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African Union and the Agenda 2063 Project

Adeoye O Akinola 

*Department of Politics and International Relations
University of Johannesburg, South Africa* 
aoakinola@uj.ac.za

Khabele Matlosa 

*Centre for African Diplomacy and Leadership,
University of Johannesburg* 
*and International Research Fellow, Africa Institute of South Africa,
Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, South Africa* 
khabelematlosa@rocketmail.com

Introduction

On 9 July 2002, South Africa played host to eminent Africans as the African Union (AU) was officially founded and launched in its port city of Durban, amid diplomatic fanfare. The AU emerged as the custodian of continental unity and integration, inheriting the noble mantle from its precursor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which had gallantly steered the course since its inception in 1963. Both the OAU and AU stand as formidable bastions of Pan-Africanism and heralds of the African Renaissance, epitomising the fervent pursuit of state-driven continental cohesion and solidarity.

As the AU commemorated 20 years of its existence in 2022, a judicious appraisal of its trajectory became imperative. This momentous and intellectual reflection beckons an introspective gaze into the milestones achieved, the trials encountered, and the path charted for the future. It is a timely contemplation, adorned



with significance, especially amidst the ingenious adoption of Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want. Agenda 2063 is a visionary blueprint orchestrated for the collective socio-cultural and politico-economic metamorphosis of the African continent and its people. Thus, as the AU moves past the 20-year mark, the confluence of introspection and foresight shall illuminate the path ahead, guiding the Union towards the realisation of its noble aspirations and the fulfilment of the boundless potential inherent within the rich socio-political landscape of Africa.

Contextual Background

It is impossible to have a full appreciation of the AU without the OAU as part of its historical context. The genesis of the OAU stems from the collective yearning of continental Africans for unity, dignity, liberation, and self-determination amidst the trials and tribulations of colonial exploitation and postcolonial challenges. A confluence of historical imperatives, including the ravages of struggles against slavery, colonialism, imperialism, racism, apartheid, xenophobia or afro-phobia, the fervour of Pan-Africanism, and the imperative of decolonisation, propelled the birth of this strategic institution. Grounded in the ethos of solidarity and the recognition of shared destinies, African leaders embarked upon the noble endeavour of establishing the OAU. This historic breakthrough, catalysed by the imperative of collective agency and the fostering of continental cohesion, stands as a testament to Africa's resolve to chart its destiny and transcend the shackles of oppression, exploitation, and socio-political strangulation. Thus, the OAU emerged as a beacon of hope, heralding a new era of African agency, unity, and collective empowerment on the continent and on the global stage.

It is the pursuit of Pan-Africanism around which the historical evolution of the OAU should be appreciated. Pan-Africanism is a set of shared ideas and assumptions expressing the desire for the total liberation and unity of Africans in Africa and around the world (Mandaza & Nabudere 2002; Mathews 2018:16). Its origins are traceable to the liberation struggles of African Americans in the United States (US) and around the world against slavery and racial discrimination (Adi 2018).

The strongest features of Pan-Africanism include:

- a. a movement aimed at giving people of African descent full participation in the political, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of their countries and the world;
- b. Afrocentrism – taking Africa as a starting point for all its ideals, ideas, and beliefs;
- c. the belief that all Black people around the world constitute a single united family, descended from a common African origin, heritage, and culture;
- d. a firm stance for the decolonisation of Africa and independence of all African states and an opposition to all forms of racial domination, discrimination, oppression, and injustice; and
- e. a commitment to the universal recognition of the full dignity of the people of African descent, and their equality as citizens of the world (Kuambi 2002:47-48).

Pan-Africanism was popularised by, *inter alia*, lawyer, activist, and author Henry Sylvester Williams (Trinidad and Tobago), African American sociologist and historian William Edward Du Bois (US), journalist, historian, and author George Padmore (Trinidad and Tobago), and political activist and Black nationalist Marcus Garvey (Jamaica), who led several Pan-African Conferences (PACs). The most notable one that influenced the establishment of the OAU was the fifth Pan-African Conference, held in 1945 in Manchester, Britain. The fifth PAC – also attended by some African leaders, including Nkrumah and Kenyatta – adopted significant resolutions. These included:

- a. Africa's total decolonisation and complete independence;
- b. the unification of Africa through regional blocs;
- c. the importance of unity and integration;
- d. the embrace of Africa's non-aligned position; and
- e. non-interference in internal affairs.

These positions influenced Nkrumah, who proclaimed that Ghana's 1958 independence was incomplete without the total liberation of the African continent. Of the several conferences that Nkrumah organised in Accra on Pan-Africanism, the most significant was the 1958 All African Peoples' Conference attended

mainly by liberation movements across the continent, with the central theme of solidarity and unity in the struggle against racism (Bujra 2002).

