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Leadership and the Success of African Integration and Development Agenda: Juxtaposing the African Continental Free Trade Area-Afcfta and Agenda 2063

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Abstract

After emancipation, from devastating epoch of slavery and colonialism, the respective African states with its leaders embarked on myriads of developmental policies. This was a follow-up to 'Kwame Nkrumah's philosophy of "seek ye first the political freedom and every other thing will be added into you". Ironically the granting of political independence to African states soon became a nightmare. This is so as many countries in the continent ran into boiling and troubling waters: military coups, civil wars, inter-state wars, poverty, bad governance, separatism, environmental conflict and degradation, poor health security, over dependence on foreign aid with it's concomitant huge debt burdens, etc. This philosophical underpinning of kwame Nkrumah above prompted the flooding of African political landscape with lots of policies(both homegrown and externally induced from western world), ranging from, import substitution and industrialization strategy, structural adjustment program-SAP, Privatization, millennium development goals, sustainable development goals, African growth and opportunity act, etc. It remains an irony that after all such lofty integration and development policies, with enormous rich natural resources beneath the African soil and untapped human capital, still the continent is suffering from insurmountable governance pathologies and developmental quagmire, and unable to benefit from the global trade. It is upon this backdrop, the study delves into ascertaining the extent at which Leadership influence the success of the African regional integration and development scheme, with focus on the African Continental Free Trade Area-AFCFTA and Agenda 2063. The study explored the content analysis methodological orientation as data were gotten from only secondary sources(textbooks, journal publications, magazines), etc. while the good governance theory and regional integration theories were explored to buttress the work. The study discovered that, if there is no visionary, corrupt-free, competent, selfless leaders who are willing to disentangle from neocolonial dependence syndrome, and forge a common but sustainable front, such ideas of integration and development can not be achieved or sustained. Hence Unity among African leaders, discipline and willingness to disentangle from neocolonial dependence, corrupt-free, committed, transparent Leadership with ideology of pursuing integration course with integrity, trust, mutual cooperation is needed.

Keywords: Africa, Leadership, development, regional integration, AFCFTA, Vision 2063, Africa

INTRODUCTION

The quest for economic development, and political emancipation of African continent, geared towards a United and formidable Africa, after many years of unbearable exploitation from slavery and colonialism is not to be overemphasized. Thus the forceful integration of Africa into the global capitalist formation configured to the advantage of Western capitalist countries at the detriment of third world countries of Africa created an atmosphere of unequal exchange. Thus without the requisite technological, scientific and military prowess to

survive and compete effectively in such capitalist formation, Africans were made to be mere producers and suppliers of cheap raw materials and labor: such raw materials were taken to Europe and transformed into finished goods to be sold at high rate to Africa. It was based on such unpalatable situation, that some African Nationalist, like: Bylden, Casely Hayford, W.E.B. DuBois, Jomo Kenyatta, Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Haile Selassie, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Eyo Ita, Mrs. Funmilayo Kuti, Ahmadu Bello, etc., (Encyclopedia.Com.), embarked on journey towards the granting of independence.

The philosophical underpinning, of Kwame Nkrumah that says, "*seek ye first the Political freedom and every other thing will be added unto you*" prompted the successful Nationalist and independent leaders to embark on several strategies towards, decolonization, emancipation, unification and development in areas of politics, economic, technology, monetary and trade expansion. For instance, The Organization Of African Unity-OAU, was to achieve the above objectives of decolonization, (African Renewal, 2002). The formation of the Organization of African Unity (1963-2002), and the intergovernmental association of development, established in 2002 to promote unity and solidarity of African states, was to spur economic development, and to promote international cooperation. The African Union (AU) replaced the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The AU's headquarters is at Adisa Ababa in Ethiopia, (The Encyclopedia.Com). As mentioned above, independence redemption saw African leaders embarked on many development agenda geared towards economic development and expansion, trade integration, common market and common currency, etc. to enable the continent compete favourably in and take advantage of the globalized market. Unfortunately immediately after independence many African countries saw themselves wobbling in many boiling and troubling waters of military coup, civil wars, secessionist tendencies, resources wars, environmental conflicts, Corruption, dependence on foreign aid in virtually all aspects of its life, (Meres, 2017; Institute of security studies, 2022; the Relief web, 2019).

The continent, has also steered the compass of its developmental strides through homegrown policies and those dished out by Western powers as therapeutic dose to leap frog its developmental quest. The import substitution and Industrialization policy, the structural adjustment program-SAP, Privatization, Millennium Development goals, South African Development Commission-SADC, Intergovernmental Authority for Development-IGAD, Economic Community Of West African States-ECOWAS, Sustainable development goals, the Lome convention in 1975 which was later changed to the Cotonou agreement, African growth and opportunity act, etc. (Mahler, 1994; Lomazi, Borisch and Laaser, 2013; Sulaiman, Migros & Aluko, 2014; Office of the United States Trade Representatives; Gain, 2022; Schneidman, McNulty & Natalie, D. 2022). But despite all these attempts at development and integration in areas of trade, regional integration in economic, monetary, and development, growth etc. the continent still grapples with myriads of developmental quagmire evident in high rate of poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, environmental degradation, corruption, dependency on foreign aid which breed severe indebtedness and unbearable balance of payment difficulties, decayed infrastructural edifices-education, health, roads, power, etc. One wonders a continent so rich in all manner of promising natural, material and human resources, yet still remain underdeveloped.

As trenchantly observed by Olu-Adeyemi and Ayodele (2007), greater African integration has long been a promising thoughts but ends up as an exercise in futility and inconclusive agenda. Thus beginning from the idea of Organization For African Unity in 1963, leaders at official conferences and formal summits have long put forth the idea of a befitting continental integration for development, although with minimal results to show. However there is again a rejuvenated enthusiasm to establish close economic and political platform among states in the continent. This is in tandem with the obvious reality of the urgency and necessity for regional integration and a clearer understanding of the past challenges on same project of regional integration. Political liberation and de-colonization was the galvanizing strength and ideology upon which economic integration and unity, was anchored on. With the independence of several African States and the subsequent

establishment of a plethora of integrative mechanisms, the Pan-African conferences were particularly unequivocal in their advocacy of freeing Africa in an all-round sense with the zeal for economic cooperation as the basis of economic and political transformation. Aworawo (2015), also corroborated the views of Olu-Adeyemi and Ayodele, that a retrospective historical thinking from independence in the late 50s and early 60s, depicts Africa's quest for integration has been identified as vital for the acceleration of development in the continent. The reality of the post-Cold War international economic world order also spurred the intensification and fine-tuning of existing regional attempts leading to the establishment of a supra-national organisation and capacity building institutions to address the problems of underdevelopment in Africa.

