

## AFRICANS UNITE FOR A BETTER AFRICA

EZEAJUGHU MARY C. (PhD)

POLITICAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL: Igbinedion University, Okada, STATE: Edo State, COUNTRY: Nigeria

Email - marychukwuagozieezeajughu@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *This paper observed that the challenges to achieving a united African Nation are numerous at this time. In addition to problem of lack of integration at national levels and poor funding of the AU. The paper concludes that these challenges should serve as the rallying point for African leaders at this time and not the political machinations of some leaders on the continent. That notwithstanding, Africa leaders have had to bury their differences and embrace African unity in the fight against colonialism and racist rule. Africa has some of the most abundant natural resources in the world, many of which are yet to be tapped. These include not just minerals and oil, but also bountiful possibilities for clean energy. But natural resources are not Africa's only advantage. While Western countries are shouldering the burden of aging populations, Africa is the world's youngest continent. If it invests in education and training to develop the potential of its youth, Africa could become one of the most dynamic and productive of economies. Africa has everything needed to be more developed than where we are now, all we need is to believe in ourselves, improve ourselves, unite and move forward as Giants that we are and stop allowing other continents to devalue us. Africans and their leaders need to create and support a strong, sustainable, and prosperous continent.*

**Key Words:** *Africa, Development, Unity, Government and Growth.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

We all want a united Africa, united not only in our concept of what unity connotes, but united in our common desire to move forward together in dealing with all the problems that can best be solved only on a continental basis. Since the advent of independence for most African countries, the African continent has struggled with a seemingly endless array of development challenges, from civil war and political instability to epidemic disease, chronic food insecurity and pervasive poverty. However in recent years, Africa has experienced an economic resurgence. The emerging economies, particularly Brazil, India, South Africa and China, have recognised Africa's potential as an investment destination and a source of natural resources. Recent years have seen several interesting attempts to address high rates of informality through innovative combinations of tax, social protection and labour market policies. Rwanda is a good case in point, where more than 10,000 motor-taxi drivers, who are predominately young men, belong to one of two associations for motorcyclists. These associations enable access to social protection as well as provide credit, and operate driving schools for their members. Furthermore, organizing workers from the informal economy and encouraging enterprises in the informal economy to come together in production clusters or cooperatives have proven to be effective ways to increase decent work in the informal economy. In the rural economies of the continent, cooperatives and their apex organizations have played a critical role not only in production, but also in processing, storage, transport and marketing for export, greatly improving returns to their members. Meanwhile, efforts have been made to boost productive employment in rural areas. Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme, though not a full employment guarantee, entitles the poorest households selected to participate in the scheme for a minimum number of days of public works for the duration of the programme or until they graduate from support. In doing so, the programme aims to develop rural infrastructure, rehabilitate land and improve watershed management, thus contributing to increased agricultural productivity. Cooperative enterprises, such as savings and credit cooperatives or burial societies, also provide complementary mechanisms of job creation and social protection.

In most countries, urban population growth has been outpacing economic development, partly because of the lack of employment creation in higher productivity segments of the economy. Sharp income inequalities in many African cities also mean that the contribution of economic growth to poverty reduction is limited. Africa has more urban poor than any other region. Research from the World Bank indicates that poverty could be urbanising as the poor are moving to cities more rapidly than the population as a whole. And even though future improvements in urban poverty reduction are likely, the sheer number of poor people who lack access to services like improved water and sanitation is expected to increase dramatically. The African Economic Outlook 2016 predicts that Africa could see its slum population triple

by 2050. The first thing to understand about Africa is that Africa is not monolithic. Africa is many Africa's—in terms of language, of country size and stage of development. Of the 53 countries on the continent (49 in Sub-Saharan Africa), some are rich and some poor. Some are rich in minerals; others not. Some are coastal; others landlocked. Some are at peace; others racked by conflict. Some are beginning to pursue long-term transformation plans, while others still struggle with daily exigencies. Some have rapidly growing pools of talented businesspeople and dedicated technocrats, while others work to develop basic skills. Some have world-class logistics; others have budding express shippers and freight handlers. Most people would nonetheless agree that African countries have some common features and face some common challenges. Africa has already come a long way. We have seen exports carry the continent forward, even though only about 10 percent of those exports are of manufactured products. Africa's medium and high-tech industries have grown—although recently at less of a pace—but commodities and natural resources have up to now been of overwhelming importance. There are exceptions, but regrettably Africa has been characterized by corrupt practices in one form or another since that time.