The OAU was the culmination of heated debates on the form and substance of regional integration between two ideologically opposed schools of thought, namely: the radical (revolutionist) camp (The Casablanca Group) and the moderate (evolutionist) camp (The Monrovia Group). The former espoused the union of African states with a union government at its pinnacle. The latter supported gradual integration predicated upon narrow-national sovereignty. Several conferences were organised aimed at bridging the divide between the two groups. At such a conference convened in Lagos, Nigeria in 1962, a compromise between these opposing groups was reached based largely on proposals made by Ethiopia, Liberia, and Nigeria. This led to the adoption of a functional approach to Pan-African unity and integration.

The conference adopted the Lagos Charter, which recommended the establishment of the following organs:

- a. an Assembly of Heads of State and Government (HoSG);
- b. a council of ministers;
- c. a general secretariat; and
- d. various commissions.

On 25 May 1963, the Lagos Charter was presented at the Conference of HoSG held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Founded by 32 independent African states, the OAU was established not as a political union, but as a functional integration body, with Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia playing a major role. The Addis Ababa HoSG summit was preceded by the meeting of foreign ministers held on 15 May 1963.

The ideals of Pan-Africanism were central to the formation of the OAU. Established on 25 May 1963, the OAU pursued five main goals:

- a. to promote the unity and solidarity of African States;
- b. to co-ordinate and intensify their co-operation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa;

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- c. to defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence;
- d. to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; and
- e. to promote international co-operation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (OAU 1963:3).

Despite the numerous challenges that it faced between 1963 and 2001, the OAU pursued the above objectives and registered major achievements, especially in ensuring the completion of the continent's decolonisation with the liberation of the last bastions of colonial domination in Namibia (1990) and South Africa (1994). The OAU kept the spirit of Pan-Africanism alive through solidarity among Africans in Africa and the diaspora. It protected Africa's interests globally within the difficult environment marked by the Cold War, which divided the world into two ideological camps led respectively by the United States (US) and the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). The OAU was the first international organisation on the continent to begin a deliberate process of regional and continental integration.

While building on the milestones of the OAU, the mandate of the AU was much more expansive. While the AU remained faithful to the ideals of Pan-Africanism articulated above, the new generation of African leaders reinforced this with renewed commitment to the African Renaissance. The African Renaissance denotes the renewal of the spirit of Africanness, including adherence to African cultural heritage and the embrace of our common history. It was popularised by former South African president Thabo Mbeki after his 'I am an African' speech of 1996. It is an "unflinching belief in Africa's common destiny, shared values, and "the affirmation of African identity; the celebration of unity in diversity and the institution of the African citizenship" (AU 2013:2).

By the time the AU was founded, the global political and economic context had radically changed from the OAU era. Fundamentally, three key developments influenced this transformation. First, the fall of the Berlin Wall (and, with it, the collapse of the Cold War ideological bipolarity globally) presented

a new context for the transformation of the OAU. Second, the European Economic Community (EEC) – which had existed since 1957, transformed in 1993 to the European Community (EC), and subsequently the European Union (EU) in 2009 – presented an external stimulus for the transformation of the OAU. Third, while the collapse of the Cold War and the demise of apartheid contributed to the significant decline in inter-state wars, intra-state conflicts intensified, leading to massive loss of lives, as well as internal and external displacement of persons, accounting for Africa's humanitarian crisis. The doctrine of non-interference in internal affairs of member states had failed to address intra-state conflicts, most notably the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, claiming more than a million lives and even more displacement of persons.

In response to the changing global and continental environment, during its 26th Ordinary Session, the OAU Heads of State and Government Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 9-11 July 1990, adopted the Declaration on the political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the world. It was this declaration that provided a bridge between OAU and its successor, the AU. The declaration made it clear that because of the global and continental changes, the OAU had to change course from its historical focus on decolonisation, liberation, and nationbuilding towards socio-economic development, structural transformation, self-reliance, social justice, popular participation, human rights, democracy, constitutionalism, and the rule of law, with emphasis on inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable social groups like women and youth. In this vein, African leaders resolved to strengthen the OAU so that it might become a viable instrument at the service of Africa's economic development and integration, revive the ideals of Pan-Africanism and commitment to strengthening their unity and solidarity, and pool their resources and wisdom to face the emerging challenges (OAU 1990).