Igwe, Ochinanwata, and Nnamdi (2021) also argued that, regionalism presents a promising attempt to engender Africa's transformation, economic development, and territorial advancement. Whether viewed with optimism or scepticism, globalization of trade has become a critical focus of world leaders but regional integration, governance of treaties and policies remain contentious grey areas. Ample evidence of Africa's strive and success in regional integration can be appreciated from the regionalization of the Economic Community Of West African States - ECOWAS and its treaty implementation. Despite the portrayal of Africa as the most underdeveloped continent in the world, the emergence of Economic Community Of West African States-ECOWAS and the African Union is a manifestation that Africa has a sense and burning zeal of taking responsibility of its affairs. However while some success in regionalism may have been recorded, such success appears to be limited in scope. The obvious shortcomings includes: member states internal insecurity, crime, illicit trading and smuggling across the borders. Also, ECOWAS security apparatus suffer from financial distress and political interference. ECOWAS forces receive insufficient training, lack of preparation and inadequate military equipment. These produced weak interventions and "seriously weakened" the external and internal security of the region and ability to neutralize the onslaught of Boko Haram terrorist group. More so, ECOWAS has been grappling to bring into fruition the radical integration of the region with other economic blocs. The Tralac News of (2017), reported that, the issue of regional integration is particularly prevalent in Africa, where it has been estimated that the continent's current trade intensity barely stands above 12 percent. Africa's own agenda then aimed at boosting intra-regional trade from the current level to 25 percent or more by 2022. This is an ambition that must be embraced by Africa's traditional and emerging trading partners, considering the promising development benefits that could be derived from such a scenario.

Thus, taking a retrospective intellectual premise, from the above insightful analysis, it is a resounding truth that, regionalism for whether economic, political, technological and trade integration remains very important. This is so as we are in a globalized era where the world and nations are entangled in a web of economic, political, cultural, environmental, military, and technical nest of continuous integration in a borderless world. Having been domiciled in a global capitalist terrain, where individually, each African state can not compete perfectly, a regional integration within to confront the external influence remains inevitable. The continent has embarked upon many integration and development scheme. But little improvement had been recorded. Africa does not possess the requisite arsenal to survive in a global economy, hence the reoccurrence of the era of colonialism where the continent still remains as mere producers and suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor as was the case in colonial era. Currently, all integration moves have not really yielded enough result as the markets of developed nations has not been really accommodating and favourable in terms and conditions on the entering of African goods into developed economies markets.

Though Alan Larson, the Under Secretary For Economic ,Business and Agricultural Affairs applauded the bounties from African Growth and Opportunity Act- AGOA accrued to Africa, thus: in the southern Africa region, since 2002, for instance, Lesotho has seen the opening of twelve new apparel factories and the expansion of eight existing plants, resulting in the creation of 25,000 new jobs. Now, for the first time, manufacturing employment in Lesotho exceeds government employment, and Lesotho has become the second largest exporter of manufactured products to the U.S. from Sub-Saharan Africa. In Namibia, new textile and

apparel investments totaling \$300 million resulted in 10,000 jobs. In South Africa, the African Growth And Opportunity Act- AGOA has been directly responsible for the creation of 19,000 new jobs, and indirectly for 40,000 others, many of these in the textile and apparel sector. And in Malawi, over 4,000 jobs were created in the textile sector. AGOA-related businesses employed about 200,000 people in Kenya, and the country has earned roughly \$650 million in AGOA exports in 2002, again mainly textiles and apparel. Yet another example: in West Africa, Woolworths opened two new branches in Ghana's capital city, Accra, where the company will invest \$10 million over the next five years. We can also cite Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda and Senegal as success stories, (Larson, 2003). Some challenges of AGOA, still looms as Akiko (2017) opined that, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has successfully supported for the sub-Saharan countries to achieve trade-led economic development on one hand, it has been criticized for the limited method for selecting beneficiaries and its legal instability. After the AGOA was renewed for another ten years in 2015, African countries are facing the new challenges such as AGOA reciprocation and the out-of-cycle eligibility review.

The recent integration and development scheme, embarked by Africa to make a leap frog attempt at reenergizing, consolidating and improving Africa's economy and trade via Continental Free Trade Area and the Agenda 2063 is a noble continental outreach. These are homegrown Pan-African Strategies established to cut off Africa from the unpalatable global web of economic strangulation. Such homegrown ideas as espoused by Agenda 2063: seeks to deliver on a set of Seven Aspirations each with its own set of goals which if achieved will move Africa closer to achieving its vision for the year 2063. The AFCFTA as a renaissance economic blue print which focus on an integrated continental trade geared towards forming the world's largest free trade area by connecting almost 1.3bn people across 54 African countries. The agreement aims to create a single market for goods and services in order to deepen the economic integration of Africa. The trade area could have a combined gross domestic product of around \$3.4 trillion, but achieving its full potential depends on significant policy reforms and trade facilitation measures across African signatory nations. The AFCFTA aims to reduce tariffs among members and covers policy areas such as trade facilitation and services, as well as regulatory measures such as sanitary standards and technical barriers to trade. The agreement was brokered by the African Union (AU) and was signed by 44 of its 55 member states in Kigali, Rwanda on March 21, 2018. The only country still not to sign the agreement is Eritrea, which has a largely closed economy. As of 10 February 2022, 41 of the 54 signatories had deposited their instruments of ratification with the chair of the African Union Commission, making them state parties to the agreement : 7 aspirations: 1- a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, 2- An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance, 3- An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, 4- A peaceful and secure Africa, 5- An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics, 6: An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children, 7- Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

Dovetailing from the above, such integrative mechanisms seems plausible and applaudable as erstwhile steps, but unsuccessful. It is based on the acknowledgement of certain setbacks that bedeviled previous ideas, that this paper resonates an intellectual strands to look into the role which Leadership plays in the actualization of both the Africa Continental Free Trade Area and Agenda 2063.

