

Appraisal of African Union's Transformative Objectives to the Africans: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

The need to revitalize the continental organisation in Africa is the reason behind the transformation of AU from OAU. The official inauguration of the AU on 9th July, 2002 marked the turning point in the Africa history from all sorts of political instability, insecurity, prevalent poverty rate, epidemic of deadly diseases, among others, which the continent had experienced under OAU. The AU's objectives emanated from the weakness of the OAU to strengthen the former. The study appraises AU for the mechanisms put in place to ensure peace, stability and development in the African continent. The research findings observe that measures introduced by AU to address the challenges confronting Africa which include – the replacement of Non-Interference Policy to Policy of Non-Indifference, Respect for Rule of Law, establishment of Peace and Security Council, formation of African Peer Review Mechanism, Abolition of Trade barriers among others has assisted in uniting the African continent. The study adopts functionalism theory to express the uniqueness of cooperation and unity towards ensuring stability and development in Africa. The importance of harnessing economic resources to ensure buoyant regional integration preached by the theory has made it relevant to the study. The research is a qualitative that uses both primary and secondary data sources. Interview method as primary source of data for this study was generated from professional views of respondents from Nigerian government parastatals and higher institutions of learning, and the interview data was thematically analysed with the aid of NVivo 10. The secondary data for this research was sourced through relevant materials such as books, journal articles, policy documents, and newspapers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed by Pan-Africanists for the purpose of uniting Africa and to promote self-independence in the continent. Notably among the prominent Pan-Africanists were Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Henry Sylvester-William, Herbert Macaulay, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah. The formation of OAU not only represent an important achievement recorded by the Pan-

Africanism movement, but also a monumental mark in the history of African continent (Obayiuwana, 2013). The idea behind the formation of a new continental organisation in Africa known as African Union (AU) came into being after noticing some lapses in its predecessor, the OAU. Although some might say OAU failed to achieve its objectives, they cannot ignore the fact that OAU helped in the abolition of apartheid and colonial rules (Apuuli 2016). Several meetings were held in Africa namely the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) popularly referred to as product of Kampala Movement of 1991, Algeria Summit of 1999, 35th Summit of Heads of State and Government of September, 1999 held in Sirte, Libya¹ and 36th Summit of OAU held in Lome, Togo.

At the 36th Summit held in Lome, Togo, the African leaders ratified the proposed draft of AU Constitutive Act for the new organisation. The formal ratification and approval of the Constitutive Act ushered in the official inauguration of AU as the new organisation and successor of OAU in Africa. This took place at OAU Summit of Heads of State and Government that was held on 9th July 2002 in Durban, South Africa where 53 African leaders were in attendance. The fusion of three projects initiated by Libya, Nigeria and South Africa (see Akinsanya, 2014) facilitated the transformation of OAU to AU. These three projects were: (a) Libyan quest for Pan-African unity; (b) Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) promoted by Nigeria; and (c) African Renaissance project sponsored by South Africa. The three projects have assisted in ensuring successful transformation of OAU to AU.

Edo and Olanrewaju (2012), Wapmuk (2014), Solomon (2015) and Bamidele (2016) stated that the main aim of AU is to fulfil the objectives that its predecessor failed to realize. This has canvassed for the initiatives and transformative measures put in place by the AU to ensure stability and development in Africa. Thus, it is against backdrop that the study appraises the transformative objectives of the AU to the African continent. The transformation of OAU to AU has become a general phenomenon which scholars such as Bujra (2002), Dunmoye (2002), Thiam (2005), Lamidi (2010), Edo and Olanrewaju (2012), Akinsanya (2014), Wapmuk (2014) have written extensively on it. However, it was discovered that little attention was focus on the transformative objectives of AU as the successor of OAU in African continent which has accounted for limited study in the area. Hence, the study aims to explore of what are the AU's transformative objectives, and how has the transformative objectives of AU benefited Africans.