It was, therefore, within this new post-Cold War and post-apartheid context that the AU was established, in part, to address the challenges identified in the 1990 OAU declaration above. Hence, it came to pass that during its summit held in Sirte,

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Libya in 1999, the OAU adopted a resolution to create the AU. It subsequently adopted the Constitutive Act, a treaty establishing the AU during its summit held in Lome, Togo in 2000. Finally, the AU was inaugurated officially in Durban, South Africa on 9 July 2002. The AU's vision is "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena" (The AU Commission n.d.). The objectives of the AU are to:

1. achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa, and to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of its member states;
2. accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent;
3. encourage international co-operation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
4. promote peace, security, and stability on the continent;
5. promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, and good governance;
6. promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments;
7. establish the necessary conditions that enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and international negotiations;
8. promote sustainable development at the economic, social, and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies;
9. promote co-operation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples;
10. co-ordinate and harmonise the policies between the existing and future regional economic communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union;
11. advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields, in particular in science and technology; and

12. work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent (AU 2000:6-7).

Building on previous development and integration efforts of the OAU – such as the Lagos Plan of Action and the Act of Lagos (1980), the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (1991), as well as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (2001) – the AU adopted a new continental development blueprint in the form of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want in 2014. This agenda evolved as part of Africa’s collective response and common position to the process of the development of the 2030 global agenda for sustainable development that resulted in the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in 2015.

The Vision, Aspirations, and Goals of Agenda 2063

In 2013, African leaders celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/ AU under the theme: Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. At the end of the celebration, they adopted the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, thereby renewing their commitment to continental unity and integration.¹ This declaration represents a perfect bridge between the ideals espoused by the OAU, which were predicated upon the old doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states and the new paradigm of non-indifference to human rights abuses within member states. Even more importantly, the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration created a firm platform for the development of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

Currently, it is essentially Agenda 2063 that defines what the AU is and what it is not. As declared in the agenda, “The aspirations reflect our desire for shared prosperity and wellbeing, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realised, and with freedom from fear, disease

1 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration.

and want” (AU 2015:1). This agenda has seven aspirations (AU 2015: 2):

- **Aspiration 1:** A prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
- **Aspiration 2:** An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of the African Renaissance
- **Aspiration 3:** An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
- **Aspiration 4:** A peaceful and secure Africa
- **Aspiration 5:** An Africa with a strong cultural identity, values and ethics
- **Aspiration 6:** An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its youth and women
- **Aspiration 7:** Africa as a strong and influential global player and partner

This agenda is being implemented through ten-year action plans. The first of these started in 2014 and ended in 2023. The AU highlights the following 20 goals of this agenda:²

1. a high standard of living, quality of life, and wellbeing for all citizens;
2. well-educated citizens and a skills revolution underpinned by science, technology, and innovation;
3. healthy and well-nourished citizens;
4. transformed economies;
5. modern agriculture for increased productivity and production;
6. a blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth;
7. environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient economies and communities;
8. a united Africa (federal or confederate);
9. continental financial and monetary institutions that are established and functional;
10. world-class infrastructure that criss-crosses Africa;

2 For full information of Agenda 2063, see <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/goals>.

11. democratic values and practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched;
12. capable institutions and transformative leadership in place;
13. peace, security, and stability preserved;
14. a stable and peaceful Africa;
15. a fully functional and operational African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA);
16. a pre-eminent African cultural renaissance;
17. full gender equality in all spheres of life;
18. engaged and Empowered Youth and Children.
19. Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence; and
20. Africa taking full responsibility for financing its development.

Since 2018, the AU has been undergoing institutional reforms. As part of this reform exercise, the African leaders have decided to streamline the AU's programming along four main continental priority areas: democracy and governance, peace and security, socio-economic development, and repositioning Africa globally. So far, the outcome of this reform process remains a mixed bag. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic considerably derailed efforts on the institutional reform front as the AU devoted more attention to containing the pandemic over every other issue from 2020-2021. However, the reform agenda is a contested terrain between and among key players, which partly explains why the leadership of the reform process seems paralysed. Many African elites continue to ignore the Pan-African agenda, including continental integration and the free movement of people. This is compounded by the AU's dependence on external resources from powerful global players, such as the European Union (EU), the United States, China, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

Challenges and Prospects

The AU was established to fulfil its vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa. Yet, more than 20 years after its existence, Africa is not integrated and peaceful, and its population cannot be said to be prosperous (see Monyae & Nkala 2023). The continent has been confronted with governance challenges, while

many countries have experienced political instability, military coups, and autocracy. In 2023, numerous countries witnessed civilian transitions, a commendable feat indicative of democratic progress. However, elections held in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Eswatini, Gabon, Sierra Leone, and Madagascar were marred by heavy contestation and denounced by disillusioned citizens. These electoral processes have become more of a ritual aimed at preserving political stability rather than delivering tangible benefits, thus failing to fulfil the true promise of democracy for African populations.

