

## **In Search of Greater Unity: African States and the Quest for an African Union Government**

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**Abstract** *The paper examines the notion of an African union government. It argues that the proposal for a 'union government' has often divided African leaders into different ideological groups. That notwithstanding, Africa leaders have had to bury their differences and embrace African unity in the fight against colonialism and racist rule. Under the OAU, these constituted the rallying point for African leaders until the last vestiges of colonialism and racist rule were crushed in South Africa in 1994. More than 40 years after the idea of unification of Africa was first suggested by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana; the Libyan leader, President Muammar Ghaddafi re-tabled the proposal. However, the machinations being employed by the Libyan leader to actualise his vision of a union government in Africa under a single president necessitate a deeper exploration of the idea. The paper observed that the challenges to achieving a union government are numerous at this time. In addition to problem of lack of integration at national levels and poor funding of the AU; Africa is presently faced with several problems bordering on violent conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment, economic development, diseases such as HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and bad governance amongst others. 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.*

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## **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.-Kwame Nkrumah ( 1963:12)

The idea of a Union Government for Africa is not so novel. As far back as 1963, President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana had argued that a federation of African states or a Union Government for Africa would be the most effective vehicle for Africa's economic, social and political emancipation. This proposal became an issue of serious debate between the Casablanca group led by Ghana, supporting immediate continental unification and Monrovia group led by Nigeria, favoring functional cooperation. The defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963 as a compromise between the two groups.

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.

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Libyan leader, President Muammar Ghaddafi re-tabled the proposal, first at the Extra-Ordinary Summit of the OAU held in Sirte, Libya on 9 September, 1999 and reaffirmed at the at the 4<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Abuja, Nigeria on 30 and 31 January, 2005. The grand debate on the union government was later held at the 9<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Accra, Ghana, from 1 to 3 July 2007.

The quest to achieve greater unity and solidarity among African countries and peoples necessitated, not only the transformation of the OAU, but also the creation of new structures to address the myriad of problems that confront Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These include the need to address crucial challenges bordering on violent conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment, economic development, diseases such as HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and bad governance amongst others. In the paper the notion of an African union government is explored. Are African states ready to unify under a single government? How have African leaders responded to the idea of the union government? What are the challenges for achieving a union government for Africa at this time? The paper also discusses the efforts at building continental unity over the years, in order to forge common grounds, in dealing with all the problems that are better solved only on a continental basis.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

The notion of a United States of Africa suggest the relocation of political power and authority, either partial or complete, from national governments to a supranational body or entities. Integration could be a means for achieving the establishment of a union government and vice versa. African integration has always been objectified on the quest for African unity, freedom and emancipation. How to achieve integration, however, has been a subject of serious debate between the federalists, realists, functionalists, and several other integration theorists.

The federalist approach to integration presupposes the coming together of diverse entities in order to create a

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central unit, to which they relinquish their sovereignty, thus leading to the creation of a supra-national entity (Mitrany, 1975:50). The state, according to Charles Pentland, possesses sufficient political authority and coercive and material power to satisfy the member states' need for collective defense; internal security and economies of scale; while still permitting them to maintain their individual identities and exercises local autonomy in appropriate fields of policy (Pentland, 1975:12). The federalists assumed that the establishment of political organization and processes that can address political issues has the goal of promoting greater unity and development (Adogamhe, 2008:5). Proponents of this approach to integration argue that this will fast-track the time table for addressing the most important political question of state sovereignty, which they view as an obstacle to Africa's integration. But the critical questions includes- are African states are ready to pursue genuine federalism in which case authority and power will be given to a supra-national authority or federal government? Are African states ready to view national interest as federal interests? The realists have expressed serious reservations about Africa's ability to sustain one territorial jurisdiction because the institutional and physical infrastructure to support this kind of arrangement is lacking. They have also pointed out the lack of political will on the part of leaders to surrender their exclusive claim to sovereignty.