The study makes use of functionalism theory to appraise the AU's transformative objectives to Africans. The theory therefore emphasized on the role of international organizations in addressing common problems and providing for human welfare and basic requirement (Rosamond, 2000). As an integration theory, functionalism perceives international cooperation to be the first stage in the integration process which will allow people to pool their efforts to achieve a common objective (Rosamond, 2000). The idea was seen through the pan-Africanists motive of founding OAU to unite African countries to be able to present for common front in the international community. At the same time the transformation of OAU to AU with the quest for regional economic integration considering the political imperative through the resources of endowed countries in Africa such as: Nigeria, Libya and South Africa in order promotes socio-economic development in Africa has equally make the theory to be relevant in the African context. The concern is that Africa is rich in natural, mineral and human resources which need

¹ The 35th Summit of Heads of State and Government held on September, 1999 at Port City of Sirte, Libya was popularly referred to as Sirte Declaration.

to be exploited to achieve much needed development in the region. This is in line with the position of functionalist that, it is less likely that countries would go to war when they are involved in doing things together.

2. METHOD

The study utilized literature related to metamorphosis of continental organisation specifically on the OAU to AU. The study was based on qualitative approach that makes use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data comprises of the professional views granted by experts. These experts include diplomats, academicians, senior civil servants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the relevant embassies. The informants were considered as suitable because of their experience and involvement in the topic under investigation. As posited by Obikeze (cited in Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2006), in-depth interview method of gathering data assists to gain access to structures, processes and it can eventually lead to the discovery of unexpected phenomenon. While the secondary data source employed by the study comprise of published and unpublished material generated from library, archives, and search engines such as books, journal articles, newspapers, policy documents, among others.

3. DISCUSSION

The transformation of the continental organization in Africa was a symbolic in the history of Africa. This has made Obayiuwana (2013) and Wapmuk (2014) to have described such as been timely and particularly when the Africans need a union that can bring African States together. The main reason for transforming the OAU into the AU as opined by Edo and Olanrewaju (2012), Wapmuk (2014), Solomon (2015), and Bamidele (2016) was largely derived from the failure of the former to deliver its assigned objectives and goals that could provide greater benefits to the African continent as a whole, and its populations in particular. As earlier stated, the parameters of the OAU's functions were framed in accordance with a set of principles and expected norms stipulated in its Charter. These stipulations, however, had significantly restricted the ability of the Organization to effectively deal with a myriad of challenges that plagued the continent.

The AU intends to achieve its own set of objectives and adhere to the expected norms prescribed under its Constitutive Act. Both objectives and norm serve as a yardstick to measure or determine whether the AU can perform better than its predecessor (Boateng, Akamavi & Ndro, 2016). Having learnt the lessons from the failure of OAU to discharge its duty and attain its objectives, the Constitutive Act of the AU contains a range of objectives and purposes that are intentionally drafted to avoid making the same mistakes made by the former. However, it worth noting that Kimanyi (2015) is of view that it is too early to determine whether the objective of the transformation of OAU to AU has been achieved or not. Informant ABU1 stressed that:

“...the African Union was formed recently, so one cannot say either the objectives have been achieved or not. It is a gradual thing. It is a very gradual thing. It is becoming more effective now in terms of integration, but to go by whether the achievements or objectives of the Union have been achieved, it seems as if there is a goal post. It is a continuous process, and it is a learning process”

Similarly, another informant suggested that, *“yes, to specific levels. The intention of the change of the OAU to AU has yielded productive outcomes to the African continent”* (Informant

MFA3). Moreover, some informants were of similar opinion to the views above over the assessment of the transformation objectives of OAU to AU in Africa. Informant ABU2 stressed that:

“Well, one can say, not fully. But then it has been transformed when? It is still a relatively new organization 2002 or thereabout. So, it is too early to say the organization has achieved or not achieved. But they have started to achieve it”

From the forgoing, one can argue that the new continental institution in Africa, AU has achieved, to a considerable extent, especially the purpose of its establishment. The process of achieving its objectives might seem gradual, albeit it might also sound incorrect to describe the transformation objectives as not been achieved. Hence, the scholars considered it too early to judge whether the objectives of the OAU-AU transformation have been achieved or not (Wapmuk, 2014; Apuuli, 2016). Below are some of the achievements advanced from literature and supported by the views of professionals/experts participated in the during the field survey. Therefore, the formation of AU as a new organization in Africa paved way for the organization to have recorded symbolic achievements to the African continent.