In the past few years, Africa experienced several shocks, like the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the Russia-Ukraine war, which have reduced the continent's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth from 4.8% in 2021 to 3.8% in 2022 (AfDB 2023:1). In 2023, the GDP of Africa was estimated at \$3.1 trillion, and the continent was host to an estimated 1.4 billion people. African economies remain resilient in 2023-2024, with average growth projected to stabilise at 4.1%. In monetary terms, the proportion of sub-Saharan Africa's contribution to the global GDP dwindled to a mere 1.9%, starkly contrasting with its population share of 18% worldwide (The Economist 2023). The cost of basic amenities, energy, and food were very high, with average inflation increasing to an estimated 15.1% in 2023, from 14.2% in 2022, and 12.9% in 2021 (AfDB 2023:1-2).

In 2023, a report by Statista found that about 430 million Africans were living in extreme poverty, with the poverty threshold at \$1.90 a day.³ A substantial portion of Africa's population, comprising approximately 615 million individuals, lacks access to essential healthcare services, representing more than half (52%) of the continent's citizens. Furthermore, the overall quality of health services in Africa remains sub-par, exacerbating the health disparities its populace faces.

Economic indicators across Africa underscore a concerning trend: inflation rates escalated from 9.1% in 2003 to 15.7% in

3 For more information on the poverty rate from 2016, see <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1228533/number-of-people-living-below-the-extreme-poverty-line-in-africa/>.

2023, while unemployment rates have crept upwards from 6.47% in 2013 to 7.11% in 2023. Moreover, the Corruption Perception Index revealed that in 2023, 44 out of 49 countries scored below 50, indicative of pervasive corruption. This confluence of factors, compounded by conflicts and political instability, has eroded institutional efficacy in combating corruption. Additionally, the year 2022 witnessed unprecedented flooding in Niger, destroying 38 000 homes, and 2.3 million people were displaced across the Horn of Africa due to drought. While this was attributed to climate change, it underscored the inadequacies in institutional readiness and response mechanisms.

In contemporary African societies, the prevalence of conflicts has become a pervasive phenomenon, prompting ongoing investigations into their distinctive characteristics that precipitate their escalation into severe forms of violence. The issue of conflict in Africa demands meticulous scrutiny, given that discussions about its endemic nature are relatively constrained. Central to this conversation were key deliberations on the historical underpinnings of conflicts in Africa, the contributions of diverse actors (states and non-states) in addressing issues of violence and conflict, the significance and progress of initiatives aimed at combatting violent conflict, and the impact of external actors on the African continent. Fundamentally, the overarching challenges facing Africa remain misgovernance, leadership failure, and the formidable presence of conflict and violence. These conflicts are not novel occurrences, and their manifestation in specific regions is not recent. It is imperative to recognise that the emergence of new conflicts alongside existing ones follows a discernible pattern, suggesting a recurrent cycle.

The imposition of Westphalian paradigms of statehood upon African countries served as a disruptive force, severing the natural trajectory of indigenous African governance frameworks from blossoming into paramount structures for the African populace (Atta-Asamoah 2016). The emergence of African nation states bore the indelible imprint of colonial exploitation, born out of a rapacious scramble for resources and the perpetuation of socio-cultural and economic hegemony during the tumultuous era of postcolonial statecraft.

The average state in Africa is a few decades old. This means that as much as some progress has been made in the preservation of their dominance in the monopoly over the use of force, they are still defined by certain fundamental challenges and weaknesses in projecting relevance to citizens and establishing a presence across their territories. These weaknesses have meant that, in many cases, the idea of the state is not yet a natural part of citizens. The main challenge of state-making in this part of the world is therefore centred around constructing the idea of the state in the minds of citizens and getting them to accept its naturalness as a core part of their social, economic and political mobilization” (Atta-Asamoah 2016: 31)

Unlike its predecessor, the AU swiftly recognised the peril certain state actors pose to their citizens. While the AU garnered praise for its courageous adoption of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), it has nonetheless fallen short in fulfilling its duty to safeguard civilian lives in various instances, including the ongoing crisis in Sudan. Conflict and other forms of political violence have continued to define Africa. In 2007, Kenya experienced electoral violence resulting in over 1 000 fatalities. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been embroiled in violent conflict since 1996, claiming the lives of over 6 million individuals, marking it as one of the deadliest conflicts since World War II. The Sahel region witnessed approximately 15 000 conflict-related deaths between 2020 and 2021, as reported by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. In 2022, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) highlighted the dire humanitarian crises affecting 10 million children in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger due to ongoing conflicts.