Though African leaders differed on how to approach the issue of continental unity at this time, they did not allow their different ideas to cloud their collective aspirations or to destroy the shared desire to come together to help other African countries still under the yoke of colonialism and racist rule. The creation of the OAU was therefore to herald greater African unity among African states to collectively deal with the challenges of political liberation, economic development and security. The OAU succeeded phenomenally in the area of liberation struggles, this was climax with the liberation of South Africa in 1994 and the enthronement of democracy in the country. The OAU was not as successful in the areas of continental development, poverty eradication, ending numerous conflicts and human rights abuses as illustrated by the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The ineffectiveness of OAU in these areas, and demands of a fast changing world spurred by the forces of globalization necessitated its transformation to African Union in 2002.

In a rapidly changing global environment, Africa needs to seize the initiative and take advantage of these emerging conditions. It needs policies that maximise its comparative advantage and bring about the necessary structural changes in its economy. It needs to invest far more in its young people and in the hard and soft infrastructure required for growth. And above all, it needs institutions that are capable and responsive, and leaders in politics, business and society willing to behave in a democratic and accountable manner.

The future, as always, is shrouded in uncertainty. But many of the trends that will determine Africa's future prospects are already visible today. If we are clear sighted in our analysis, we can begin to identify the challenges and opportunities that lie before us. Firmly determined to take its future into its own hands, Africa is growing out of adopting agendas to, instead, setting the agenda. Agenda 2063 is one mechanism for doing so. So is the African Continental Free Trade Area, which will integrate a market of 1.2 billion people with a GDP of over \$3.4 trillion, creating new opportunities for Africa and its business partners? In addition, many African countries are embarking on ambitious development plans that are driving the adoption of technologies and new sources of energy. Countries are also showing a greater appetite for information technology and knowledge. Africa remains the world's poorest continent, with 34 of the 48 UN-designated least developed countries. The fundamental principle in the ILO Constitution that "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere" continues to resonate as a call to action. This is compounded by the presence of marked inequality. The wealthiest, and, in particular, the owners of natural resources, benefit disproportionately from the dynamic growth context. Of the 839 million working poor in the world, 214 million, that is one in four, live in Africa. And as noted earlier, progress in achieving the MDGs in Africa has been uneven.

Vulnerable employment levels – which include own-account and unpaid family work – are the highest across all regions. Nearly eight out of ten working people in sub-Saharan Africa are in vulnerable forms of employment. This is nearly twice as high as the world average, and African women are over-represented in the ranks of the vulnerable. Youth unemployment has remained stubbornly high and has even increased in Northern Africa. It is a key factor in emigration pressures. Emigration rates in Africa are the highest among all regions. And there is evidence that lack of decent work opportunities – rather than low economic growth – is a major determinant of involuntary migration. When the effects of conflict and environmental degradation are added, the towards inclusive and sustainable development in Africa through decent work imperative for action to offer alternatives to involuntary migration becomes all the more compelling. In the recent migrant crisis, a large proportion of migrant flows across the Mediterranean States have been from the "Horn of Africa" countries.

## **2. Overall, conflict in Africa is causing fewer fatalities than during the 1990s :**

In Africa, levels of high-fatality violence are now generally comparable to those of half a century ago and are significantly lower than during the post-Cold War period. However, the continent is witnessing an increase in the number of violent incidents largely driven by riots and protests. Most armed conflicts in recent years have been clustered in four regions: North Africa, the Sahel and West Africa, the Horn, and the Great Lakes region. These areas are likely to

continue to experience conflict over the coming decades, partly because past conflict is one of the best predictors of future conflict. In 2016, the most common event types were (in descending order) riots and protests, violence against civilians, battles, and remote violence (use of improvised explosive devices or IEDs). In the same year riots and protests accounted for almost 40% of total conflict events in Africa, up 10% from the previous year. Despite the rise in social conflict, battles between armed groups and the use of remote violence are currently the most common conflict types. In fact, the rising use of remote violence is a trend across Africa (and the world). The use of IEDs in Africa nearly doubled from 2010 to 2011 and has been rising steadily ever since.

### **3. The barriers to democracy are both deeply entrenched and widespread on the continent :**

Yet Africa is relatively more democratic than could be expected given its generally low levels of GDP per capita. This might in part be the result of conditional development assistance and/or the impact of the rapid spread of the internet and access to television and sources of alternative information. Popular demand for democracy in Africa is robust and has been rising steadily over the past decade, according to Afro barometer. More than two thirds of Africans surveyed support democracy as the preferred type of political regime and an even higher share rejects alternative authoritarian regimes. This makes sense in a context where citizens have been poorly served by decades of authoritarianism and where democracy is often a facade. Today most Africans want more democracy than they are actually getting. More than four in 10 Africans complain that voters are at least ‘sometimes’ threatened with violence at the polls; that opposition candidates are at least ‘sometimes’ prevented from running; that the news media ‘never’ or only ‘sometimes’ provide fair coverage of all candidates; and that voters are ‘often’ or ‘always’ bribed. Half of Africans say that elections are currently an inefficient mechanism to ensure that people’s views are represented and that voters are able to remove nonperforming leaders from office.