3.1 From Non-interference Policy to Non-indifference Policy

One of the landmark achievements of the transformation of OAU to AU is the adoption of non-indifference policy by the latter that replaced the former’s policy of non-interference. Arguably, the non-indifference policy under the Constitutive Act of the AU repudiates the sacrosanct principle of non-interference enshrined in the OAU Charter (Sarkin, 2016). The latter, as stipulated in Article III, expressly prohibits the OAU and its members from interfering in the internal affairs of other member States (Warner, 2017). The adoption of non-indifference policy by the AU encapsulated a departure from the previous normative behaviours of defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States that were steadfastly pursued by the OAU and its member States. This opposite practice of behaviour clearly linked with its constitutive principle entrenched in Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act (African Union, 2002). It states that *“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 crime against humanity.”* Going by the introduction of this AU’s policy of non-indifference, one can argue that the policy has saved many African countries from experiencing many casualties during internal crisis.

The foreign policy postures of many African States, to a considerable extent, have been shaped by the adoption of AU’s non-indifference policy (Sarkin, 2016). This is particularly the case in the context of foreign policy involving its neighbouring States. It can be argued that no African State will totally ignore any event and crisis that transpired in its neighbouring countries. If it does, there is every possibility that such State will share the burden or calamity that might happen to its neighbour or of those around it. For instance, the issue of militancy and insurgency in Cameroon and Chad could have aggravated to the porosity of Nigeria’s border if the latter has failed to act fast (Babatola, 2012). The involvement of third party in another country’s domestic affairs arguably lauds major achievement of the AU over its predecessor. According to informant MFA2, *“the permission to interfere in the affairs of any of its members particularly when it has to do with the violation of human rights and constitution of member countries”* has assisted in maintaining peace and stability in Africa. He added that some government in Africa:

“Can indulge in the perpetration of atrocity against its own people, can indulge in ethnic maligning or genocide of activities without other countries feeling concerns and feeling compel to take actions at least to protect the interests of minority and prevent the human rights of the citizens of those countries”.

In attesting to the amendment of the non-interference policy to non-indifference Policy under the AU Constitutive Act as part of the achievement of the transformation objectives in Africa, an informant ABU2 observed that:

“Those doctrines or the principles of non-interference in internal affairs of member States which was one of the key pillars of the OAU was now amended in the Constitutive Act, which says that non-interference does not mean to be Indifference to massive violations of human rights. If a country or government in a country massively violates the human rights of its people then the African Union will intervene collectively”.

Therefore, the introduction of the policy of non-indifference in the AU Constitutive Act has empowered the organization to interfere in the domestic affairs of its members when gross abuse of human rights or its sorts is perceived (African Union, 2002). This equally gave States Such as Nigeria, justification to be self-committed to Africa’s peace, stability, and development, as well as the opportunity to exercise their role toward achieving the objectives of the AU.

3.2 Peace and Security Council (PSC)

The establishment of PSC is one of the successful outcomes that could be described as the achievement of the transformation of the OAU to AU. The PSC is a security organ of AU assigned with the responsibility of preventing, managing, and conflict resolution in Africa. The organ is one of the holding pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) which is the focus of the AU for the promotion of peace, security and stability in African continent (De Coning, Swelam, Singh & Rupesinghe, 2016). According to Alli and Wapmuk (2014), the PSC is *“a standing decision making organ”* and *“acts as a collective security and early warning arrangement to facilitate the timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situation in the continent”* (p.183). The idea of APSA as a mechanism for conflict prevention, peace support intervention and operation, peace building and peace-making was designed in Africa to provide solution to the continent. This idea further gave birth to what is known as the African Solution to African Problem (ASAP), Try Africa First (TAF), and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). The idea of PSC with its security tools such as APSA, R2P, and TAF, signify that Africa needs a collective forces or security to combat insurgence or curb crisis (Jordaan, 2017; Dauda, Ahmad & Keling, 2017). The formation of PSC for promoting the maintenance of peace and security in Africa was supported by all the informants of this study.