Others have argued for a more gradual approach to integration. The functionalist approach to integration is one of the oldest arguments put forward that supports those that favour 'gradual incrementalism'. In the view of David Mitrany, the leading exponent of functionalism, integration could be effected through the creation of a transnational complex of economic and social organization. International activities could be organized around basic functional needs such as transportation, health and welfare necessities, cultural activities, trade and production. This process would not involve the surrender of national sovereignty, but would promote international peace and security. The basic rationale for the existence of any given political community, in Mitrany's conception, is welfare and security; and once a

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'moderate sufficiency of what people want and ought to have is given to them, they will keep peace'(Mitrany, 1975:51). African states emerging from colonialism were deeply concerned about preserving their sovereignty. This partly explains the choice of the functional approach to integration as the framework for the establishment of the OAU in 1963. The ideas thrown up by the functionalist approach has been taken up by the neo-functionalist school.

The neo-functionalist approach is the intellectual descendant of functionalism, because it builds on the work of Mitrany. It derives support from the experience and success of regional integration in the European Economic Community (now European Union). Based on the experience gained from European coal and steel community, and its companions-Eurotom and EEC- the neo-functionalists felt justified in reformulating the functionalist approach both as practise and theory. Based on their observations of the integration processes of these organisations, they argued that while certain functionalist dynamics were clearly at work, the progress of integration could not be explained simply in terms of technical self determination and the learning of habits of cooperation. This argument prompted Adogamhe (2008:6), to note that 'in a way, the neo-functionalists are not so much concerned with the attainment of integration as an end, but rather, with the understanding of why and how actual integration outcome occur'. In an attempt to draw lessons from the various perspectives, Jacob and Teune (1994:4-5) have argued that 'political integration generally implies a relationship of community...a feeling of identity and self awareness. As for the essence of this relationship, they stated that, 'the essence of the integration relationship is seen as collective action to promote mutual interest'.

### **The Pan African Search for Unity in Historical Perspective**

Pan Africanism as a political project of forging unity of all blacks of African descent dates back to the 1900s. Prominent pan-African personalities such as Henry Sylvester Williams, William Edward Burghardt Dubois, David Levering

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Lewis and many others were instrumental for the success of the early pan African congresses which was to serve as inspiration for the pan African movements on the African soil. With the representation of pan African delegates from Africa, the fifth pan African congress under Dubois was held in London in 1945. Africans in attendance who later became nationalist leaders included Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta and Tom Mboya of Kenya; Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania; and Peter Abrahams of South Africa (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002:3).

The pan African project of the unity and economic development of Africa through a single federation was a major goal of the pan African movement. Late Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and several other African leaders were committed to the idea of achieving continental unity through a single federation. Nkrumah's commitment to total liberation of Africa was demonstrated when he proclaimed at the time of Ghana's independence that, 'the independence of Ghana was meaningless unless it was linked up with the total liberation of the African continent' (Nkrumah, 1980:77). Not all African leaders had shared Nkrumah's vision of achieving continental unity through the creation of a union government for Africa. Before the establishment of the OAU, the pan African movement was fractured into ideological groups namely, the Casablanca and the Monrovia groups. Whereas the Casablanca bloc favoured political integration as a prerequisite for economic integration and a socialist path to economic development, the Monrovia group preferred a functionalist approach to African integration. The views of the latter were captured in a speech presented by the former Prime Minister of Nigeria, the late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa at the inaugural summit of the OAU in Addis Ababa in 1963:

There have been quiet a lot of views on what we mean by African unity. Some of us have suggested that African unity should be actualised by the political fusion of the different states of Africa, some of us feel that African unity could best be achieved by taking practical steps in economic, political and scientific and

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cultural cooperation and by trying first, to get the Africans to understand themselves before embarking on the more complicated and more difficult arrangement of political union (Balewa, 1964:159).

Despite the different views expressed by African leaders on African unity and how to actualise the goal, there was a common desire to move forward in dealing with common challenges which at that time centred on ending colonialism and preserving the independence of African states. Through the diplomatic initiative of Emperor Heile Selassie of Ethiopia, a compromise was reached between the two ideological groups which met in May 1963 in Addis Ababa to establish the OAU.

