

REGIONAL COOPERATION AND ITS DYNAMICS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POLICY ISSUES BY  
EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICAN UNION.

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**ABSTRACT**

The need to advance a cogent panacea to the perennial challenge of development on the African continent cannot be overemphasized. Thus, the collaboration among African States under the international cooperation for development within the framework of the African Union is an option with enormous prospects **precisely because it is an effort that aims at sustainable development.** This position is further corroborated by an examination of the nature and character of the European Union as well as its operations hitherto, particularly on three main sectors, Agriculture, Infrastructural Development and Trade. While the African Union typifies an imitation particularly in institutionalized form, its promoters ignore the centrality of the nature of the State and the need to first strengthen its essential capacity to effectively and efficiently benefit from the gains of regional cooperation. This paper therefore argues that the African Union as presently constituted lacks the requisite capacity to stimulate the desired development on the continent irrespective of adopted policies and existing institutions. Consequently, a reengineering of the state and its institutions should be the first step in this direction.

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**Keywords:** Regional Cooperation, European Union, African Union, Policy Issues, Agriculture, Trade  
Development,

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of regional cooperation for development has assumed some ambiguous proportion, with the geographical and allied contiguity of the participating states, standing as the major defining characteristics. The central components of regional cooperation for the development include joint projects, mutual assistance and common position to external issues, among others. The fundamental philosophy that informs regional cooperation is mainly the need to provide solution(s) to the challenges of development in the areas of security, trade, infrastructure and agriculture, *to ensure sustainable development*. (Vanheukelom, 2016). More instructively again, is the potency of regional cooperation for development as a tool for the emancipation of countries in the periphery of the global capitalist system. . In other words, it is pertinent to mention that states do not enter into cooperation, particularly on a regional basis, for the sake of it, *but for sustainable development in the future, which has always been the underlining factor for such an exercise*. It is within this context, that this paper evaluates some policy areas of the activities of the EU and compared to the AU.

## THE EU AND THE AU; SOME BACKGROUND.

The EU as a framework for regional cooperation for development started as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The EU has become an organic supranational institution with founding tenets such as political (democracy) and economic liberalism (free market). Central to the operations of the EU are a number of organs such as the European Council of Ministers which is "... the epicentre of EU decision-making... the institutional heart of decision-making in the EU" (Lewis, 2007: 155), the Committee of Permanent representatives (COREPER), the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the Court, the European Central Bank, among others. Cooperation among EU member States is further reflected in a number of policies that are geared towards the achievement of set goals and objectives. These policies include the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Cohesion Policy which incorporates the Cohesion fund and Structural funds (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, e.t.c.), all now known as the European Structural and Investment Fund, as well as the Single Market Act (Single European Act).

While the EU stands proudly as the most advanced regional organization in the world (Rosamond, 2002: 498), there are some Eurosceptics among its member States, those who argue against increased integration particularly in its institutionalized form as the European Union. Those with this view believe that integration weakens national identity and the institutions of the State, which to them are the major obstacle to the activities of the European Union. The recent *Brexit* case, as well as the current trend in France in the buildup to the last presidential elections, are worthy of note.

The AU, on the other hand, was preceded by the OAU but now represents the framework for political cooperation and economic integration for **African countries, in order to achieve some sustainable development goals**. Established in 2002 to supplant the OAU which, according to African leaders, had outlived its usefulness, the AU has its prime objectives as the advancement of a pan-African position on issues in the international system, increase political and economic integration among member States, the promotion of democracy, increased

collaboration with Regional Economic Communities (RECs), among others. To achieve these objectives, a number of institutions were established such as the Assembly comprising the Head of States of all AU countries, the Executive Council, the AU Commission, pan-African parliament, Specialized Technical Committees, the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, AU Court of Justice, among others. The AU has further formulated some policies that are aimed at engendering development, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development which is aimed at transforming the continent and delivering dividends such as the eradication of poverty, among others. Other policies of the AU include the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, African Economic Community, Continental Free Trade Area, Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, among others.