Since the mid-2000s, a discernible trend of democratic haemorrhage (atrophy, decay, and degeneracy of democratisation) has been underway. After a long lull, and despite zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes of government by the AU and regional economic communities (RECs), military coups are prevalent on the continent, especially in the Sahel belt stretching from Niger to Sudan. Between 2002 and 2023, there were 26 successful military

coups in Africa, most of which occurred in West Africa. Since 2019, there have been ten successful military coups in Africa in Sudan (2019, 2021, followed by outright civil war in 2023), Mali (2020, 2021), Guinea (2021), Chad (2021), Burkina Faso (February and September 2022), Niger (2023), and Gabon (2023). During the same period, the continent has experienced 12 unsuccessful military coups.⁴ Ironically, the upward spiral of coups occurred at the time when the AU had committed to silence the guns in Africa by 2020, an initiative whose time frame has now been extended by ten more years to 2030.

A slightly more complex phenomenon of democratic 'haemorrhage' (as compared to military coups) has been the executive coups that take the form of manipulation of constitutions by incumbent heads of state to elongate their stay in the state house. Since 2002, when the AU was established through its 2000 Constitutive Act, which explicitly declared zero tolerance of unconstitutional changes, about 23 incidents of manipulation of constitutions have occurred, of which 18 were successful, while only five failed (Matlosa 2023).

The war in Ethiopia's Tigray region in 2022 led to an estimated 100 000 to 110 000 battle-related deaths and displaced over 1.5 million individuals. According to the Missing Migrants Project, since 2014, the Central Mediterranean Sea route, predominantly used by African migrants, has witnessed the highest number of casualties, with an estimated 22 746 individuals dead or missing. Push factors such as extreme nationalism, economic protectionism, anti-migration policies, xenophobia, climate change, and autocratic regimes have driven more irregular migrants to undertake perilous journeys through the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

4 Twelve (12) African countries that experienced abortive military coups are the Central African Republic between 17 December 2020 and 13 January 2021; Niger, 31 March 2021; Sudan, 21 September 2021; Guinea Bissau, 1 February 2022; Mali, 16-17 May 2022; Sao Tome & Principe, 24-25 November 2022; The Gambia, 20 December 2022; Sudan, 15 April 2023; Sierra Leone, 31 July 2023; Burkina Faso, 26 September 2023; Sierra Leone, 26 November 2023; and Guinea Bissau, 30 November-1 December 2023.

The AU has also recognised the difficult task ahead when it notes that, “Agenda 2063 builds on past achievements and challenges and takes into account the continental and global context and trends in which Africa is realising its transformation” (AU 2015:11). Despite the struggles of the AU to fulfil its mandate, the continental body has navigated through difficult terrain to record moderate successes. The drafting of the Agenda 2063 is the pinnacle of AU’s achievement. However, its successful implementation will project the AU as an effective regional organisation, matching the dreams of the drafters of the Consultative Act, and millions of Africans who have put their faith in the continental body.

The AU stands poised to spearhead the transformation of the African economy and uplift its people, leveraging the continent’s abundant human and mineral resources, including its burgeoning youth demographic. Currently, Africa is host to the youngest population in the world with about 400 million people between the ages of 15 and 35. Children under the age of 25 made up 60% of the African total population in 2020. African political leaders have failed to utilise these human resources, opening the space for their mobilisation for conflict and terrorism by warmongers. As the preeminent agency on the African continent, the AU assumes paramount importance in shaping Africa’s international relations and governance landscape. With the advent of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which consolidates Africa’s 55 economies into a singular market, the AU now commands an economic bloc ranked as the world’s 8th largest. However, the realisation of its potential hinges upon adeptly navigating the challenges posed by the resistance of national leadership to AU’s evolution into a supranational entity and ensuring the unimpeded movement of people across the continent.

The AU has established many protocols for the free movement of persons, including the AU revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030); however, there has been less momentum toward its actualisation. Several nations are now seizing the initiative and challenging the artificial boundaries imposed by Western colonial powers by partially or

entirely dismantling visa restrictions. Mozambique, for instance, has lifted visa requirements for 29 countries, while Rwanda has eliminated visas for all African citizens. Additionally, Kenya has joined this movement by implementing a 90-day visa waiver with South Africa, and South Africa itself has established a visa-free agreement with Ghana. Notably, Ghana's President Nana Akufo Addo has underscored Accra's commitment to welcoming all African citizens in 2024, signalling a burgeoning trend towards enhanced regional integration and co-operation.