3.3 African Standby Forces (ASF)

The ASF is another achievement resulting from the transformation of the OAU to the AU. The reason behind the formation of ASF by the AU is to solve the problem of not having standing armies faced by its predecessor (Ibrahim, 2016). Article 13 of the AU Constitutive Act provided for the creation of ASF in Africa that can operate with the arrangement of five (5) sub-regions under the African continent. The five sub regional groups in Africa are ECOWAS, SADC, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), ECCAS, and the Arab Maghreb Union

(AMU), with their respective names ECOWAS Standby Force, SADC Standby Force, Eastern African Standby Force, ECCAS Standby Force, and North African Regional Capacity (Moller, 2009). The arrangement of standby forces designed by the AU, according to Sarkin, (2016), will allow for easy intervention and effectiveness in securing peace and stability by the forces in their respective regions. The idea of making use of a regional Standby Force to calm any instability in their respective locality has many advantages to the AU. Such benefits include: (i) it allows the organization to save both human and material resources to be incurred in maintaining peace on a certain conflict; (ii) it will also assist the Forces of that region to curb any instability with ease given that they are familiar with terrain of their region.

In addition to the views on the formation of Standby Force under the AU umbrella, an informant described this initiative as *“drawing lessons from success stories of region or sub-regions like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with ECOMOG”* (Informant NIIA1). The need for such forces was corroborated an Informant’s ABU2 views that:

“They (Africa) have gone to also trying to make a reality of the African Standby Forces which is supposed to be five brigades, one from the each of the regions of Africa: West Africa, Southern African, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Northern Africa. And these are supposed to be the brigades that will be on standby, so that the African Union, when they decide to intervene in either in a country where there is massively violation of human rights of their people or just to keep peace. Africa does not have to always rely on the United Nations or donor countries before it intervenes”.

The success recorded in Africa resulting from the establishment of the Standby Forces could also be attached to the amendment made to the non-interference policy which has been incorporated in the AU Constitutive Act. This legal provision allows other AU members to interfere in any African States whenever there is alleged grave abuse of human rights (African Union, 2002). The essence of non-indifference policy is to allow members of AU to be more concern over what happening in their surroundings/neighbouring countries. Such act of non-indifference promotes the spirits of oneness and cooperation in Africa and has invariably led to collective security in the continent.

3.4 Respect for the Rule of Law

The respect for the rule of law is another achievement recorded by the transformation of OAU to AU. The members of AU are abiding by the dictate of the Constitutive Act of the organization. In the opinion of Murithi (2014), member States are abiding by the rules of the Organization due to their awareness of the likely consequences if they act otherwise. This means that members of the AU are keeping to the rules of the organization either for compliance sake or for the fear of the likely sanction or penalty from the Union if they acted otherwise. For instance, under the Constitutive Act, any country who changes its government order than by Constitutional means will be suspended from the Union of the African Family. And this was applied not just to small countries like or relatively small countries like: Guinea, like Madagascar, it was applied to Cote d’voire and it was applied to even Egypt. As argued by an informants ABU2 and Unilorin that one of the reasons why military coup is not an option in countries like Nigeria is that, it is inconceivable that Nigeria will be suspended from ECOWAS and of course from the African Union as a must if it changes its government other than by the constitutional means, but that is arguable. The provision is there, if any country changes

government rather than the constitutional means, such is suspended from the African Family until it returns to democratic rule in which it will re-join the family. The avoidance of sanction among organization's members has indirectly inculcated the spirit of maintaining law and order not only for the AU but also for their respective countries. The respect for the constitution of the land and individual rights and freedom are parts of the requirement that make an environment to be politically stable (House, 2016).

3.5 Political Stability

The stability nature of the political sphere recorded in many African States has been attributed to the achievement of the OAU-AU transformation. Many scholars have argued that the adherence to the rule of law and respect for the constitution of the land breed development. This development in turn is capable of leading to political stability (Almond & Verba, 2015; House, 2016; Caselli & Tesei, 2016). The respect for the constitution and the protection of rights of the citizens promotes political culture and at the same time encourage people participation in the running of the State's affairs. Therefore, when comparing the level of political instability experienced in Africa prior to the formation of the OAU and after, it can be argued that stability in the African politics is one of the achievements of the transformation's objective.

