United Nations. United Nation has helped strengthen national security and defense forces as well as democratic institutions in Africa. In this effort, the UN has work closely with Africa's regional cooperation mechanisms to facilitate economic development (<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/africa>).

The activities of World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the two most powerful international financial institutions in the world today have also helped in facilitating economic development in

Africa. The views that African economic development have been jeopardised with World Bank and IMF aid policies, is far from the truth. The failure of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as a strategy for economic development adopted by African leaders was as a result of misplaced priority of African leaders. The negative impact of aid on Africa's economic and industrial development is caused by corruption on the part of African leaders. The corrupt nature of some African leaders has resulted in the siphoning of aid assistance from IMF and World into personal pocket instead of channelling the aid into developmental projects. IMF and World Bank assistance to African states, though with conditionality is not enough to justify that foreign aid retarded Africa's economic development. It would, of course, be misleading to create the impression that serious efforts have not been made by World Bank and IMF towards Africa's development. Foreign bodies have made contributions in form of aid in an attempt to improve development in Africa. We must recognise the role of world financial institutions and foreign government in providing economic assistance in form of aid to Africa.

2.2. Africa's International Cooperation and Integraion at the Regional and Sub-regional Organisations

After decolonisation, African states began to developed system which will enable Africa people to realise their economic potential for development. To ensure development, regional and sub-regional organisations were established for economic development and conflict management among African states. For example, in West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS/ECOMOG) was established not only for economic development but also for peace and conflict resolution.

ECOWAS was established in May 1975 in Lagos. The major aim of ECOWAS is institute cooperation and development in all spheres of economic activities among member states. In 1977 the ECOWAS made a big stride by establishing the Fund for Co-operation and Development (West Africa, 13 Feb. 1978). The fund was met to establish projects in member states. The fund was also to guarantee foreign investment made

in member states in pursuance of the treaty provisions for harmonising the internal and external finance of the Community (Olaniyan, 1982). The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been Africa's most prominent interstate organisation to promote economic development of member states. The removal of trade barriers by ECOWAS have resulted in trade expansion for free economic cooperation and integration of member states. This removal of trade barrier has helped to facilitate economic development among member states of ECOWAS since its inception.

The ECOWAS has succeeded in establishing strategy for future development in transport and communication. In 1961, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) convened a conference on West African Transport in Monrovia, Liberia. The conference recommended the gradual construction of sub-regional road network to facilitate intra sub-regional trade (Nwachukwu, 1991). There has also been commendable achievement in the area of telecommunication. The improvement in telephone, telex and television services among member states has helped in facilitating cooperation and integration. In the area movement of persons, ECOWAS has succeeded in the integrating African people through the process of the free movement protocol.

The West African sub-region is generally characterised by irredentism. The frequent coup d'états in Africa and political instability has necessitated defence cooperation among African states. It came to the reality of African leaders that political instability and conflict can retard economic development thereby frustrating the essence of ECOWAS, hence the need for ECOWAS protocol on standing military initiative who will serve as a buffer when there is breakdown of law and order that will bring about political instability and conflict in any ECOWAS member state. The first attempt at defence cooperation was in 1979 at the Summit of Heads of States and Government. It was the initiative that gave birth to the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). ECOMOG was the first regional peacekeeping mission launched by an African sub-regional organisation. Also, for the first time in the history of Africa, the Liberian conflict brought the creation of an indigenous regional cooperation mechanism for conflict management (Yoroms, 1993).

ECOMOG was to become the first case for regional conflict management. And it prompted a spurt of institutional development within ECOWAS that transformed the organisation into Africa's most advanced conflict management body (Weller, 1994). The Liberian conflict and the host of other numerous conflicts in Africa have resulted in Africa's call for greater cooperation against military regimes in Africa.

The Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) was established on 25 May 1963, by leaders of the then thirty-one independent African States in Addis Ababa the capital Ethiopia. Its main interest was the elimination of racial and colonial rule in Africa. The OAU became a platform for Africa's cooperation against colonial regimes in Africa. The organisation was to unite all African states to be able to speak with one voice in the international community and to build a formidable force toward the realisation of political and economic development. Prior to the establishment of the OAU in 1963, African states were divided into three political groups: Brazzaville, Casablanca, and Monrovia. These groups have their different philosophy of how African states should approach development. Some gave the impression that it believed that African unity needed to be approached through economic cooperation, not political integration (Makinda and Okumu, 2007). For example, the Casablanca group affirmed their determination "to promote the triumph of liberty all over Africa and to achieve its unity (Ibid). The Casablanca group was against the UN policy on Congo with the way Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, was treated. Casablanca group advocated political unity for Africa as a prerequisite for economic cooperation. According to Nkrumah for "economic unity to be effective, it must be accompanied by political unity". He posited that the "two are inseparable, each necessary for the future greatness of African continent, and the full development of African resources" (Ibid). Nkrumah repeatedly emphasized the socialist approach to Africa's development.