Problem Discourse

Africa's developmental strides of integration towards favorable strand in a globalized world, has not been a palatable one. Africa has not been fortunate in the global capitalist terrain as evident in the era of slavery and colonialism till present day. Africa continues to occupy the bottom rung in the global market space. Africa remains mere producers of raw materials and cheap labor, while depends on the Western world for virtually everything: a consuming nation without any ingenuity in breakthrough in science, technology, which breeds serious balance of problem which creates a neocolonial syndrome. Such a scenario has caused several pains as

the continent regress. One wonders a continent so rich in resources: Africa, the second-largest continent, is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean. It is divided in half almost equally by the Equator. Africa's fishing industry provides income to more than 10 million people and has an annual export value of \$2.7 billion. Marine fisheries are important to many coastal countries in Africa. West Africa is one of the most economically important fishing zones in the world, producing 4.5 million tons of fish in 2000. Africa's two most profitable mineral resources are gold and diamonds. In 2008, Africa produced about 483 tons of gold, or 22 percent of the world's total production. Africa is home to select deposits of oil and natural gas, which are drilled for energy and fuel. In 2007, the continent produced 12.5 percent of the world's total oil production and 6.45 percent of the world's total natural gas production. Nigeria, Libya, Algeria, Egypt, and Angola dominate Africa's oil industry. The Driefontein Gold Mine outside of Johannesburg, South Africa, is one of the largest gold mines in the world. The mine is made up of eight shafts that reach depths of up to 3,352 meters (11,000 feet) underground, (The National Geographic Society <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia>)

The Aljazeera News reported that, most of the electronics we use today are based on a number of minerals – from aluminium to zinc. In 2021, some 1.5 billion smartphones were sold around the world – up from 122 million units in 2007. As of 2020, nearly four in five (78 percent) people own a smartphone. More than half of a mobile phone's components – including its electronics, display, battery and speakers – are made from mined and semi-processed materials. Petroleum and coal are among the most abundant minerals for 22 out of Africa's 54 countries. As of 2019, Nigeria produced most of the continent's petroleum (25 percent), followed by Angola (17 percent), and Algeria (16 percent). At \$125bn per year, South Africa generates the most money from its mineral resources. Nigeria comes in second with \$53bn per year, followed by Algeria (\$39bn) Angola (\$32bn) and Libya (\$27bn). With all of these rich resources, the country it's still wallowing in all ramifications of underdevelopment: poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, dependency syndrome, uncompetitive trade pedigree in international global trade. Mostly in this era of globalization where the free trade rhetoric and open door policy hasn't benefitted the African continent even with so much resources. As opined by Ouattara (1997), globalization will continue to reinforce the interdependencies between different countries and regions. The International Food Policy and Research Institute-IFPRI, (2022) reports that, At the global market space, African countries continue to specialize in unprocessed agricultural products. Most African economies are largely monolithic, with comparative advantage in a relatively meager number of products. Although Africa's agricultural exports constitute a small share of world agricultural exports (only 4.2 percent over the 2003–2019 period), African exporters dominate world markets in a handful of products: the continent accounts for over 70 percent of global exports in unprocessed cashew nuts, cocoa beans, cocoa shells and husks, kola nuts, and vanilla. Most of these are niche products with relatively small markets. Africa's place in the global market, continues to be stunted by both domestic factors—such as low agricultural productivity and investment, poor transport and communications infrastructure, and inefficient customs procedures—and global trade barriers. Non-tariff measures (NTMs), such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, and price and quantity controls, pose some of the biggest constraints on Africa's agricultural exports. For intra-African trade, NTMs are even more damaging than tariffs.

United Nations Conference On Trade and Development-UNCTAD reported that, the challenge is clear, too. Africa accounts for only 1 per cent of global manufacturing. And manufacturing represents about 10 per cent of African GDP, compared to 35 per cent for East Asia and the Pacific and 16 per cent for Latin America and the Caribbean. The low level of manufacturing infrastructures in Africa means that manufactured goods – such as cars, machines, and electronic gadgets – must be imported from western industrialized world, a problem that is also an opportunity. If various national markets can be effectively integrated into a larger regional market, the report says, there should be sufficient population and patronizers to support the expansion of industry within the region. Verter (2017) also opined that, because advanced and newly industrialized economies possess more requisite technological know-how and gadgets for production and, access to finance, and market than Africa,

they have a greater market proportion in the world trade. Arguably, African countries have been left in the cold as they struggle to compete unfavourably with advanced economies. As presented in many forums, Africa has been struggling to show relevance in the world market. However, its global share of merchandise trade has dwindled over the decades. This is partly due to the continent has concentrated on the exportation of few primary commodities (i.e., mineral fuels, iron ores, gold, cocoa beans) with controversial prices and demands in the world markets.

Based on the above critical issues that shrouds Africa's trade with the outside world, the need for an African-centered initiative remains quintessential in bolstering it's quest for a promising venture, competitive and sustainable regional economic boom that will make the continent thrive well in this area of globalization with it's concomitant free trade, liberalism, open door policies, etc. The African Development Bank Group-AFDBG,(2018) informed that, Africa's integration is no longer a matter of choice. Against an international backdrop of changing political and economic priorities, Africa must pilot a new course for its industrialization and economic development, using the momentum of regional integration. For Africa, a vast continent of over 1.2 billion people, integration has considerable potential not only for promoting robust and equitable economic growth through markets, but also for reducing conflict and enhancing trade liberalization. Isik (2016) stressed the need for resources-rich Africa towards regional integration, thus: in a continent facing massive infrastructural deficiency, African countries can not miss out on opportunities to foster the shared use of infrastructure and to bolster the nexus between extractive resources and the broader economy. Non-mining businesses like farms or food traders in sparsely populated or remote areas, for example, would benefit from shared infrastructure, since railways, roads and electricity are all needed to bring goods to markets. Regional integration is often seen as less relevant for resource-rich countries, since demand for commodities typically comes from the global market rather than from regional demand. Regional integration in Africa, however, is capable of engendering a diversified economy ,taking such away from dependence on the export of just a few mineral products; in delivering food and energy security; in generating jobs for the increasing number of young people; and in alleviating poverty and delivering shared prosperity.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to discuss the rationale behind the emergence of African development agenda with focus on African Continental Free Trade Area and Agenda 2063.