The views above was attested to by an informant Unilorin that the adherence to the AU Constitutive Act and respect for human rights among African States constituted to the level of political stability experiencing in Africa today. He stressed that:

“The norms of democratic rule have gained more attraction largely because African countries are themselves committed to that principles and the response to internal conflict without been encumbered by the principle of non-interference which has also gone down now. Any African leader that has intention of flagrantly violating the human rights of its people for indulging genocides or ethnics glimpses will have to think twice because there will be no room for accommodation within the African Union contrary to the practice under OAU”.

Another informant also commented on the comportment and respect for the AU Constitutive among its members as one of the greater achievements towards realizing the objective of transforming the OAU into the AU. The informant argued that the report on cases of human rights violation has drastically reduced in view that the AU members are aware of the likely repercussion under the Constitutive Act of the organization if they do otherwise. As a result of the members' respect for the sanctity of the organization's constitution, the African citizens will be full of enthusiasm to participate in the political system of their respective State. This invariably promotes stability in African politics.

The view of informant MFA2 on provision and permission of a continental organization to interfere in the affairs of any of its members, particularly when it has to do with the violation of human rights and constitution of member countries that negate the policy of the Union was described as “key holding the political stability”. Similarly, informant BUK equally supported the arguments that the transformation objective has been achieved through the enforcement of the Constitutive Act of the organization on its members. Complementing the Article 4(p) of the AU Constitutive Act, an Informant ABU2 posited that:

“The Constitutive Act have said any country who changes its government order than by Constitutional means will be suspended from the Union of the African Family.....The provision is there, if one changes its government rather than the constitutional means, such will be suspended from the African Family until it returns to democratic rule in which you will re-join the family”.

Hence, the views above have indicated that the attainment of political stability in Africa through the formation of AU has been achieved in Africa. The achievement of political stability in Africa has arguably promoted the level of unity and integration among nation-States in African continent (Almond & Verba, 2015).

3.6 Unity and Integration

Promotion of unity, cooperation and integration among African States is another achievement of the transformation’s objective in Africa. Although the OAU tried to unite Africa during the existence of different ideological blocs in the continent, the unity was later washed away by the incessant conflicts and crises in the continent which the OAU was unable to curb (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2014). The emergence of the AU as a new continental organization has fostered unity and cooperation among African States which invariably led to the integration in the continent. Many of the informants believed the AU being the successor of the OAU has promoted the cooperation and oneness among African States. The zeal of working together among African States was high after the transformation of the organization due to the level of their cooperation and willingness. Therefore, African continent is an indivisible entity. The idea of integration in Africa as a result of the transformation and the readiness of African States to work together as a team and at the same time harness their resources together for a common goal led to the economic progress in Africa (Wapmuk, 2014). One of the reasons elucidated above for the collapse of the OAU in the continent was due to its inability to achieve economic objective for the Africa. Hence, the integration among African States has promoted the level of their cooperation and desire to pool their resources together in order promote the African economy.

3.7 Economic Progress

The African economic growth and development is one of the objectives achieved through the transformation of the OAU to the AU. In fact, it has been one of the reasons behind this transformation (Wapmuk, 2014). It is undeniably that African continent is endowed with variety and abundant natural resources (Venables, 2016). In fact, Africa’s resources are one of the factors that attracted Western imperialism movement in Africa (Pickett, 2017). Hence, evidence to this could be found on the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa’s reports that, the African economy in the 1990’s under the OAU has recorded tremendous decline. For instance, between 1990 to 1994, the African economy declined by 1.3 percent which had also impacted on Africa’s GDP to decline by 2 percent annually (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2016; Boston Analytics, 2016; UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2017). However, since the transformation of the OAU to AU, the African economy has recorded 3.4 percent increase annually up till 2017 (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2017). This has made the African Development Bank (ADB) to describe the African economy as the world’s second fastest growing economy and estimate that by 2018 the growth is expecting to have increased by 4.3 percent (World Bank, 2017).