### **THE EU AND AU; SOME COMPARATIVE POLICIES.**

One dimension to regional cooperation for development within the EU and the AU is the focus on three conspicuous sectors namely; Agriculture, Infrastructural Development and Trade. Requisite policies have been advanced by the EU and the AU to maximally exploit these sectors for the purpose of regional cooperation for development and to achieve its primary goal which is the accomplishment of mutual development goals (Siitonen, 1990).

A thorough analysis of the EU and the AU reveal contrasting fortunes in the various sectors. The reasons for these discrepancies can be situated in the nature of the adopted policies by both organizations, their instructional framework and the actors, particularly the State.

### **AGRICULTURE.**

For the agricultural component of its regional cooperation for development, EU member nations agreed to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1962, under the precursor of the EU, the European Economic Community (EEC). The primary goals on which the policy is anchored include the achievement of food security, provision of support for farmers, deregulation of the food market, among others (European Union, 2012: 3). As a reflection of the protectionist nature of the policy, the CAP is aimed at providing preferential treatment for homemade agricultural produce; in order to stimulate the domestic market for such goods.

The success of the policy, thus far, has ensured that the EU ranks as the highest exporter of agricultural produce in the world at the cost of \$585 billion for 2015 and a share of 37.1% of the global agricultural export. Critical to the CAP is the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund which provides financial resources to boost the agricultural industry by supporting increased production of agricultural produce in terms of buying and storing surplus produce, encouraging export, technological development and environment conservation.

The AU on the other hand, has the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as its major propeller of the agricultural aspect of its regional cooperation for development. Launched at the AU Summit held in Maputo, Mozambique, in July 2003, the CAADP seeks to revitalize the continent's agricultural

sector to engender agricultural development and self-sustenance. This is based on the belief that Africa cannot feed her population and she also lacks the capacity to sustain herself (Ikerd, 2008). The programme is based on four pillars namely land and water management, rural infrastructure for market access, agricultural research as well as increasing food supply. Critical to the success of CAADP is an investment plan of \$251 billion and at least 10% of the budget of African countries devoted to the agricultural sector.

As argued by Vanheukelom (2016), the reality is that AU member States give halfhearted support to the CAADP because of the support for agriculture from some external donors. Focusing on Nigeria's 2016 budget, N75.8 billion was allocated to the agricultural sector constituting a paltry 1.25% of the total expenditure. This thus raises some questions on the commitment of Nigeria as a frontline State towards achieving the goals of the CAADP. The defectiveness of the CAADP is also evident in the influence of external factors such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), especially on the CAADP Framework Document and its implementation. The influence of FAO erodes the independence of the CAADP as a panacea to Africa's agricultural challenges and this the influence the FAO has consistently played in perpetuating the dependency of third world countries in the global capitalist system.

#### **INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The infrastructural development programme of the EU is located in the framework of the structural funds particularly the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). These funds are primarily designed to reduce economic, environmental and social problems in urban and rural areas with special treatment given to naturally disadvantaged areas (e.g. remote, mountainous or sparsely populated areas) (Keijzer, et al. 2014). Against this background, over 2, 000km of roads have been built and 7, 000km of roads have been renovated within the territories of EU member States, particularly for less developed regions located in Poland, Romania, Estonia, Slovakia, among others. According to European Union (2014), the ERDF has provided funds to improve the capacity of Slovakian healthcare sector by providing increased facilities such as medical equipment, beds. (European Union, 2014). In order to improve the productive capacity of member States, the fund has accorded ample preference for science and technology under the Research and Technical Development Infrastructure (RTDI) scheme. For instance, in Czech Republic, more than 50 centres of excellence and science and technology parks have been established (European Union, 2014).