The study further look into some specific issues below:

Examine the rationale behind the emergence of African Continental Free Trade Area and Vision 2063

A brief analysis of Africa regional integration challenges.

The Role of Leadership in the actualization of regional ntegration and transformation agenda.

Operational Definition of Terms.

In this study ,some concepts would be clarified to aid easy understanding. Concepts like Leadership, regional integration and good governance

Leadership

There are myriads definitions of leadership in the management and organisational behaviour literature. According to Burns (1978), leadership is one of the most discussed but least understood topics in the universe. A useful definition of leadership is that by Robbins, Judge and Vohra (2013) which states that leadership is the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a vision or set of goals. Organizations (and indeed societies) need strong leadership and management for optimal effectiveness. Leaders are needed today to challenge the status quo, create visions of the future, and inspire organisational or societal members to want to achieve the visions. The same goes for management which is a related but slightly different concepts. Although there is no single definition of leadership, it is imperative for this article to consider some perspectives. Ward (2009) defined leadership as “the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common

goal,” and not a selfish objective. As Northouse(2007) has aptly noted, leadership “is a process of getting things done through people”; it “means responsibility”—having “passion for the purpose and the mission of the organization” or society one leads.

Good Governance

According to Ekundayo (2017), Good governance theory, therefore, is a governance theory that sets some basic principles according to which a good government, whatever its form, must be run. Such principles include accountability, control, responsiveness, transparency, public participation, economy, efficiency etc. In sum, the theory of good governance is created to reflect all the principles enunciated above and many more (Minogue, Polidano and Hulme, 1998). In view of the foregoing and in line with the World Bank principles and policy interventions in third world countries, good governance involves an efficient public service, an independent judicial system and legal framework to enforce contracts and responsible administration of public funds. Other requirements for good governance include an independent public auditor responsible to a representative legislature, respect for the law and human rights at all levels of government and a pluralistic institutional structure. Apart from the above, good governance is predicated on three segments of the society which have direct effect on governance as highlighted. The type of political regime, the process by which authority is exercised in the management of the economic and social resources with a view to development, and the capacity of governments to formulate policies and have them effectively implemented (WorldBank, 1992:3 <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/gov>).

Regional Integration.

According to the World Bank.org (2022), regional integration is capable of making countries overcome divisions that distorts the flow of goods, services, capital, people and ideas. These divisions are a constraint to economic growth, especially in developing countries. The World Bank Group helps its client countries to promote regional integration through common physical and institutional infrastructure. Trade, investment and domestic regulation, transport, ICT and energy infrastructure; Macroeconomic and financial policy. The provision of other common public goods (e.g. shared natural resources, security, education). Hix (2001), opined that, regional integration is a multifaceted process, whereby sovereign nation-states establish common political, legal, economic, and social institutions for collective governance. Venables (2001), is of the view that, regional economic integration occurs when countries come together to form free trade areas or customs unions, offering members preferential trade access to each other's' market. The study.com,(2021) informs that, regional integration is a process in which countries enter into a regional agreement in order to enhance regional cooperation through regional structure and rules. The most well-known of these are: USMCA formerly NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), which is with the U.S., Mexico and Canada, and The EU (or the European Union), which has 27 member countries in Europe.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the Good Governance theory and Regional Integration theory.

The Good Governance Theory

According to Asaduzzaman (2016) as a concept, “good governance” does not have a straightforward definition, though it has been expanding rapidly in the discourse of development (Vartola et al. 2010). In general, good governance is associated with efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework. It is equivalent to purposive and development-oriented administration, which is committed to improving the quality of life of the people and enlarging the scope of people’s participation in the decision making process of development. In short, it is a citizen-friendly, citizen-caring, responsive, decentralized local government sys-tem; an autonomous political society; an efficient and accountable bureaucracy; strong civil society; and a free media (Huque 2001; Minocha 1998;Stowe 1992).According to Ekundayo (2017) good governance theory, therefore, is a governance theory that sets some basic principles according to which a good government, whatever its form, must be run.

Such principles include accountability, control, responsiveness, transparency, public participation, economy, efficiency etc. In sum, the theory of good governance is created to reflect all the principles enunciated above and many more (Minogue, Polidano and Hulme, 1998). In view of the foregoing and in line with the World Bank principles and policy interventions in third world countries, good governance involves an efficient public service, an independent judicial system and legal framework to enforce contracts and responsible administration of public funds. Other requirements for good governance include an independent public auditor responsible to a representative legislature, respect for the law and human rights at all levels of government and a pluralistic institutional structure. Apart from the above, good governance is predicated on three segments of the society which have direct effect on governance as highlighted. The type of political regime, the process by which authority is exercised in the management of the economic and social resources with a view to development, and the capacity of governments to formulate policies and have them effectively implemented (WorldBank, 1992:3) (<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/gov>).

The relevant and input of the good governance theory to the study ,shows how leadership that portrays the tenets of good governance is required to spur regional integration in Leadership that is transparent, citizenship driven , accountable and prudent in utilizing available resources for national and regional interest.Such leaders should be ready be disentangled from any tenets of neocolonialism and western domination.

Without African leaders proving readiness to act in accordance with good governance and effective leaders, mostly in this democratic era, efforts for domestic and regional integration and transformation can not be realized.

Regional Integration Theory

The regional integration theory, according to Schimmel and Fenning (2018) seeks to explain the establishment and development of regional international organizations. Key questions are why and under which conditions states decide to transfer political authority to regional organizations; how regional organizations expand their tasks, competencies, and members; and what impact they have on states and societies in their regions. Theories explaining the development of European integration—rather than decision making and policy making in the EU—are intergovernmentalism, neofunctionalism, and postfunctionalism. The key debates in regional integration theory have taken place between variants of intergovernmentalist and neofunctionalist integration theory. Inter-governmentalism assumes national governments to be the key actors in regional integration. Governments use regional integration to maximize their national security and economic interests in the context of regional interdependence. Integration outcomes result from intergovernmental bargaining and reflect the regional preference and power constellations. Governments delegate authority to regional organizations to secure their bargaining outcomes but remain in control of regional organizations and the integration process. By contrast, neofunctionalism disputes that governments are able to control the integration process. Transnational corporations and interest groups as well as supranational actors are empowered by the integration process and shape it in their own interest. In addition, integration creates a variety of “spillovers” and path-dependencies that push integration beyond the intergovernmental bargain. More recently, postfunctionalism has enriched and challenged the theoretical debate on regional integration. In contrast to neofunctionalism, postfunctionalism assumes a backlash mechanism of integration.