The AU facilitated the end of the Ethiopia-Tigray destructive war. On November 2, 2022, a historic peace accord was inked between representatives of Ethiopia's federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), effectively halting nearly two years of devastating conflict that had exacted a heavy toll on the nation, claiming the lives of countless individuals. The culmination of extensive mediation efforts, the agreement was brokered in Pretoria, South Africa, under the auspices of the AU. The mediation process, spearheaded by an eminent team comprising former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, former Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta, and former deputy president of South Africa Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, heralds a significant step towards reconciliation and stability in the region. Although the AU's efforts in facilitating the peace deal are acknowledged, there is a call for greater dedication to swiftly quell hostilities. With Sudan embroiled in conflict since April 2023 and the protracted violent conflict in the DRC, there is a pressing need for the AU to intensify its interventions for prompt resolution of such crises. Undoubtedly, peacekeeping is an expensive endeavour, and the AU has struggled financially.

The financial standing of the AU continues to raise apprehension. With an endorsed budget of \$650 million for the year 2022, allocation details reveal \$176 million designated for general operations and \$195 million earmarked for programmes (Nantulya 2022). While member state contributions commendably cover 72% of operational expenses, this achievement falls shy of the ambitious target of attaining self-sustainability. Furthermore, the Union's reliance on external funding for peace and security initiatives remains a pressing concern, as evidenced by the fact

that donors predominantly finance the substantial \$279 million allocated to this critical endeavour (Nantulya 2022).

To a significant portion of the African populace, the AU often appears as a makeshift apparatus tailored to accommodate the interests of presidents and prime ministers, rather than a dynamic institution poised to effectively serve their needs in alignment with its stipulated protocols and conventions (Nantulya 2022). For many across the continent, the AU's credibility hinges upon the diligent adherence to the principles enshrined within its founding charters and supplementary protocols, especially those mechanisms devised to amplify citizen engagement and input. Thus, it falls upon the AU to reshape the perceptions of Africans by demonstrating outstanding performance despite its institutional hurdles, thereby persuading Africans and the international community of its preparedness to serve as a guiding light for the continent's people and a potent force in global affairs.

Objectives of this Book

While this book offers a nuanced exploration of the performance of the AU as it responds to the divergent challenges that have curtailed African prosperity, stability, and security, the rationale for this significant undertaking is grounded in ten primary factors.

Firstly, the transition from the OAU to the AU in the late 1990s was an epoch-making development. Therefore, there is a need to review the result of the transition to date.

Secondly, there is a need for an evidence-based comparative study of the OAU and AU, by identifying the points of convergence and divergence.

Thirdly, this book offers an immense intellectual contribution towards breathing life into the almost defunct Agenda 2063 as the long-term development blueprint of the AU. For instance, except for the much-vaunted African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the other 13 flagship projects of Agenda 2063 – including the Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport projects – remain dormant. More than 10 years after the launch of Agenda 2063, Africa is still confronted with diverse

violent conflicts. African leaders made a modest effort towards achieving the ideal of silencing the guns' and ending wars in Africa (another flagship project of Agenda 2063), including declaring 2020 as "the year of Silencing the Guns". In 2020 itself, however, not much was achieved in terms of silencing the guns, given that much effort was invested into containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, not much progress has been made in containing violent conflict (including terrorism) in Africa today. Hence, during its extraordinary summit held on 16 December 2020, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government resolved to extend the deadline for Silencing the Guns from 2020 to 2030. What informed the 2030 deadline for its actualisation? Based on the security landscape on the continent, the growing proliferation of terrors, and the complicit intervention of mercenaries in many countries, guns may continue reverberating through the continent beyond 2030.

Fourthly, this project revitalises Africa's shared history and agenda, reigniting a sense of African consciousness and intellectual vigour to foster collective Pan-Africanist endeavours towards integration. This comes as a necessary antidote to the prevalence of unilateralism and bilateralism exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as highlighted by the ongoing Russian-Ukraine conflict and apartheid Israel's war of aggression against Palestine.

Fifth, this publication plays a pivotal role in advancing the decolonisation of Africa's international relations, facilitating the continent's rightful assertion of its position within the global community of nations, both within and beyond the United Nations system.

Sixth, it offers an in-depth review of the performances of the AU, particularly its efforts at delivering on the core objectives of Agenda 2063, as well as delving into the imperativeness of effective institutional reforms of the AU. It is pertinent to question whether the AU requires superficial reforms that merely scratch the surface or if it demands a profound institutional overhaul coupled with a fundamental shift in the mindset and behaviour of regional stakeholders.

Seventh, it offers evidence-based sustainable suggestions on how to transform contemporary Africa into the Africa that we all want.