The OAU in general was unsuccessful in its efforts toward improving the African economic status, such as through the adoption of LPA in 1980, the Abuja Treaty of 1991, the formation of AEC in Africa, among others (Wapmuk, 2014). All these economic plans or projects yielded very little or no fruitful result to Africa. The deterioration of African economy during the OAU has made the African leaders to think on how best to improve the organization to achieve the economic benefits for the continent. An informant ABU1 pointed out that:

“The idea of rating regional economic blocs, one can call it sub-regional economic blocs like: ECOWAS, South African Economic Community, East African Economic Community, Maghreb Union, Central African Economic Community. These are to be the building blocks of the African Economic Community. That is the idea of the African Union. That these sub-regional economic blocs will form the building blocks, the plans for a collective economic union in Africa. And most of these economic things have been working well, they have been doing well: West African Community, East African Community, Central African Community is also trying. Only the Maghreb Union has not been up and doing because of the crises between Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria”.

Notwithstanding regional economic blocs, such as ECOWAS that was formed during the existence of the OAU, the emergence of AU in Africa has made regional economic blocs in the continent to be more energetic and vibrant towards achieving their respective economic goals. In a similar vein, informant Abuja stated that *“the ease at which the business is being moved or invest in African countries could be traceable to the vision of African Union”*. Furthermore, informants NIIA1 and ABU2 established the fact that *“the NEPAD was formed in order to really or begin to concentrate more on economic matters, comprehensive African Agricultural Programmes”* and *“development of infrastructure and all of that rather than always on political matters”* in the continent. Consequently, going by what was argued by informants MFA1 and MFA3 that *“unlike before, when the continent is having zero consideration for economy progress and development of Africa”*, it is arguable that African continent under AU has recorded significantly economic progress. The formation of the AU has greatly revamped the African economic system from its deteriorating state through the employment of economic driving motivational tools. This is evident with the annual economic growth of one-third of the Sub-Saharan African countries is between by 4 to 6 percent (World Bank 2017). It is expected that the African countries will become the major driving forces in the global economy (Boston Analytics, 2016).

3.8 African Peer Review Mechanism

The introduction of African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is another indispensable economic tool used for monitoring the level of economic development and progress recorded through the implementation of NEPAD in Africa. In upholding its commitment to promote and facilitate economic growth and development in Africa, Nigeria was one of the five AU members to assent to the APRM at the meeting of NEPAD Heads of State together with the Committee on Implementation in Abuja on 9 March 2003 (Wapmuk, 2014; Alli & Wapmuk, 2014). The APRM was formed with the aim to promote economic, socio-political, and good governance among the African States. Informant NIIA1 attributed the formation of APRM to the objective of OAU-AU transformation in Africa. Similarly, Informant ABU has testified that

the creation of APRM under the AU is an achievement of the transformation objective. He stated that:

“The APRM which was done under the auspices of the African Union...The APRM is like having some criteria to assess governance in African States. So, they have the headquarters in Midrand in South Africa where they sent experts to African States that are ready who have signed to this thing, in order to see how they are growing, to see to some indications or indicators to good governance, rural development, freedom of the press and a lot of things. So, those ones will be graded to assess them, they will now produce the result to the Summit of Heads of States of Africa. Nigeria has done its own and got a fair mark within mark of 13th. Some African States are not doing it. So, members of the Union will go to countries with their experts and check on how they have been doing in terms of governance, good governance in order to grade and they will submit the reports to the Summit of all Heads of African States of the African Union”.

Informant BUK also posited that *“the introduction of African Peer Review Mechanism is another achievement of AU. The APRM is charged with the responsibility of monitoring socio-economic development in the African continent in line with NEPAD”*. The view was supported by informant UniJos that *“the APRM resembles having a few criteria alright to evaluate administration in African States”*. It also assisted the AU to evaluate the level of socio-economic development going among its member States. This assessment serves as signal to the continental organization on the performance of its members and it determine when the AU will come in for supports either technically, financially, or materially (Akinsanya, 2014).