The input of the theory is that,Regional integration has come to stay, mostly in this era of unfettered globalization runner by capitalism.Nations have come to accept the fact that,no man is an island in such a global village.Regional economic, political, technological and military bloc has been prevalent in global politics.Nations perceive regional ties as a veritable means to secure and achieve national interest.

Upon this reasons, Africa can not deny the fact that,it needs a conglomeration of it's willing,trusted and effective states and leaders to pursue regionalism.As shown in early post-it dependence era ,the continent is an exemplary world of people ready to meets it's need via the pursuit of regionalism.

A Review of African Economic Integration and Transformation Strategies:the case of African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) and Agenda 2063:

As stated in preceding pages,the African continent is in dire need of a befitting transition that spurs economic, political, technological and social advancement that not only enhances the welfare of it's citizens but set the continent on the path of sustainable growth.Such growth entails escaping from dependence in all ramifications, poverty, exclusion from globalization benefits.Thus the agelong minimalist role played by Africa in the global economy,right from when it was forcefully integrated into the global capitalist economy by colonial occupation.This has kept Africa at the receiving end of global economic profits.Little wonder the rate of debt burden, continuous borrowing, balance of payment problem, technological backwardness,etc.Consequent upon this,the continent has in various times channeled it's compass towards myriads of development ideas anchored on regional economic and political integration.

According to Hailu (2014),as Alemayehu & Haile duly observed, ‘regional integration initiatives in Africa have a long history, dating back to the establishment of the South African Customs Union (SACU) in 1910 and the East African Community (EAC) in 1919.’⁵⁶ Since then, a number of regional arrangements have been formed in the continent. In addition to agreements at a regional level, attempts have also been underway to create economic cooperation (and ultimately meaningful economic integration) among African countries at a continental level.This was first seen in the adoption of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its establishment.The OAU Charter, adopted by the heads of states and Governments in Africa in 1963, entrenched the fundamental objective of regional solidarity and cooperation for development. The OAU had undertaken different initiatives to integrate the Africa region for the promotion of economic and social development. In this regard, various regional and intergovernmental meetings were held which resulted in the adoption of various treaties, declarations and plan of actions.

Hailu (2014) opined that,the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 based on the Treaty of Lagos.⁷⁶ The objective of ECOWAS, as illustrated under article 3 of the 1993 revised treaty, is:to promote cooperation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union ... to raise the living standards of its people, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent.The objective of ECOWAS extends to cooperation in almost all the sectors of the respective economies of the member states. The ECOWAS treaty aims to achieve economic integration through the harmonization and coordination of national policies and the promotion of integration programs.Although ECOWAS was formed with the purpose of economic integration and cooperation, it has (in the past decade) assumed a more active role in the management of regional conflicts and humanitarian crisis;and its mandate has been extended accordingly by the revised treaty of 1993. Several efforts have also been undertaken by member states of ECOWAS to establish a common currency amongst themselves as the eventual goal of the economic cooperation was to establish monetary union in the region.

According to Mendes, Rudolph and Teixeira (2014),import substitution was one of the development strategies which started to prevail as a form of industrialization in most developing countries in the post-war period. In many Latin American countries, especially Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina, a conscious implementation of import substitution policies was observed as of the 1950s and early 1960s.They further observed that,Soon after independence, countries of Sub-Saharan Africa identified themselves ideologically with that strategy, and began to implement it in the subsequent years; in fact, that was the only strategy associated with the ideology of development originated with the independence process in African nations.That strategy lasted until the second half of the eighties due to a structural adjustment policy which strongly disapproved of that industrialization system for the region.

The United Nations Economic Commission For Africa bulletin report that, from the time of independence, there have been failed attempts to industrialize efficiently using import-substitution, which gave rise to the notion of regional integration as a means to facilitate structural transformation in Africa. As a result, African countries have embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies primarily driven by the economic rationale of overcoming the constraint of small and fractioned economies working in isolation. Several pan-African organizations have successively been working towards deepening economic, social and political cooperation and integration in Africa. A number of colonial cross-border arrangements have continued to exist post-independence and serve the regional integration agenda thus far. Prime examples are related to the previous African Financial Community (CFA) zone, comprising the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc. The West African CFA franc was ultimately integrated to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in the territory of ECOWAS, while the Central African CFA franc is set to join the envisioned Economic and Monetary Union of Central Africa (CEMAC) in the ECCAS region. Likewise in Southern Africa, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) with its associated monetary union – the Common Monetary Area – is set to be integrated to the SADC constituency. (United Nations Economic Commission For Africa)

Various pan-African organizations are, through different mechanisms, promoting sustainable economic growth and development, where the key component of regional integration is present in their workings. ECA was established by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 1958 as one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations that, together with partners and member States, consecutively work towards sustainable development in Africa. ECA focuses on providing technical assistance by undertaking research and policy analysis to strengthen the capacity of institutions driving the regional integration agenda, including the African Union, regional economic communities and member States. (United Nations Economic Commission For Africa) ECA has been to target Africa's development challenges, particularly in the context of poverty eradication, to ensure sustainable growth and good governance on the continent and thus promote international cooperation for Africa's development. In this regard, ECA had, in the 1960s, recommended the creation of subregional groupings in Africa to serve that purpose. Around the same time, the Heads of State and Government of 30 of the 32 independent African nations gathered to establish the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at the Conference of Independent African States on 25 May 1963. Apart from the liberalization efforts of colonization and apartheid, the main objectives of OAU were: to promote unity and solidarity among African States; to organize and strengthen cooperation for development on the continent; to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member States; and to encourage international cooperation as outlined by the United Nations. [2] Parallel to the creation of OAU was the establishment of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB). It was formed after an agreement signed by 23 founding member States on 14 August 1963 in Khartoum, Sudan. The Group includes two other entities, with AfDB as the parent institution – the African Development Fund, which was established on 29 November 1972 by AfDB and 13 non-African countries; and the Nigeria Trust Fund, which was set up in 1976 by the Federal Government of Nigeria. (United Nations Economic Commission For Africa).