The AU adopted the Programme for Infrastructure Development (PIDA) at the 18<sup>th</sup> AU Summit held on 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2012, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to engender intra-continental infrastructural development. For the period of 2012 – 2020, an estimated cost of \$68 billion has been identified to provide 51 infrastructure projects across the continent, and a further \$360 billion for an extended timeline till 2040. These infrastructural projects cut across different sectors such as energy (\$40.3 billion), transport (\$25.4 billion), water resources (\$1.7 billion) as well as information and communication technology (\$0.5 billion).

However, the dialectical conundrum faced by the PIDA is its dependence on private sector financing, a sector that was excluded from the formulation stage of the programme (Vanheukelom, 2016: 41). This thus explains

the impediment PIDA projects face as at 2017 where only 9 out of 51 infrastructural projects (17.6%) are at the implementation stage (Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, 2017)

## **TRADE**

The indispensability of uninhibited trade and movement of human, material and financial resources to the achievement of the goals of regional cooperation for development particularly on regional basis cannot be overemphasized. This thus explains the importance accorded to the Single European Act (SEA) of the EU whose origin dates back to the need to stimulate the regional economy to engender self-sufficient growth in the aftermath of the Second World War (The Treaty of Rome, 1957). The SEA which was formally adopted in 1986, and reinforced by the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, Nice Treaty of 2000, is based on four principles namely; the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital. The effect of this policy is conspicuously evident in the increased export profile of the EU, the employment opportunities created, the ease of migration, increased foreign direct investment into member economies, among others. It is pertinent to mention that the SEA policy of the EU is firmly anchored on liberalism and its tenets such as private ownership of the means of production, privatization, deregulation and the restricted role of the State.

On the other hand the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) policy of the AU encompasses the trade and migration component of its regional cooperation for development efforts. The policy adopted at the 18<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Head of States and Governments in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2012, aims at engendering a smooth flight of material, capital and human resources establish a customs union. Hitherto, the policy has remained botched as evident in, for instance, the failure to meet the 2017 target of the commencement of the free trade area. The success of the CFTA largely depends on the improvement of the productive capacities of African economies which are mono-cultural and lacking forward and backward linkages. African economy also lacks the requisite infrastructures in sectors such as transport, energy, ICT, and has not resolved the currency puzzle.

## **THE EU AND THE AU.**

Beyond the above three policies, the defectiveness of the AU is evident in its weak institutional capacity. Article 23 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000) provides for sanctions for defaulters in financial responsibility to the AU such as the withdrawal of representation rights. However, this principle has not been invoked to the letter. This indifference among member States also serves as an obstacle in other spheres as AU countries are slow to implement joint decisions. For instance, only 41 countries have implemented CAADP as at 2015. Another important aspect of the AU that raises concern is the constant rhetoric of popular participation. Member States of the AU have not solved the impasse of popular participation at the domestic level and that is because state operations are carried out to the benefit of a few (elite class) rather than the pursuit of the general good. The problem of popular participation at the domestic level weakens the capacity and efficiency of a pan-African parliament in the context of regional cooperation for development. In this regard, Sesay (2008) asserts that “the African Parliament would not mean much to a people who, by and large, still do not have much say in the choice of those who govern them” (Sesay, 2008: 22). The pan-African parliament will continue to remain a puppet,

for as long as it is anchored on the flawed democracy in practice all over the continent. Thus, the inorganic nature of the AU is central to evaluating its capabilities. According to Sesay (2008),

While the AU has put in place an impressive array of new institutions and organs, such as the Peace and Security Council, African Parliament, the Court of Justice, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and the Financial Institutions, many of them do not seem to follow a logic that is informed by the political and economic reality of the continent and member states, as well as past experience. Thus, the new institutions and organs represent at one level, impersonations of organizations in other parts of the world that bear no direct relevance to the African continent's historical, socio-economic, political and cultural development (Sesay, 2008: 21).