The barriers to democracy are both deeply entrenched and widespread in Africa. Neopatrimonialism, which sees officials and elected leaders use state resources to secure loyalty, is common. This frustrates the extent to which electoral democracy translates into accountability and thus into improved outcomes on growth and human development. Yet over time greater transparency, best practices and the use of modern technology during voter registration and during elections will undermine the opportunities for fraud and help improve electoral governance. Most important of all, African civil society is becoming more adept at guarding against manipulation, and regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) are slowly playing a more important role to verify and accompany electoral processes.

### **4. Governance :**

There are other structural weaknesses in Africa’s evolution, but perhaps the one that offers the greatest challenge may be the political one. Despite the amazing strides towards democracy achieved in many parts of the continent since the 1990s, it is also true that the healthier political conditions realized in no small number of African countries are still somewhat fragile. Bates and Block submit that powerful forces are at play in Africa that seek to reverse the political reforms that allowed an improvement in government policies and the recent good economic performance. In support of this claim, they report that in a large number of countries where term limits for the chief executive were adopted during the time of political reform 20 or 25 years ago, those limits have been removed, or at least there has been pressure to have them abolished or extended. They also point out that according to reputable sources, a number of African states have regressed recently to lower levels of political and civil liberties.

### **5. Agriculture :**

Africa does not only have hydrocarbons and minerals as natural resources. As Elhiraika and his co-author stress, the continent is also home to 60 percent of the world’s uncultivated arable land. This fact, together with the circumstance that agricultural productivity is still lagging in most African countries, strongly suggests that in this sector another huge reserve for development still resides. A number of our authors emphasize the role of agriculture as one of the renewed sources of growth that will be needed if Africa is to sustain its good overall performance of the last 15 years. As several authors explain in their respective chapters, agriculture is crucial considering that a large proportion of the population (around half a billion Africans) and around 70 percent of the poor is still rural. Leaving agriculture for other economic activities and urbanization alone will not solve the still growing problem of poverty. This huge challenge must also be tackled within the agricultural sector itself.

### **6. Why African solutions to African problems?**

The idea of ‘African solutions to African problems’ has become a convincing maxim of the AU. It is an emotive, politically charged call meant to resonate equally with governments and civil society on the continent. The maxim applies to a wide range of issues, including development, education and health, but often used in relation to peace and

security. It is embodied in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which encompasses the Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force, the Panel of the Wise and the Peace Fund. African solutions to African problems appears to be an indication of Africa's determination to solve her own challenges and leave the image of a permanently troubled land behind. It speaks of the coming together of African leaders and civil society to repair the damage that Africa has long suffered. The AU, the organisation tasked with leading Africa into becoming a peaceful, prosperous and integrated continent, is naturally expected to embody this maxim to its fullest potential and apply it whenever the need arises. However, critics of the Try Africa First approach point to the numerous times that the AU has failed to lead conflict management efforts on the continent as an indication of the organisation's deficiency to meet its mandate. Critical analyses of frameworks initiated by the World Bank Groups, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO) on Africa's economy have hitherto not transformed the African economy rather it contributed to the increasing rate of poverty, inequality and marginalization of Africans. Some of the strongest criticisms of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) have related to their effect on Sub-Saharan Africa. The decade of the 1980s, when over two-thirds of Sub-Saharan African states were receiving World Bank and IMF Structural Adjustment loan, was generally considered to be a lost decade for Africa. As it was during this period, economic growth, per capita incomes and investment declined and unemployment increased. The issue of corruption in Africa remains central to Africa's development. Momoh, (2015) have argued elsewhere (see Momoh, 2015a:4) that Africa annually lost US \$148 billion to corruption which is around 25 per cent of the continent entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Within this US \$148 billion between US \$20 billion to US \$40 billion are lost due to payment to bribes to government officials in Africa. The implication of corruption on African states is that it has eroded the institutional capacity of African governments as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned and public offices are bought and sold. Thus, corruption undermines the legitimacy of governments in Africa

Africa can do better, and to do so it must overcome the fundamental problems inherent in a model of economic growth that is not inclusive enough. Balanced and sustainable development entails two main challenges: boosting economic growth and ensuring broad and equitable distribution of the gains from growth. Experience shows that these challenges cannot be achieved simultaneously without decent work, and that lesson is fully reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. So what are the obstacles to further progress on the DWAA, and how can they be overcome? First, a sufficient volume of domestic resources must be invested effectively in decent work policies. Those resources are required to establish and maintain the labour market institutions that are essential to the implementation of such policies and needed to support sustainable enterprises, extend social protection floors and invest in jobs and skills. At the same time, the realization of decent work reinforces that funding base. This investment can set off a virtuous circle in which the realization of decent work itself generates an expanded funding base. Yet in many African countries government revenues do not even reach 15 per cent of GDP, which may be considered the bare minimum for a State to fulfil its most rudimentary functions, with more resources needed to finance adequately labour market policies and social security systems. The recent UN Conference on Financing for Development provided an important reminder in this respect. Recent evidence shows that economic growth in Africa is generally strong, fueled in large measure by business-enabling policy reforms, more favorable commodity prices and a marked improvement in peace and security, notably in the west and south-central sub-regions. Robust growth in the first decade of this century helped to diminish the depth of poverty. The recent global economic and financial crisis that beset world markets throughout 2009 sparked sharp price drops for exports and commodities and reduced trade and investment, slowing Africa's growth.