Hailu (2014) affirmed that In 1991 African Heads of States signed the Treaty Establishing African Economic Community (AEC) in Abuja, Nigeria. 64 Paragraph 3(V) of the preamble to the LPA reflects the view of the signatories that the Plan will pave the way for the formation of an African common market leading to the AEC. 65 In this regard, the Abuja treaty seems to be a continuation of the integration effort started under the LPA. The treaty which entered into force in 1994, envisaged a strong pan-African economic community built on the ramparts of the existing sub regional bodies. 66 The treaty aims at establishing economic integration by strengthening the existing regional blocks. The AEC treaty had set 2028 as a new date for attaining a Pan African economic community comprising fifty-three states and some 600 million people. This is intended to be achieved over a period of thirty four years using six levels or stages of integration.

The Abuja Treaty is arguably the most important agreement as regards economic, social and political collaboration, coordination and convergence in Africa as it lays out the future of the continent with the establishment of an African Economic Community. The integration process is set to cover a period of 34 years from 1994 to 2028. Following the signing of the Abuja Treaty, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government directed the Committee on the Review of the Charter (established in 1979) to meet and re-examine the OAU Charter with a view to aligning it with the Abuja Treaty. Notwithstanding numerous attempts since 1979, OAU member States could not agree on amendments to the 1963 Charter,(Economic Commission For Africa)

During the thirty-seventh session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, African leaders adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It was ratified by the African Union in 2002 in Durban, to deal with Africa's development problems in a new paradigm. The main objectives of NEPAD have been to reduce poverty, put Africa on a sustainable development path, halt the marginalization of Africa, and empower women. The Partnership provides a comprehensive, integrated development plan that tackles key social, economic and political principles for the continent. A practical example is the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, which is an initiative that comprises several cross-border infrastructure projects in the sectors of: transport, energy, water, and information and communications technology. Moreover, the Durban Summit also approved the creation of the NEPAD African Peer Review Mechanism, which became operational in 2003, for further promotion and monitoring of good governance practices in and among member States in Africa. After a number of years with lagging regional integration initiatives, the fourth Conference of African Ministers of Integration adopted the Minimum Integration Programme in 9 May 2009. The programme contains an action plan to accelerate coordination, convergence and collaboration among the regional economic communities so as to achieve the ultimate objective of the African Economic Community. It also identifies financing and structural impediments hindering the implementation of the Abuja Treaty and offers a roadmap for how to overcome the challenges. In parallel, COMESA, EAC and SADC agreed to negotiate a Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA) as a building block of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) on 22 October 2008.[5] Concurrent to the TFTA negotiations was the eighteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union held in January 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was organized under the theme: "Boosting Intra-African Trade". The Assembly of the African Union endorsed the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and the fast-tracking of the Continental Free Trade Area.[6] Following the successful first negotiation forum held in Addis Ababa from 22 to 27 February 2016, and the second forum planned for May 2016, CFTA is arguably the most comprehensive regional trade arrangement in the process of negotiation at the moment,(Economic Commission For Africa).

All developmental efforts or policies earmarked by nations, falls on the shoulders of leaders who priorities issues of national interest, map out strategies, allocate resources and set implication, monitoring and evaluation task. Many issues surrounding developmental milestones and challenges of nations globally has a link to leadership. Most developmental , security, social, political and social issues suffered by nations, mostly in Africa are as a result of attitude of leaders.

African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA).

The agreement aims to create a single market for goods and services in order to deepen the economic integration of Africa. The trade area could have a combined gross domestic product of around \$3.4 trillion, but achieving its full potential depends on significant policy reforms and trade facilitation measures across African signatory nations. The AFCFTA aims to reduce tariffs among members and covers policy areas such as trade facilitation and services, as well as regulatory measures such as sanitary standards and technical barriers to trade. The agreement was brokered by the African Union (AU) and was signed by 44 of its 55 member states in Kigali, Rwanda on March 21, 2018. The only country still not to sign the agreement is Eritrea, which has a largely closed economy. As of 10 February 2022, 41 of the 54 signatories had deposited their instruments of ratification with the chair of the African Union Commission, making them state parties to the agreement : 7 aspirations: a

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

The International Labour Organization(ILO) bulleting report that,the aspiration of the AFCFTA is a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; high Standard of Living, Quality of Life and Well Being for All. Indicative National Strategies;Implement AU frameworks on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration and Public-Private Partnership for Jobs Creation and Inclusive Development; Develop/implement policies that will enhance free movement of people and workers;Initiate policies that would lead to a better and more responsible labor migration flows.Aspiration 2:n integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and vision of Africa's Renaissance;Domesticate all protocols leading to free movement of persons within the REC,domesticate all the ILO Conventions on Labour Migration as appropriate to each Member State,review all labour bilateral agreements with other member states and non-member states,develop capacity to manage the flow of cross border migration with attention to the concerns of Women, Youth and vulnerable groups; and some continental regional economic commitments such as:Develop / implement advocacy strategies / programmes for ratification by member states;develop/implement regional frameworks that enhances access at points entry to Women involved in cross-border trade.

Agenda 2063

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) 2022 publication on " Agenda 2063: the Africa we want; first ten-year implementation plan, 2013-2023", informed that, In order to ensure effective implementation, the 24th Assembly of the Union further requested the African Union Commission (AUC) to finalize a draft First Ten Year Plan of Agenda 2063 for consideration and adoption by the June 2015 meetings of the AU Policy Organs. The document presents the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan for Agenda 2063. It builds upon the Agenda 2063 Framework Document adopted in January 2015, and seeks to accelerate Africa's political, social, economic and technological transformation while continuing the Pan African drive for self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity. Covering the period 2014-2023, it is the first of a series of five ten year implementation plans to be developed to realize the vision of the "Africa We Want By 2063".