3.9 Abolition of Trade Barriers

The idea behind the abolition of trade barriers among the AU members is to promote smooth transaction and movement of goods and services in the continent. It is permissible for all member States of the AU to invest in any part of African continent. According to the Article 13 under the function of the Executive Council stipulated in Constitutive Act of the AU, members can own goods and trade among one another. Conscious on the fact that national economies have rarely isolated each other, certain African nations have adopted economic policies to encourage investment, uninterrupted flow of trade, and high employment in their own country. One such policy aimed at encouraging investment is tax holiday incentive, which is given to investors exempting them from paying tax on their investments for certain period (Akpan, 2014; Kyambalesa & HOUNGNIKPO, 2016). For instance, in 2002, the government of Tanzania introduced Export Processing Zones (EPZ) where businesses are exempted from corporate tax for the first ten years. This is the reason why Nigerian products or goods are widely found in Ghanaian markets and vice versa. While attesting to the fact that abolition of trade barriers will promote higher level of investment in Africa, an informant UniAbuja argued that:

“Obstacle to movement of goods and services as one can see, the like of Dangotes and some others, are in all over other countries doing one thing or the other. That is why one can move to some other countries without taken Visa. One cannot detach African Union from regional organizations like ECOWAS, so the ease at which the business is being moved or invest in African countries could be traceable to the vision of African Union. So, one cannot say that everything has been achieved.

Quite frankly the propensity for them to get close to actualizing that missions and goals is there”.

This assertion is further supported by informant BUK that stated “*while doing this among the economic regional organization like ECOWAS, economic or trade barriers that will hinder the smooth running of transacting business among African States was removed in order to boost the African economy”.*

However, contrary to the views above on the abolition of trade restriction, Bruton (2010) and Khoury & Prasad (2016) argued that the removal of trade barriers will likely affect the following which may also be harmful to the environment such as: (i) there will be greater demands for the imported goods which may rendered the receiving country to be irrelevant especially when the products are similar; (ii) it is capable of leading an environment into a dumping ground for out dated goods from other countries; and lastly, (iii) it may encourage the deposition of illicit goods or drugs which can jeopardize the mission of prohibiting the trade barriers. Hence, the same scholars further suggested that the idea of economic development through the removal of trade barriers could only be achieved if countries specialize on what they can produce locally with the available local raw materials.

4. CONCLUSION

The transformation of the OAU to the AU was carried out to revamp the former, with high expectation that this newly formed continental organization is be able to deliver a range of objectives benefiting the African continent. The strength of the AU has been built on the foundation of the identified weaknesses of the OAU, which were adjusted by the AU as its area of strength. The objectives entrenched in the OAU Charter include African liberation, decolonization, eradication of racism and apartheid. Nevertheless, its inability to achieve other objectives, most notably addressing issues such as economic stagnation, insecurity, health pandemic, poverty, and human rights violation among others, canvassed for its eventual organisation and operational restructure, leading to its replacement by the AU.

The reasons for the OAU-AU transformation were considered by many scholars as being adequate and genuine for a new continental organization to emerge in Africa. Since, the emergence of the AU as the successor of the OAU, the continent has been witnessing changes ranging from economic progress, political stability, socio-cultural development and security protection for Africans and non-African residing in the continent. This was made possible by the AU owing to the inclusion of economic mechanisms such as the NEPAD, the APRM and abolition of trade barriers. The economic measures prohibited rifts and barriers that are making it difficult for business transaction among African countries that consequently promote African economies and trades. Similarly, the formation of security mechanisms such as Peace and Security Council (PSC), Rresponsibility to Protect (R2P), African Standby Forces (ASF), African Solution to African Problems (ASAP), Try Africa First (TAF) and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) are put in place to attend to issues that may lead to conflicts among African States. Formation of the security mechanism by AU has drastically reduced the prevalent of chaos and crises in Africa. This has also assisted the AU in ensuring peace and stability in the continent which in no small measure made the AU a functional organization compare to its predecessor.

Above all, the achievement of the objective of transformation of AU from OAU could be credited to the Constitutive Act of the AU. The Act provides for needs of African economic to develop, the need for cooperation among member States and the need for stability in the continent. The peace and stability need in Africa are adequate and well taken care of under the Constitutive Act, particularly Article 4(h) which stated that, “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 crime against humanity” (African Union, 2002). Therefore, the organization is empowered to intervene in the affairs of any of its members during crisis to maintain peace to avoid instability in the continent. Unlike its predecessor, the AU Constitutive Act has assisted the organization greatly towards the organization’s performance in Africa. These innovation by the AU has directly and indirectly transformed the continent and at same time given hope of a better future for Africans and the African continent.

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