Eighth, despite its good intentions, norms (African Charter on Democracy, Election, and Governance – ACDEG), institutional frameworks (African Peer Review Mechanism – APRM), and zero tolerance approach to unconstitutional changes of government (UCG), the scourge of UCG continues in the form of military coups, electoral manipulation, and executive coups, thereby dimming hopes of democratic renaissance and silencing the guns in Africa by 2030. Ninth, the mutually reinforcing collaboration between the AU and RECs/Regional Mechanism (RMs) remains a mixed bag as the twin principles of subsidiarity and complementarity do not seem to work uniformly across all five regions (e.g. it has paid a dividend in West Africa more than in the other four regions so far). Tenth and finally, the global power asymmetry still perpetuates Africa's underdevelopment, marginalisation, and exploitation for the benefit of powerful actors in the current phase of globalisation – a global village for the West and a global pillage for the rest, including Africa.

Key Themes Covered in the Book

The book encompasses nine major themes, divided into 30 chapters, authored by meticulously chosen contributors well-versed in AU affairs. Section 1, *Introduction*, offers a thoughtful reflection on the AU's 20-year milestone in 2022, evaluating its trajectory with discerning insight. This reflective analysis delves into the achievements, challenges, and prospects of the AU, particularly concerning Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. This section also highlights the imperative to address unresolved issues inherited from the OAU, focusing on key challenges in development, governance, peace, security, and global positioning. The AU's reform efforts, led by President Paul Kagame, address fundamental shortcomings hindering its optimal performance.

Section 2, *Pan-African Agenda*, explores the genesis of Pan-Africanism, a global movement for the emancipation and unity of Africans, and examines its influence on the AU's formation and

engagements with the global order to counter neocolonialism. It further analyses how the principles of Pan-Africanism shaped the development and performances of the continental institution and influenced modern Pan-African ideas and practices. It examines the international backdrop of the Global Pan-African Reparations movement, tracing its trajectory from the inception of the AU following the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban. The analysis scrutinises Afro-pessimism amid efforts to undermine Pan-Africanism and negate African agency in challenging colonialism and apartheid, including issues such as global warming. It thus argues for reparative justice for Global African people.

Section 3, *Unity, Integration, and AfCFTA*, engages the objectives of the OAU's transition to the AU, which aimed to foster an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa. However, this integration agenda faces hurdles like fragmented societies, colonial legacies, sovereignty and nationalism concerns, and institutional weaknesses. It argues for the transformation of the AU into a supranational institution for the advancement of the AU's integration goals. This section further undertakes an examination of AU leadership, correlating it with the organisation's effectiveness. This analysis, necessitating a historical exploration of the AU's development and current trajectory, highlights the intricate challenges of leadership, termed the "leadership conundrum", which locates the AU's struggle and the lack of development in Africa in unresolved leadership issues. Moreover, the authors delve into the significance of AfCFTA for continental integration and development. They analyse the role of intra-African trade in AfCFTA's success and Africa's emergence as a major global economic force. The section provides actionable strategies for enhancing intra-African trade within the free trade framework, emphasising the need to strengthen regional economic communities (RECs), tackle tariff and non-tariff barriers, and establish regional and continental customs unions to ensure AfCFTA's success.

In Section 4, titled *Africa's Global Voice*, the focus is on evaluating the AU and Africa's interactions with global entities. It places international collaboration within the realm

of diplomacy and African influence, examining the driving forces behind the AU's international partnerships and the ways various actors assert their influence. The section also delves into CARICOM's involvement with Africa, exploring decisions made by CARICOM heads of government and outlining potential pathways for enhancing regional ties, particularly in inter-regional trade. Furthermore, it discusses US-Africa relations, tracing the evolution of US 'Africa policy' and considering the partnership in a world no longer dominated by a single hegemon. Critically, the section evaluates collaborative efforts between the AU and UN in achieving peace, security, and sustainable human capital development, aligned with the AU's Agenda 2063. Within its chapters, the section examines Africa's positioning in negotiations with strategic partners, probing its capacity for effective engagement.

Section 5, *Migration Challenges and African Borders*, delves into the complex issues surrounding both intra-African and Africa-EU migration dynamics. It sheds light on the obstacles facing the AU's efforts to achieve free movement of people across the continent. Despite its significance for economic integration and Pan-African unity, the AU has struggled to implement its ambitious frameworks and foster a shared African identity and citizenship. This section situates Africa-EU migration within historical and contemporary contexts, addressing the asymmetrical nature of relations between the two regions. It examines the 2015 migration crisis in Europe and its profound impact on EU migration policies, leading to a shift towards securitisation, development aid leverage, and intensified border controls. Additionally, the section explores how colonial legacies and border security concerns have strained inter-state relations within Africa, citing the Malawi-Tanzania border dispute within Southern Africa as a case study. This conflict was heavily influenced by the agendas of former White regimes in Southern Africa and the (re)integration aspirations of postcolonial Southern African countries.