The vision 2063 , according to the Africa Union Commission document,has 7 priority areas: aspiration 1:a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development,2-an integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance,3-an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law; 4 - a peaceful and secure Africa; 5 - africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics, 6: an Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children;7 an frica as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.The African Union Commission Reports states that,if well implemented and objectives achieved, Agenda 2063 would make real per-capita incomes to be a third more than 2013 levels.Incidence of hunger, especially amongst Women and Youth will only be 20% of 2023 levels.Job opportunities will be available to at least one in four persons looking for work.At least one out of every three children will be having access to kindergarten education with every child of secondary school age in school and seven out of ten of its graduates without access to tertiary education enrolled in TVET programmes.Malnutrition, maternal, child and neo-natal deaths as at 2013 would be reduced by half; access to anti-retroviral will be automatic and proportion of deaths attributable to HIV/AIDs and malaria would have been halved.Nine out of ten persons will have access to safe drinking water and sanitation;

electricity supply and internet connectivity will be up by 50% and cities will be recycling at least 50% of the waste they generate.

Challenges to African Regional Integration And Development.

As obviously pointed out in preceding pages, the issues surrounding Africa's poor integration and development achievement is not that of inadequate schemes. Because from independence till date, many schemes have nurtured as regards this area of regional concern. Resources too isn't a challenge as many African countries are endowed enormously with requisite natural resources and even human resources. This is why soumana affirmed that, Yet, these arrangements failed to impact positively on the Continent's economic performance. Inadequate political will and commitment to the process; high incidence of conflicts and political instability; poor design and sequencing of regional integration arrangements; multiplicity of the schemes; inadequacy of funding; and exclusion of key stakeholders from the regional integration process are factors accounting for the ineffectiveness. Also despite this ugly outcome, the continent is not discouraged, as it still push for more regional integration efforts.

Ability to reenergize Africa's potentials in all ramifications, making use of it's endowments to develop the continent as done by Asian Tigers to be freed from neo-colonial syndrome of over dependence, debt burden, capital flight, etc.. This till has to do with the mindset and willingness of leaders who are the mirror at which people look at their respective states in Africa. Qobo (2007) argued in conformity to the above pointing out that, it is widely acknowledged that Africa's integration efforts have thus far failed to bear satisfactory fruit. While other regions have successfully used their integration mechanisms to improve their economic welfare, Africa lags behind with respect to GDP growth, per capita income, capital inflows, and general living standards. This is a problem across most of the continent, in spite of the existence of plethora of policy plans and grand vision.

Qobo further reiterated that, another area and factor that impedes integration is that of the historical plague of disintegration in Africa. Thus African respective states were not states that their people shared some common attributes of nationhood as compared to 19th century Europe. African countries remained largely internally unintegrated in the post-colonial period. Rather, as Joseph Nye Jr suggests, they bore a close resemblance to the types of 16th- and 17th-century Europe. Today, as then, national consciousness remains the exclusive project of the elites and bourgeois project rather than a process that is citizenship - driven upward. As a result, there is no nationalism in the true sense of the word, but only elite nationalistic projects (Nye 2004:112 in Qobo 2007). Further more, this underscores the futility of attempting continental integration on the basis of a fragile and shaky national foundations. In a sense, Africa's regional integration project as well as its slow and tumultuous integration into the global economy is an integration of incomplete states; states that cannot fully lay a claim to complete nationhood and suffer from multifaceted internal instabilities. Thus, as Nye (2004) suggests, internal structure with it's cruel centripetal and centrifugal forces presents one of the problems for Africa's developmental prospects. The matter becomes more worrisome as there is lack of the willingness of member states to cede or share sovereignty at the regional level by agreeing to a supranational body.

Gomes (2014) is of the view that, due to the current international division of labor Africa specializes mostly on the export of primary goods with the prices established at the global level and not in Africa. Such models of unequal exchange not only lessen the opportunities for development of African countries at the expense of export but also result in competitive ability loss of African countries at the world market.

The Place of Leadership In Actualizing African Continental Integration And Development.

Leadership is something an individual, society, organization or agency can not jettison, in terms of laying down principles, ideology, goals, direction and coordination of efforts towards goal achievement. No amount of human, capital, natural and material resources can function without a being, group of individuals with a reasonable sense of responsibility to sincerely spearhead a course in a manner that proves prudence, competency,

selflessness and progressiveness to meet objectives. Same implies to Africa which is a continent battling with the insurmountable governance and developmental challenges in their respective states and in the region.

Thiam (2003) cited former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo on his perspective on leadership, unity and development in Africa, thus: the role expected of African leaders to undertake in fostering meaningful and purposeful cooperative mechanism. He emphasized on the cogent need for African leaders to sincerely perform the role of architects of Africa's own fortune since so far Africa's leadership style, has only brought disaster to millions of Africans. For Obasanjo Africa's redemption and liberation lies within the hands of Africans via their leadership. For this, he Obasanjo was moved to established the African Leadership Forum with the mission of fostering genuine leadership in Africa towards regional integration for continental development.

The views of Gordon (2002) corroborates the above assertion on the centrality of African leaders as an instrument of continental breakthrough. In his intellectual reasoning on the African condition highlighting some basic indicators such as health, education, food, housing, road conditions, corruption, etc., he concluded that the determining factor in Africa's problems is the governance pathology of leadership failure. "If all the money in the world is given to Africa today," he argues, "it will be in shambles without any befitting achievement in the long-run if the continent is bereft of effective and creative leadership." (Gordon 2002, 174). As perceived by most pundits, Africa's leadership can be understood in two perspectives: a leadership that failed in its attempts to promote political, economic, and social development and that which failed to set up the basic infrastructures for a genuine united Africa. Gordon pointed out that the emergence of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), for instance, was a long battle among African leaders on what form African unity should be, Pan-Africanism, and regionalism. In this respect, the extinction of the OAU in July 2002 was a cruel testimony that stunted the unreasonable leadership quarell that characterized Africa in various forms and fashions from the 1960s to this day. This type of leadership characterized by sectarianism, ethnocentrism and their corollaries succeeded in breeding a permanent state of conflict (active or latent) throughout the African continent. The politics of ethnocentrism and division by Africa's leadership has also been taken into consideration by Ayittey (1998). The author not only frowned at, but rebuked Africa's leadership for this bad failure. However, he presented a clear dichotomy between the leadership in Africa and the people. Africa's disintegration and demise, for him, is the fallout of ineffective leadership. The second distinction and the most critical one from his perception focused specifically on what he calls the 'two Africas': the traditional Africa and the modern one. He prognosticated that the traditional face of Africa is the one that works with efficiency, the one that produces on a subsistence level for its people. In contrast, the "modern Africa", the lost one, is the Africa riddled with political greed which breeds disruptions and dislocations. It is the Africa that destroys many innocent victims as illustrated by the Rwandan genocide and the senseless human carnage in other areas of Africa. He argues that "Most African leaders are despots and failures" and are true representations of modern Africa (Ayittey 1998, 13).