The Monrovia and Brazzaville groups had similar views. The Monrovia group agreed on several principles, which were later re-issued as the "Lagos Charter of the Organization of African and Malagasy States" after a meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, in January 1962. The five principles they endorsed later formed the basis of the OAU (Ibid).

Africa's unending quest for political and economic development led to the review of the OAU and emergence of African Union (AU) in July 2002. The reality of globalisation, global security and good governance necessitated greater cooperation among African states and their leaders if they are to maintained relevance in the global world of change. Security and peace have been critical to the AU since in inception. This led to the adoption of the AU's Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP). According to O. B. Osadolor, security includes human rights, the right to participate in governance, the right to education, the right against poverty among others. African leaders under the charter of the AU have pledged to cooperate in achieving security and peace in Africa.

African leaders have shown renewed efforts in and stronger commitment to the cause of regional integration and this is evident in the establishment of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in 2001. The African Development Bank (ADB) has intensified its efforts to support Africa's developmental stride. ADB has achieved this by providing financial assistance to regional programs and capacity-building initiatives in conjunction with NEPAD on agricultural, educational, and scientific projects (Stepak, 2008). Since the establishment of ADB, in 1967, it has financed more projects in forty African states. Railway projects were financed by the ADB and this has facilitated more cooperation and integration among African states.

In Southern African Region, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) established in 1992, was an effort towards Africa's cooperation and integration in Southern African region. As late as December 2000, the SADC secretariat insisted that it had no mandate to address political peace and security questions (Ibid), but Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia sent troops into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to support the then President of DRC, Laurent Desire' Kabila. Also, South Africa and Botswana intervene in Lesotho to support the leader against internal political unrest. Nigeria intervened in the Liberian civil war, Sierra-Leone civil war, the Chadian conflict and Sudan. These developments in Africa were some of the factors that led to the re-adjustment in Africa's regional cooperation.

3. CONCLUSION

With the decolonisation of African from the late 1950s, African states began to join international organisations. Many African states became member of the United Nations and it specialised agencies like UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, among others. Since independence, African states have been able to use their membership to attract political and economic development to Africa. African states have able to speak with one voice on the issues pertaining to the wellbeing of Africa continent. They have been able to challenge decisions and policies of the UN which they feel will endanger or hinder Africa's social, political and economic advancement. For example, it has been on record that African leader with one voice have call for the increase in the membership of the Security Council. Also, having acknowledged the UN effort on democratic governance in Africa, Africa leaders have also resisted the UN interference in governance in Africa. As members of the UN, African states have benefited from the United Nations peacekeeping missions initiatives. As a result, African leaders have continue to call on the United Nations for cooperation in all it ramification for Africa to be able to achieve political and economic development in the world of global interdependence.

The world financial bodies like the World Bank and the International Monetary fund (IMF) have assisted African states through the granting of financial aid to facilitate economic and industrial development in Africa. It has been argued that assistance in form of aid which is given in conditionality to developing countries has further worsened the possibility of Africa developing is far from been true. The lack of vision of some African leaders and Africa's inability to channel developmental aid from foreign donor is what has been hindering economic development in Africa. There have been coordinated efforts by African leaders through cooperation to facilitate economic development.

African states have been able to achieve greater measure of development through the establishment of regional cooperation and integration. The establishment of ECOWAS, SADC among others, has facilitated economic cooperation among member states. For example, ECOWAS was formed in 1975 for cooperation and development in all

spheres of economic activities ranging from industry, telecommunication, transport, natural resources, and commerce. So far, ECOWAS have achieved greater success but not without challenges in the task of integrating Africa's resources for greater development in all its ramifications. The SADC was formed in Zambia on April 1980 following the Lusaka declaration. Since its inception, SADC economic activities of member states in Southern Africa has been harmonised for greater economic development in Southern Africa. Apart from ECOWA and SADC, there are other regional and sub-regional initiatives in Africa aimed at cooperation and integration for Africa's economic development.

The OAU/AU has also been a platform for Africa's cooperation. With the emergence of the new global realities of globalisation and global insecurity, the AU has succeeded integrating member states through various developmental mechanisms such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) among others. Africa states through the AU have been able to speak with one voice in the international communities on the issues concerning the wellbeing of African people. With the high rate of global insecurity and political instability, African leaders through the AU have been able to develop a regional defence initiative (AU Defence Protocol) to tackle challenges of political instability in Africa. Since Africa's attainment of independence, cooperation and integration either at the global level or regional or sub-regional levels has helped to facilitate economic and well as political development in Africa. Through Africa's cooperation, economics have been integrated and political instability in Africa has been put under critical check with the establishment of mutual defence agreement among African states.

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