In Section 6, *Peace and Security*, the authors assess the effectiveness of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The section reveals the fractures within the AU's

framework for continental peace and security, emphasising the lack of co-ordination between the AU and regional economic communities and the resulting implications of policy and harmonisation gaps on African peace and security. This prompts an examination of the Silencing the Guns project – the AU’s flagship initiative aimed at preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts in Africa by 2020. However, the failure to achieve this objective led to a review and the implementation of a revitalised roadmap for Silencing the Guns by 2030. The section critiques the limitations of this initiative and advocates for its reframing and reorientation, proposing a regionalised approach to addressing conflicts across the continent. Using Algeria as a case study, the section illustrates a roadmap for Silencing the Guns in Africa. Algeria employs a combination of hard and soft power strategies, including promoting national reconciliation, deradicalising youth, raising public awareness through education, and effectively disseminating information via the media. Additionally, the section explores diverse human security concerns on the continent, shifting focus from solely state security to socio-economic and environmental issues that threaten human lives.

Section 7, *Democracy, Elections, and Governance*, explores the AU’s efforts towards promoting multiparty elections during its initial two decades and delves into its role as a norm-setter, particularly in fostering credible, transparent, and peaceful electoral processes. It applauds the AU’s proactive initiatives in establishing norms and standards to guide democratic elections across the continent. Using Kenya’s 2022 elections as a case study, it examines the impact of adopting electoral technologies on African citizens, questioning whether the ostensibly peaceful electoral transition marked a step forward for democratic consolidation or served as a test for democracy itself. It advocates for a Pan-African approach to institutionalising democracy on the continent. Furthermore, the section evaluates the AU’s performance since the adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG) in 2012, particularly concerning election-related violence. It conceptualises the violence, explores its causes and consequences, and interrogates the AU’s role in resolving such conflicts through

various means, including early warning systems, preventative diplomacy, election observation, mediation, and the Panel of the Wise. Lastly, it examines the governance and leadership failures, weak institutional capacity, and contested legitimacy that often precipitate military coups in Africa. It assesses the AU's performances and the challenges it confronts in countering military regimes and advancing democratic consolidation on the continent.

Section 8, *Youth Empowerment and Gender Equality*, delves into the marginalisation of youth and women in Africa's pursuit of security and prosperity, challenging conventional views on gender inequality. It provides historical context on gender relations, emphasising women's inclusion within Pan-Africanism and decolonial movements. Highlighting the vital role of women's participation in achieving Agenda 2063 and ensuring peace and security, it employs theoretical frameworks to conceptualise their involvement in peace processes. Additionally, it acknowledges grassroots women's organisations' significant contributions to peacebuilding efforts. It further evaluates the African Union's Free Movement Protocol (AU FMP) concerning challenges faced by African women labour migrants, focusing on South Africa. It critiques labour migration provisions through a gendered lens, proposing gender-responsive policy frameworks to safeguard women's rights. By enhancing protections for women labour migrants, the AU FMP can realise its potential as a tool for empowerment and continental integration, towards the actualisation of Agenda 2063. This section extensively analyses the AU's policies and initiatives concerning youth, which are crucial for achieving Agenda 2063. With youth inclusion deeply ingrained in African history, contemporary efforts represent a revival rather than a new concept. It also outlines a roadmap to strengthen the AU's Youth Agenda, emphasising the importance of empowering young people in shaping Africa's future.

Section 9, *Cross-Cutting Issues (ICT, Education, Health and Climate Change)*, discusses the AU's 2020 Digital Transformation Strategy, investigating its potential and obstacles for digital advancement in Africa. It discusses strategy features, the continent's digital status and policy landscapes, and weighs

risks and opportunities, including leveraging geopolitical dynamics. It reflects on pathways to achieve Africa's vision for a digitally evolved society. It also thoroughly evaluates curriculum transformation in Africa, focusing on decolonisation efforts. It advocates for re-evaluating educational curricula to rectify historical biases and Eurocentrism. Emphasising inclusivity, it highlights the importance of reflecting diverse perspectives and cultures. The AU acknowledges the necessity of prioritising epistemology for Africa's autonomous, decolonised future, aligning with Agenda 2063. The section further assesses Africa's health systems post-COVID-19, focusing on the AU's Africa Health Strategy (AHS) and its alignment with member states' health plans. It examines Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) initiatives and their role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 objectives on health and wellbeing. Through a constructivist lens, the section finally delves into Africa's dual commitment to both climate protection and ongoing development. It frames climate-oriented development as a matter of multiscale co-ordination, exploring how African stances between climate and development are established and advanced at sub-regional and national levels.

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