Thiam (2003) further reiterated that, due to the nature of African leadership and their failures to transform the continent, Africa is mirrored as a continent of hopelessness and backwardness. As demonstrated by earlier scholarly works, there is a consensus that the main obstacle to Africa's unity and development is its political leadership, which has exhibited a common pattern of inability to work together within the framework of a united front (Killick 1993, Hope 1997 in Thiam, 2003.). Hope (1997) further pointed out, "it is indubitable that there is a need for a new shared vision of regional cooperation and integration. Improving policies is capable of engendering growth substantially, but if neighboring countries adopt a policy change together, the effects on growth would be exponential than what individual country would get acting alone. In the same vein, Hope further argued that African leaders have to prove their honesty with good sense of political correctness working together in order to disentangle from authoritarianism, to dismantle the bureaucratic obstacles to policy reform and change, (Hope 1997 in Thiam 2003). Ihonvbere (2000) argues that ideological differences, nationalistic interests, the inability to generate sufficient political will, corruption, regime turnover, and political instability

constitutes some determining variables limiting the ability to implement the various charters and cooperation agreements.

The role of African leaders, in ensuring and actualizing a sound, beneficial and sustained regional integration scheme for Africa, can not be downplayed. As pointed out by the Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union, Victor Harison, regional integration and development of the continent are congruent with the statutes of Member States of the Union and the Regional Economic Communities. Regional integration is a noble challenge that can only be achieved with the consensus involvement of all stakeholder. This requires sustained efforts: in short, "leadership and perseverance," as said by Commissioner Harison, (African Development Bank, 2023).

The views of Signe (2018) also point to the fact that, many lofty ideas towards regional integration and development in Africa exist from independence. But the continent till date, is faced with some of the most complex economic, political, and social challenges in the globalized world. Such maladies as provened by results from consecutive Afrobarometer surveys are factual: in particular, there is high disillusionment of citizens towards their leadership. Numerous national development strategies (such as export-led growth, import-substitution industrialization, state-led development, market-oriented development), but also regional ones (such as the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and Agenda 2030 of the African Union), proved abortive in bolstering the continent's competitiveness in a globalized world to a satisfactory level. Signe, in pondering over this issue of Africa's inability to benefit from the bounties associated with regionalism in a globalized world, looked into issue of leadership failure and legitimacy crisis. He however wonder why during the days of independence struggle, leaders were seen as Messiah and change agents, but today contemporary African leaders are not in anyway playing their role as agent of transformations in their respective states and in Africa. On this note he affirmed that, "accountable leadership can positively transform Africa into an economically, politically, and socially competitive region to reap the bounties in the globalized economy while fulfilling citizens' expectations".

Igue and Jordan (2010), reiterates that, Africa needs leaders who are abreast with and possess the requisite credentials to able to gain from the current globalized cum capitalist world that it's technologically driven. Leaders who are intellectually capable to unravel the multidimensional issues confronting regional development and integration. This was demonstrated in his words, "assimilating the current debate on development; acquiring new knowledge that is missing in Africa, adopting a long-term approach and using good negotiating skills, exploiting new information and communication technologies; marrying the new developmental values with those of equality, integrity, good governance and shared management of the wealth available".

The publication of The United Nations Economic Commission For Africa titled "strategic leadership needed for Africa's transformation", which was a conference by African Heads of States in Dar El Salaam on 31st July, 2014, further reiterated the role of leadership in achieving Africa's long quest for national integration. Speaking at the Forum, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Mr. Carlos Lopes said, "managing diversity is the foremost governance challenge plaguing the continent. That Africa needs to embrace its diversity and not see it as a curse. We need leaders who are capable of managing diversity and practice social cohesion. that issues of governance in Africa need to be addressed thoroughly". For his part, Former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa said "the African Union needed to include an element of assessing performance of leaders within its Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a way of addressing the leadership gap. "We need to strengthen the capacities of our leaders so that they are able to meet the yearnings of our people," he added.

Way forward

The African Development Bank Group report of (2019) states that, To achieve inclusive development in African nations, the African Development Bank has identified five priority areas (High 5s) that guide the implementation of its Ten-Year Strategy (2013-2022): Light up and power Africa; Feed Africa; Industrialize

Africa; Integrate Africa; and Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa. With regard to regional integration, the Bank's focus is on building a stable, integrated and prosperous Africa comprised of competitive, diversified and sustainable economies that are fully active in the global trade and investment market.

Leadership with the disciplinary tenets and willingness to disentangle from neo-colonial syndrome of over dependence. This brings to the fore the need for African countries to judiciously utilize the abundance of available resources at their disposal. Thus ensuring the different States experience appreciable level of transformations which makes the environment conducive for human development, innovation, economic boom, mostly to farmers, small and medium scale enterprises and technological advancements.

Sincere regional integration scheme that cuts drastically any hinderance in the form of unnecessary movement restrictions, excessive trade barriers in the form of high cost of import tax and rigorous bureaucratic bottlenecks. This further entails ability of African countries to dampen the diversities that could hinder smooth functioning of regional integration.

Conclusion

The study was set to examine the level of regional integration and development achievement of African continent. The study sets to fill in existing gaps in other literatures and scholarly works on African integration, yet I'd not critically tackled issues of leadership in achieving Africa's long quest for regional integration.

This acknowledging and appreciating the gigantic strides of Africa beginning from independence till date in engendering a robust and sound regional integration scheme to be able to escape the doldrums of relegation in the global capitalist economy, that kept the continent continuously at the receiving end. Thus it is no longer news that, despite the enormous natural, human, mineral resources endowed by Africa, the huge foreign aids from western nations and other donor agencies, yet nothing to show in Africa at both domestic and international forums. The continent is still wallowing in poverty, environmental decadence, poor per Capita income, low life expectancy, inadequate infrastructure to sour industrialization, heavy debt burden, etc.

It now dawn on issue of leadership that is ready with the political will, accountability, sincerity, consciousness and selflessness in coordinating the endowment of the region collaboratively to solve the myriads of challenges facing the continent.

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