### **Pan African search for unity under the OAU**

The OAU was founded with the main objective of bringing African states together so that they can have stronger voice on the international stage and to build the political strength and solidarity necessary for the prosecution of the anti-colonial struggles to free the African states still under the yoke of colonialism and racist rule. The first test for the OAU states' solidarity to deal with colonialism was the situation in southern Africa. These included the apartheid in South Africa, Namibia, the racist Ian Smith regime in Southern Rhodesia, arm struggles against Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique. With respect to the Southern Rhodesia case, independent African countries were called upon to bury their differences and assist the people of Rhodesia.

The Foreign Ministers of the OAU member states decided on 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, 1965 to cut diplomatic relations with Britain and to use force to crush the illegal Smith regime, if Britain failed to end the revolt. But before the expiration of the ten-day ultimatum, some African countries had already changed their minds. Upper Volta, Tunisia, Libya and morocco, questioned the wisdom of the OAU decision. Ethiopia and Kenya decided they will not implement the decision. However, Guinea was the first

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country to cut off diplomatic relations with Britain in 1965. Nigeria called a meeting to address the situation. Ghana, Mali, UAR, Mauritania, Congo Brazzaville followed suit. Though the OAU states could not agree on a common ground to deal with the problem in Rhodesia, but that did not mean that they had drifted away from the aim of unity. Nzungola-Ntalaja (2002:8) observed that the fragility of the new states was such that even the Bandung principle of 'positive neutralism or non-alignment' was difficult to implement because they needed the support of the super powers.

Though the African states were not as committed to as they should be to the OAU, they could not disregard the organisation either. The OAU had considerable authority in legitimising, through collective decision of its membership certain positions on controversial issues that affected African unity. The various liberation movements against colonialism and racial regimes such as Liberation Front of Mozambique (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*)- FRELIMO in Mozambique; Zimbabwe African National Union-ZANU and Zimbabwe African Peoples Union- ZAPU in Rhodesia; Africa National Congress -ANC in South Africa, African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde- PAIGC in Guinea Bissau; The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola*)- FNLA and Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*)-MPLA in Angola; could only make significant impact in the liberation struggles based on the support of the OAU.

In addition to the colonial struggles, the OAU also played significant roles as a stabilising factor in the search of African unity. It promoted the settlement of a number of territorial and other political conflicts between African states. It helped to stop armed conflict on the borders of Algeria and Morocco, Somalia and Ethiopia, and to reduce tension on the borders of Somalia and Kenya, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon and in some cases to normalise relations between these countries. To maintain peace, the OAU generally adopted the position that all inherited colonial boundaries should be maintained and that all disputes should be peacefully settled between African states (Alimov, 1973:62).

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Though the OAU made efforts to address boundary and other problems between neighbours, the organisation performed weakly in the area of internal conflict resolution due to institutional weakness stemming from the organisation's charter. Two of the most binding principles to which member states were committed to include sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other member states. The aim of the non-intervention principle was to safeguard state security, but it has worked against peace and stability in the region, as member states could only intervene on the invitation of a member state. It also became a cover for the excesses of autocratic and despotic leaders. It was thought that things were changing for the better in the 1990s, particularly with the adoption of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in 1993, in Cairo Egypt. The aim was to give the organisation a role to play in internal conflict (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002:3). However, the mechanism was not activated to prevent or at least to arrest genocide in Rwanda in 1994, the heavy loss of lives, population displacement and humanitarian crisis in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan and the collapse of the state of Somalia. Lamenting the performance of the mechanism, Ambassador Sam Ibok, then Director of the OAU's Political Affairs Department noted in 1999 that:

Even though the OAU and its Charter came into existence as a continental framework for the promotion of the African collective will to ensure collective security and collective development, we have been unable in over thirty years to craft a comprehensive security agenda of the continent. This is in spite of the establishment of a continental Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

It became imperative on African leaders that the OAU and its charter were inadequate to address the challenges confronting Africa at that time. At the same time the continental organisation needed to be repositioned to address the challenges posed by globalisation, especially if the continent was to shed-off the 'afro-pessimism' associated

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with her especially in the 1990s. According to Zdenek Cervenka (1977:18):

There are times in the live of human institutions when a factor or a combination of factors not only brings out a the strengths and weaknesses of that institution, but pointedly makes the necessity for restructuring of that institution a matter of urgent consideration if that institution is to continuously serve the purpose of its creation.