The above statement aligns with the nub of Ake's (1982) argument regarding the debilitating impact of Western values, institutions, methodology, among others, on the status quo across the third world particularly the African continent. As a manifestation of the nature of the AU, Babarinde (2007) draws direct equivalence between the institutions of the EU and the AU such as the AU's Assembly of Head of State and Government, the Executive Council, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC), the Commission, Court of Justice and the Parliament, which are reflections of the components of the EU such as the European Council, Council of Ministers, Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC), EU Commission, Court of Justice and the Parliament respectively (Babarinde, 2007). Again, Laporte and Mackie (2010) argue that a major difference between both organizations is that, "unlike the integration of the EU, which from the outset was built on strong economic foundations, the process of African integration is primarily a political process" (Laporte and Mackie, 2010: 16).

Babarinde (2007) also identifies the number of AU countries as its major obstacle, the obvious obstacle, when the AU is contrasted with the EU which started with six original members (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherland and West Germany) and its incorporation of new members on the basis of set conditionalities. However, in addition to the large membership of the AU and their institutional weakness, the provision of a framework which organizes the member States on a regional basis, backed by different and strong ideological commitment is instructive. The AU is ideologically rudderless. The importance of a continental ideology cannot be overemphasized particularly on the basis of legitimation and integrating functions (Enemuo, 1999). Another challenge of the AU is its overdependence on external funding which, according to Bossuyt (2010), has the potential of derailing the achievement of the goals and objectives of the organization (Bossuyt, 2010).

Kofi Annan at the inaugural meeting of the Assembly of the AU in Durban, South Africa, on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2002 asserts that the continent has overtime failed to pursue intra-continental pacts to a logical conclusion, with its leaders largely gratified with only unveiling one initiative or the other rather than its result (cited in Babarinde, 2007).

The fundamental causative factor of this catastrophe is the manifestation of the crisis of the African State. Within the efforts of the AU at regional integration which fits into the federal archetype a large proportion of

African States lack the infrastructural capacity (Mann, 1993) and are defectively institutionalized (Ziblatt, 2004), which adversely affects their governance capacity to maximally utilize the benefits of such integration particularly in terms of implementing decisions.

The capacity of the State stands as the crux of the differences between the EU and the AU as evident in the differences in the efficiency of the state institutions and organs, in the relevant policies and in the impacts of these organizations on member States within the framework of regional cooperation for development. The crisis of the African State is a reflection of the truncation of the evolution of the pre-colonial African societies in its pre-colonial majestic sophistication as described by Rodney (1973) and Onwubiko (1972). The States bequeathed in the aftermath of colonial rule have transformed into a means of production for the elite class which ensures that it cannot cooperate adequately (Arowosegbe, 2011).

Gana (1985) asserts that the singular event of the scramble and partition of the African continent by imperial powers at the 1884/85 conference held in Berlin led to the poor progress of the African State. And that is because, the State created in the aftermath of the Berlin conference had dual personality, as it was strong in terms of being an instrument to further imperialistic interest on the one hand, so it was weak on the basis of its features such as autonomy, revenue. (Gana, 198), on the other hand. This is why the NEPAD and indeed, the overall AU agenda are comfortable with majority of its financial resources gotten from abroad.

The crisis of the African State caused by the nature of the integration of these States into the global capitalist system led to dependency, poor leadership and poor resource management. These problems, can be situated within the indices that determine State behaviour such as security, hegemony, legitimation, autonomy and revenue generation (Young, 1988). The implications of these negative indices have obvious consequences on the nature and character of the State as well as on the performance of its functions. Most African States fit into Alavi (1972) characterization of overdeveloped State as there is no complementarity between the superstructures and the base of the society, which is why the base does not provide the requisite support for the superstructures because the African society has its base in the metropole within the framework of the global capitalist system. (Alavi, 1972), which constitute a major consequence on the capacity of the State to function well.

Lastly, the capacity of the AU to achieve the multitude of its shared goals has been limited by its juristic nature because that the entire architecture of the AU smacks of impersonation, devoid of a solid base in the continent's historical and contemporary existence (Sesay, 2008).