## 7. CONCLUSION:

Overall, Africa's story reveals a positive trend. Yet this trend is neither stable nor even. Living conditions are improving in many places, but not everywhere, not for everyone and – in the light of the continent's rapidly growing population – certainly not fast enough. Progress in sub-Saharan Africa continues to lag behind other developing regions, and in most countries population growth is outpacing economic, social and institutional developments. We have shown that there has been an increase in recent years in the number of conflicts, when considering state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts, and one-sided violence. Yet, the number of countries with conflict has not increased proportionally to the number of conflicts; rather, already conflict-affected countries have experienced more conflict. Moreover, many of the new conflicts can be attributed to the involvement of IS in already ongoing conflicts.

In sum, many countries on the African continent struggle with several parallel conflicts, yet there is reason not to paint in black when describing these trends. Importantly, policy makers, scholars, and media should avoid simplifying, and be aware of the nuances when discussing recent conflict trends. On a positive note, the findings suggest that if states succeed in solving some of the most severe state-based conflicts that cut across borders, such as the conflicts including IS, the total number of conflicts may decrease substantially. This may in turn enable states to solve and prevent other types of conflict.

## 8. RECOMMENDATION:

Our position in this study is that pragmatic approach by African leaders to the problems of the continent is required base on the fact that externally oriented approaches to development over the years have not benefited the continent. It recommended that African states should emulate the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) or the Global East part to development who focus on the internal impediments to their development rather than external factors by addressing the issue of corruption, bad governance, poverty, political instability, dependence among others. Furthermore, it suggested that the preoccupation of African leaders at the global level especially in this post developmental era of Sustainable Development Goals they must focus on issues that will promote the interest of the continent especially on how to promote political and economic reforms that will aid economic growth and development in the continent by moving from mere declarative statements to pragmatic steps that is problem solving, achievable and goal oriented. Therefore, any framework that will address the problems of African states must among other things first, be develop by Africans because they understand the nature of their problems, secondly, it must take the peculiarity of African societies into consideration. Thirdly it must be people oriented or people driven as well as welfare oriented. Lastly, it goals and objectives must be attainable and time bound. For instance, the African Union Agenda 2063 is a right step in the right direction but the fear is that if the set of African leaders today have the political will and resources to pursue the agenda 2063 that will address the challenges of governance, resource utilization, instability and further enhanced regional integration of the continent.

## REFERENCES:

1. AUC (2015); Agenda 2063: *The Africa we want*. Final Edition, April 2015.
2. BBC Focus on Africa (2011); “*Lobbying Who Does Africa’s Bidding in the West?*” October- December 2011
3. CODESRIA-TWN-AFRICA Report (2002) *Africa and Development Challenges of 21st Century being a Conference on Africa’s Development Challenges in the Millennium* Accra 23-26 April, 2002. (Council for Development and Social Science Research in Africa) and the Third World Network Africa (TWN-Africa)
4. Ella Abatan & Yolanda Spies, (2016), *African solutions to African problems?* The AU, R2P and Côte d’Ivoire, South African Journal of International Affairs, 23:1, Pp.21-38 available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2016.1153516>
5. Ero Comfort, (2013), *The Problems with “African Solutions”* International Crisis Group, available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/problems-africansolutions>
6. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/burundi/burundi-dangerousthird-term> Burundi: *A Dangerous Third Term report* 235 / Africa 20 May 2016.
7. Hussein Solomon (2015); African solutions to Africa’s problems? African approaches to peace, security and stability, South African Journal of Military Studies, Vol 43, No 1.
8. Jackson, RH & Rosberg, CG. “*Why Africa’s weak states persist: The empirical and the juridical statehood*”. World Politics 35/1. 1982. Pp.19.
9. Quoted in Araoye op. cit., p. 15. 26 Quoted in Cilliers, J. “*Terrorism and Africa*”. Africa Security Review 12/4. 2003. 100.
10. Quoted in Smith, K.(2010) “*Has Africa got anything to say? African contributions to the theoretical development of international relations*”. The Roundtable: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs 98/402. Pp. 273–274.