Many factors actually brought out the weakness of the OAU and underscored the necessity for its transformation. First, the end of the cold war and rivalries between the West and East, led to retreat from Africa. Hence, it became obvious to African leaders that only a united Africa could remain relevant in the international system (Kawonishe, 2002:89). The second factor is the failure of Breton Wood Institutions (IMF, World Bank, WTO) to alleviate poverty and promote meaningful development in Africa. Despite many attempts by international economic bodies such as Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Development Bank (ADB), which collaboratively developed initiatives such as the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER), African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme etc, not much progress was been achieved (Kouassi, 2007:11).

Another factor which exposed the weakness of the OAU was the debt situation in Africa. As at 2004, external debt of Africa states stood at US\$ 330 billion in nominal terms, equivalent of fifty percent of the continent's GDP (Mkwezalamba and Chinyama, 2007:6). At the same time, there was considerable decline in foreign aid and investment coming into the continent. Official aid had dropped from US\$ 17.9 billion in 1992 to US\$ 10.8 billion in 1999. Foreign investment had also remained modest totaling US\$ 7.3 billion in 2000 that is equivalent of four percent of aggregate Foreign Direct Investment flows of US\$ 178 billion in the developing world.

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The collapse of apartheid in South Africa gave additional impetus for the transformation of OAU. The achievement actually marked the end of an historical era, and the end of the era of national liberation struggle. With this development and against the background of globalization which has raised some critical problems, the suppressed issues of socio-economic development came to the fore. The organisation proved weak in mobilising member states to address violent conflicts, political corruption, economic development, good governance, respect for human rights, gender equality, poverty eradication and respect for the rule of law. Against the forgoing, it became necessary to review the charter of the OAU as a prelude to the restructuring of the continental body and the framework for its work (Adogamhe, 2005:14).

The processes that eventually led to the dissolution of the OAU after about 45 years of existence was initiated by Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya, when he tabled the idea at the OAU meeting in Sirte in September 1999. His idea was supported by other African leaders notably, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, who nonetheless were reluctant to embrace the idea of immediate unification of the continent. These leaders had played key roles at the OAU Algiers summit of July 1999 when the future of Africa, particularly in the areas of security and development, was discussed in detail. The Algiers meeting was considered a turning point in the history of the OAU because it was characterized by a sense of urgency to reposition the continent for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa sought to promote the idea of African renaissance and President Obasanjo supported the call for restructuring of OAU to deal with Africa's security, stability and development challenges (Tieku, 2004:260).

The constitutive legal text that was approved at Lome shed light on the AU's future direction to include the advancement of security, development, human rights, democracy and good governance, compared to the preoccupation of the OAU on elimination of colonialism, racism and apartheid rule in Africa. It was agreed at Sirte

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that the new continental organisation will come into force after the deposition of the instruments by two-third of the member states of the OAU. Nigeria became the thirty-sixth member to deposit her instrument of ratification on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2001, making up the two-third requirement. The AU was formally launched on July, 9, 2002, as a new body to meet the collective aspiration of the African peoples.

### **Pan African Search for Greater Unity under the AU**

The formation of the AU has been attributed to the changing political, social, and economic environment both in Africa and the world at large. In the decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalization has intensified the competition for access to global resources and power. African leaders knew they have to work together to address the many challenges confronting the continent. According to the former OAU Secretary General, Dr Salim A Salim:

The creation of the AU has the ultimate objective of enhancing unity, strengthening cooperation and coordination as well as equipping the continent with a legal and institutional framework, which would enable Africa to gain its rightful place in the community of nations. The cardinal motivation behind the establishment of the African Union was the desire to deepen and enhance the cohesion, solidarity and integration of the countries and peoples of Africa. (Salim, 2001:2)

A critical examination of both the objective and principles of the AU reveal some significant departures from the OAU Charter (Sessay, 2008:17; William, 2004:2). An important addition is the determination to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance as well as promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights. Compared with the OAU, the AU sought to move Africa from the search for unity to greater unity (Kouassi, 2007:13), and from non-interference to non-indifference (Williams, 2004:1). Whereas the OAU had a

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single source of authority, which is the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the AU has more sources of authority including the Assembly of the Union, the Judiciary (court of justice) and the parliament (Pan-African Parliament). The primary responsibility of the OAU was to protect the national sovereignty of member states and as such did not allow interference into their internal affairs. The AU also respects national sovereignty but has goes further to authorize rights of intervention in grave circumstances in line with the global resolve to for humanitarian protection under the Responsibility to Protect (RTP). The AU also respects national sovereignty, but has gone further to acknowledge the right of the union to intervene in a member state in order to restore peace and stability to prevent genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity (Article 4 (h)).