## **CONCLUSION.**

This paper focuses on regional cooperation for development *in order to achieve sustainable development*, within the EU and the AU and first laid the background as conceptual notes on both the organizations, to demonstrate the usefulness of regional cooperation for development particularly for third world countries. The idea of regional cooperation has metamorphosed in recent time to transcend geographical encumbrances and now

includes similarity of context and history. That is why this paper lays emphasis on regional cooperation for development, by focusing on the EU and the AU for empirical illustration.

The EU which represents a more sophisticated specimen of regional cooperation for development is discussed with particular attention paid to its institutions and policies. These institutions include the European Council of Ministers, the Committee of Permanent representatives (COREPER), the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the Court, the European Central Bank. The EU has come up with a number of policies which provide the necessary developmental benefits for member States particularly the less privileged among them. These policies include the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Cohesion Policy which incorporates the Cohesion fund and Structural funds

The AU also comes under the spotlight as a framework for regional cooperation for *development in an effort to achieve sustainable development*. The achievement of its set goals and objectives is based on a number of institutions such as the Assembly composed of the Head of States of all AU countries, the Executive Council, the AU Commission, pan-African parliament, Specialized Technical Committees, the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, AU Court of Justice, among others. Beyond the institutions, a number of policies to drive the development agenda of the AU include the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, African Economic Community, Continental Free Trade Area, Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa.

Without doubt, cooperation among member States stand as a potent panacea to the problems confronting the African States such problems like the rising level of poverty, unemployment, wanton violence, malnutrition, famine *all that militate against sustainable development efforts*. However, the nature and character of the framework of these cooperative efforts as well as the actors, particularly the State, requires apposite reengineering. It is pertinent to mention that resolving the challenges with the African States, such challenges that have variously been described as overdeveloped, weak, fragile or dependent States, is the first step in this direction. Consequently, African States need to possess the infrastructural and institutional capacity to maximally exploit the many benefits in regional cooperation for development *and achieve sustainable development*. Again, an important step in achieving this is for African States to renegotiate their interactions in the global capitalist system individually and collectively. This solution has been appropriately defined by Amin (1990) as delinking from the perennially exploitative core – periphery relations, which most African countries have been perpetually subjected to. It is important, therefore, to reorient the economy from being dependent on the core countries which is why the economy cannot grow thereby failing to provide the requisite support for the political system leading to an overdeveloped State (Alavi, 1972).

Furthermore, reengineering the State is also important in order to move it away from the basis of its origin as an instrument of accumulation and expropriation of profit. The present juristic State needs to be replaced with a more organic State to focus on the “... amelioration of social life and conditions for living for the generality of the citizens of the citizenry” (Ninalowo, A. 2007: 6). It is important to add that such a State is dependent on a number of

factors, like ideological commitment to the agenda of development, support of requisite institutions and the synergy between the bourgeoisie class and the ideology of development. This should be the first step in the process of ensuring the maximal reengineering of the state, in order for the state to develop the requisite infrastructural and institutional capacity to engage in interactions for the achievement of shared developmental goals at the continental level and also make it function well and enjoy the benefits of regional cooperation for development.

Another area that is central to the effectual operation of the AU is the role of the civil society. As organizations that perform the revered role of articulating and aggregating interests, there is need for these organizations to be duly incorporated into the workings of the AU particularly for the primary purpose of policy implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, on the basis of the lessons learned from the EU experience with regional cooperation for development, there is need for the AU to come up with a conscious developmental ideology that will serve as the source of cohesion among the AU member States.

Finally, there is an urgent need for Africa to rise up to its present challenges and come up with strategies for the development of the requisite capacity to maximally exploit the abundant benefits inherent in regional cooperation. Consequently, all efforts must be towards African development through regionalism or regional cooperation. Thus, efforts at reforming the AU is particularly urgent in order to stop her from depending on other continents of the world especially in terms of funding her projects by external donors, which only stand as provisional or cosmetic solutions that will continue to fail in addressing the root problems of the African continent.

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