Article 3, subsections 1 (e) and (f) of the constitutive act emphasize the promotion of the guarantee and respect of the basic human rights and principles of liberal democratic governance. These objective no doubt reflect the increasing concern for the poor democratic performance. The AU under Article 30 forbids the unconstitutional change of government (African Union, 2000). One of the critical challenges to achieving pan African unity is the prevalence of conflicts and political instability. African leaders recognized that peace and unity are critical to development and made it a cardinal priority by establishing the AU peace and security architecture. This includes the protocol relating to the establishment of the peace and Security Council (PSC), the African standby force, the continental early warning system and the panel of the wise and also an AU peace fund.

In terms of governance and development, the AU established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) The APRM aims at promoting the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. Countries voluntarily accede to the APRM and are assessed based on four areas namely democracy and political governance, corporate governance, economic governance and socio-economic

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development. Not all member countries of the AU have acceded to the APRM despite its prospects for encouraging the practice of good governance on the continent not all African states have signed unto the aprm and only few have actually completed the review process. Despite NEPAD and the APRM however, the AU has not been able to effectively alter the economic behavior of African governments.

### **The Proposal for the Formation of a Union Government for Africa: A Pan African Search for greatest unity?**

The proposal for a complete unification of Africa re-tabled by the Libyan leader Muammar Ghaddafi, first during Extra-Ordinary Summit of the OAU held in Sirte, Libya on 9 September, 1999, and at the 4<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Abuja, Nigeria on 30 and 31 January, 2005, was received with mixed feelings. Nevertheless, African leaders were not averse to the idea of 'new growth on deep roots' which was in line with Africa's oldest tradition, which is the search for greater continental unity (Julius K Nyerere (1963:2). They were also not averse to the idea of working together to deal with challenges affecting the continent in the era of globalisation. Accordingly, African leaders decided to carefully study the proposal put forward by the Libyan leader regarding the establishment of ministerial portfolios for the AU. The portfolios include the post of ministers of transport and communication, defence and foreign affairs(African Union, 2005a: EX/CL Dec.188 (VI)). In consideration of these proposals, the AU Assembly decided to set up a Committee of Heads of State and Government chaired by the President of the Republic of Uganda and composed of Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Niger, Senegal, and Tunisia, to liaise with the Chairperson of the AU Commission and submit a report by the next Summit in July, 2005(African Union, 2005b: Assembly/AU/Dec.69 (IV)).

In November, 2005 the Committee convened a conference under the theme 'Desirability of a Union Government in Africa'. Participants in this conference included members of the Committee, representatives of the

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regional economic communities (RECs), technical experts, academics, civil society and Diaspora representatives, and the media. The conference came up with four major conclusions. First, it recognised that the necessity of an AU government is not in doubt; second, that such a union must be of African people and not merely a union of states and governments; third, that the creation of a union government must come about through the principle of gradual incrementalism; fourth, that the roles of the REC as building blocks for the continental framework should be highlighted. Based on the recommendations of this committee, the Assembly mandated the AU Commission to prepare a consolidated framework document defining the purpose of the Union Government, its nature, scope, core values, steps and processes and also provide a road map for its achievement. The Assembly reaffirmed 'that the ultimate goal of the African Union is full political and economic integration leading to the United States of Africa'(African Union, 2005c: Assembly/AU/Dec.90 (V) S3).

The Assembly also established a Committee of Seven, which was chaired by President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and composed of the Heads of State and Government of Algeria, Kenya, Senegal, Gabon, Lesotho, and Uganda. The committee was requested to consider the steps that needed to be taken for the realisation of the objectives, the structure, the processes and the time table required for the achievement of a Union Government for Africa. It was to also consider how to strengthen the work of the AU Commission (African Union, 2005c: Assembly/AU/Dec.90 (V), S5).

The Committee of Seven finished its work and on July, 2006, submitted a detailed report titled: A study on an African Union Government: Towards the United States of Africa, in July 2006, to the 7<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of AU Assembly in Banjul, Gambia. The report highlighted that Africa is dependent on the external world, particularly in the area of technology and expatriate requirement. It noted that Africa is yet to fully exploit its potential at national, regional and continental levels in the areas of trade, education, and health. A united African has more potential of producing

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most types of food and agricultural products throughout the year. The report further noted that within the context of globalisation, the challenges of overdependence and under-exploitation of its potentials have increased the marginalisation of the continent in world affairs (African Union, 2006:7).

The study proceeded to outline 16 strategic areas an African government should focus on. These include, continental integration; education, training, skills development, science and technology; energy; environment; external relations; food, agriculture and water resources; gender and youth; governance and human rights; health; industry and mineral resources; finance; peace and security; social affairs and solidarity; sport and culture; trade and customs union; and infrastructure, information technology and biotechnology (African Union 2006:8-13). In addition, the study noted that the design and functioning of a union government as a tool for integration would have far reaching implications on the existing institutions and programmes of the AU (African Union 2006:14).

Since the Extra-Ordinary Summit of the OAU held in Sirte, Libya on 9 September, 1999, where the proposal was first tabled, the objective of a United States of Africa has been reaffirmed. However, member states are yet to agree on the pace and modalities for the implementation of this unification project. It was agreed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January, 2007 that national consultations should be held on the issue, and later hold a 'Grand Debate' on the Union Government at the level of Heads of State and Government at the 9<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit in Accra, Ghana, in July, 2007. It was at Accra, Ghana that hosted the first grand debate on the federation or United States of Africa in the early 1960s.

During the debate on the proposed Union Government in Accra, two major camps emerged-the maximalists and the gradualists (Lecoutre, 2008:45). The maximalists who favoured immediate unification were led by Libya and Senegal. The group was prepared to forge ahead with its small number, leaving those who were hesitant to join them

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later. They favoured the creation of a union government with ministries in sectors namely, defense, foreign affairs, transport and communication, health, the environment, scientific research, finance, education, energy, culture and economic and social integration(Lecoutre, 2008:47). The leaders of Mali, Central African Republic, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea, and Guinea Bissau also supported the idea of immediate decision making on the formation of a continental government. The gradualists represented by countries including Nigeria, South Africa, the Gambia, Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mauritius argued that regional economic communities should be strengthened before any continental integration. In their logic, integration should be achieved in stages with priority given to the harmonization of policies and regional integration. After delivering speeches, little time was left to discuss the proposal in detail.

However, the Accra Declaration cannot be viewed as representing a unified position. The merit of the Accra grand debate is that it brought out the divergent views of African countries. The drafting committee chaired by Ghana, and comprising Uganda, Libya, Namibia, Burkina Faso and Gabon merely produced a summary of the divergent views of member states. The first draft was rejected by mostly the maximalists and the committee had to be reworked it a second time (Lecoutre, 2008:47).

In the final analysis, the Heads of State did not take any consistent or committing decision on when and how the union government will be formed. The decision was not well received by the maximalists such as President Ghaddafi of Libya who blamed the governments of English speaking African countries with the exception of Nigeria for blocking the proposal on behalf of 'colonial interests' (Guardian, January 31, 2008). Ghaddafi further argued that 'if unity is not achieved, Libya will turn its back on Africa and reorient its foreign policy in other directions'. The Accra debate was not staged to determine either winners or losers, but to enable African states discuss freely how to move the continental integration project forward.

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### **Between Nkrumah's and Ghaddafi's notion of a Union Government in Africa**

It was Nkrumah's view that in the absence of forging a common united front, Africa would remain shackled to neo-colonialism. His model of unification under a federal government was partly informed by the cold war period in which most African states had emerged at independence. Nkrumah was opposed to the idea of unification following the Europe's model of gradual integration because of lack of unity in the region at that time (Nkrumah, 1963:216). According to Sturman (2007:3), perhaps if Nkrumah had live to see the success of the EU, he would have regarded the model of gradual regional integration of Africa, rather than immediate federation of a united states of Africa as having more potential to achieve Africa's economic and political goals. In spite of the different ideas being propounded by African leaders at that time on how to achieve African unity, Nkrumah and his colleagues gave room for negotiation and compromise. Though he argued that African unity is better achieved under a federalist framework, he was also mindful of the need to work together to solve problems that cannot only be solved through collective action. Nkrumah demonstrated a true sense of statesmanship when he stated at the inaugural summit of the OAU that African unity should be conceived as 'a common desire to move forward together in dealing with all the problems that can best be solved only on a continental basis' and not just about their own conceptions of what unity connotes (Nkrumah, 1963:12)

On the other hand, Ghaddafi vision of a union government for Africa is driven subtly by political calculations (Tieku, 2007:260). The period preceding the re-launch of the African Union in 2002 witnessed renewed debate on Pan African unity. Muammar Gaddafi, then an opponent of western imperialism, had challenged African leaders to unite across common purpose and chart their destiny unshackled by the West. His vision then was for an increase in trade amongst Africans, the creation of common continental institutions including a federal government and the free flow of persons across borders. Concerned that some of the continent's key leaders notably, South Africa's Thabo

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Mbeki, Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo, Algeria's Bouteflika and Senegal's Abdoulaye Wade were gaining more popularity than him as demonstrated in the collaboration in the crafting and launching of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), he sought a good opportunity to re-launch himself into the mainstream of continental affairs. Ghaddafi has since then utilized every gathering of African leaders to push for the creation of a united states of Africa. African leaders have discussed the 'Ghaddafi proposal' at several summits including the during the Extra-Ordinary Summit of the OAU held in Sirte, Libya on 9 September, 1999, the 4<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Abuja, Nigeria on 30 and 31 January, 2005, the AU summit in Sirte, Libya in July, 2005 and grand debate which was held in Accra Ghana, in July, 2007. Ghaddafi, like Nkrumah, also rejects the EU model of regionalisation, by questioning that, 'who is in charge?' (Sturman, 2007:7). To him the united states of Africa should be model after the United States of America, with a single minister of defense to decide and supervise interventions and peace keeping activities, a minister of trade to negotiate with the main blocs in the name of a single African market, and single leader with presidential powers to represent Africa on the world stage (Ghaddafi, 2005). Ghaddafi's political calculations were further made explicit as soon as he assumed chairmanship of the AU (Ayangafac, 2009:1). Under his chairmanship, the 12th General Assembly of the AU held in January 2009 decided to set up the AU Authority to replace the current AU Commission and change its top structure. According to the Assembly decision, the proposed Authority is expected to have a President, a Vice President and Secretaries with portfolios based on areas of shared competencies. The proposed AU Authority is also expected to have more power than the Commission in areas of dealing with poverty, infectious diseases, education, and other legal issues. The united states of Africa is conceived as a goal that should be achieved by 2015, with an African union government established by 2009 as 'transitory arrangement towards the united states of Africa' (African Union, 2006: Para 15). Ayangafac (2009) has argued that the change of

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name from African union commission to the African union authority does not necessary remove the structural problems inherent in the African union institutions. Ghaddafi's calculations have remained political and not aimed at addressing the structural weaknesses of the AU. His calculations are also aimed achieving the dream of a united states of Africa with a single president. The difference between Nkrumah's vision of a union government for Africa and Ghaddafi's are in the subtle ways the Libyan leader is pushing his political agenda of achieving a union government for Africa with single presidency. He also seem concerned about gaining more popularity (Tieku, 2007:261), than pursuing the union government for Africa as envisaged by Nkrumah- as a rallying point for African leaders to come together in dealing with all the problems that can best be solved only on a continental basis.

### **Challenges to the Achievement of a Union Government**

There are many challenges to the achievement of a union government or a United States of Africa at this time. The African union presently is structural weak as a framework for building full 'political and economic integration leading to the united states of Africa' (ASSEMBLY/AU/DEC90 (V)).

The Panel set up during the Accra Summit in 2007 to audit the performance of the African Union led by Professor Adebayo Adedeji observed in its report among others that the relationship between the Commission President, the Vice-President and the eight commissioners is dysfunctional, with overlaps in the portfolios, lines of authority and liability and unclear and ill-defined goals (The High Level Panel, 2008: XXI). In addition, it pointed out that lack of adequate leadership had caused tension between some commissioners and the teams around them. The panel identified lack of supervision due to the repeated absences of Commissioners and low morale posted in the staff. The audit made a series of recommendations to address these issues including on the nomination of the Commissioners and Chairperson of the AU.

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Another challenge to achieving the union government of Africa is the funding of the proposed union government. Historically, the records of African states and government honoring their financial commitments and obligations towards pan African institutions have been poor (Akwetey, 2008:93). The third African Union (AU) Summit held in July 6-8, 2004 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia dueled much on the issue of funding. At the Summit member states were requested to live up to expectation by paying their dues. The High Level Panel led by Professor Adebayo Adedeji had observed that the annual circle of budgeting presents a great challenge for the AU. A breakdown of the AU budget between 2004 and 2007 shows that while the approved budget for the year 2004 was US\$43,000, but it received only US\$36, 192, with member states contributing US\$25,632, while external partners contributed US\$10,560 and the expenditure at the end of the year stood at US\$39,354. In 2005, the total budget approved was US\$158,384; the total annual income was US\$74,832, member states contributed US\$48,832, and US\$25,542 came from external partners and end of year expenditure was US\$51,258. In 2006, the AU approved budget stood at US\$136, 004 and the total annual income was US\$88,893; member states contributed US\$73, 890, while external partners contributed US\$15,008 and end of year expenditure was US\$78,863. In 2007, the approved budget was US\$132,988, while the total annual income was US\$73,874, with member states contributing US\$63, 773, external partners US\$10,101 and total expenditure for the year stood at US\$71,185 (The High Level Panel, 2008).

The 2004 summit pointed out that key AU institutions that will require substantial funding include a standby force to intervene in humanitarian and natural disasters, and the Pan-African Parliament that will sit in South Africa. The cost for the intervention force was put at 200 million dollars; with the Darfur operation alone requiring 26 million dollars, while the parliament required 30 million dollars. Three million dollars was budgeted for an African Court of Justice. In addition, 600 million dollars is needed to be ploughed over three years into the much-heralded New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Murithi, 2007:9; Arouni,

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2004:1). In 2006, five African countries namely South Africa, Libya, Nigeria, Algeria and Egypt that pledged to pay 75 percent of the AU budget, also delayed their payments (Guardian, May 13, 2006).

Given the disparities in wealth and resource capabilities of the member states and the fact that the majority of Africa's post independence states have poor, commodity exports, dependent economies, the sharing of the burden or responsibility of financing of the OAU was unequal. A handful of member states with strong economies took a greater part of the financial responsibilities of the OAU and still continue to do so under the AU.

African states are yet to achieve full integration at the national level. The vast consequences of conflicts are seen in Somalia, Sudan, CAR, Chad, Somalia, Ivory Coast and in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Many African states still guard their sovereignty closely. Many perceive that yielding their sovereignty to a continental body as tantamount to losing their independence. Several factors creating divisions include, though not limited to, ethnic and religious bigotry, inequality and tensions and conflicts within most states. It is evident that Africa is saddled very pressing challenges that should be tackled first and not the other way round.

## **Conclusion**

The article has attempted to examine the notion of a union government for Africa and its place in the continental project of building African unity. It observes that the proposals for a 'union government' leading towards a United States of Africa have been more controversial since the days of Kwame Nkrumah. This actually led Nkrumah and other African leaders to bury their differences and embrace African unity in the fight against colonialism and racist rule. Under the OAU, these constituted the rallying point for African leaders until the last vestiges of colonialism and racist rule were crushed in South Africa in 1994. Africa is presently faced with several problems bordering on violent conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment, economic development, diseases such as HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and bad governance amongst others. African leaders need to unite in

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addressing these challenges. These challenges should therefore serve as the rallying point for African leaders and not the political machinations of autocratic leaders on the continent. They should also be guided by lessons of history in considering the present notion of a union government for Africa. Efforts should also be made to deepen integration at the national level and to promote African unity not just as the interaction of African leaders but as the unity of African peoples.

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