

# The Failure of African Leaders to Revive the Economy and Alleviate Poverty through the African Union



Phemelo Olifile Marumo <sup>1</sup>  & Thabang Richard Motswaledi <sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> School of Philosophy, Northwest University, South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Politics and International Relations, School of Government Studies, North West University, South Africa.

## ABSTRACT

This paper assessed the economic shortfalls of the African leaders in/ through the African Union (AU) in the revival of the African economy and that continues to hinder the continent's development. In doing so, the study employed qualitative techniques. Document analysis was used to illustrate that the African leaders in the organization have not done justice to their goal of being role players economic development of the continent. This has led to the contemporary mediocrity performance of continental economic development. This paper discovered that the economic vision of the African leaders through the AU has not been met thus far. This is a clear indication of the failure of the leaders to meet the organization's objective in terms of poverty alleviation is concerned. The study recommends various mechanisms to enhance Africa's development through internal trade and economic integration. Hence, it concludes that it is clear that the African Union has not yet achieved its economic objectives. To change this, Africa needs to promote unity and establish itself as a key player in global economic trade, rather than being on the sidelines.

### Correspondence

Phemelo Olifile Marumo  
Email:  
Phemelo.marumo@nwu.ac.za

### Publication History

Received: 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2024  
Accepted: 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2024  
Published online:  
16<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

**Keywords:** *Objectives of the AU, Failures of the African leader, The AU, Continent's Economic Growth and Stability.*

## INTRODUCTION

There should be recognition that Africa cannot solve its problems through external trade and interference from the United States of America (USA) and the West. This is a result of the one-sided conditionality attached to such relations, a condition that is one side of which the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) trade route is a good example of such. According to Naumann,<sup>1</sup> it must be highlighted that the law-making of this particular treaty is a unilateral program by the US government.<sup>2</sup> As such the US does not necessarily need to consult other member states in changing the legislation of this treaty and that may lead to the changes being for the benefit of the US only. Furthermore, given the non-reciprocity nature of the AGOA, beneficiary countries of this treaty including the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) member states are going to be negatively impacted by this relation.

As such, these capitalists keep extracting and raping Africa's resources to maintain the status quo. Moreover, the development of these capitalists (US) is at the expense of Africa, thus retaining

<sup>1</sup> Eckart Naumann, "AGOA at 10: Reflections on US-Africa Trade with a Focus on SACU Countries," *Stellenbosch: Tralac Working Papers*, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Garth Frazer and Johannes Van Biesebroeck, "Trade Growth under the African Growth and Opportunity Act," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 92, no. 1 (2010): 128–44.

exploitation.<sup>3</sup> Africa's failure to revive the African economy is due to the economic imbalances perpetuated throughout the continent.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, African states cannot pursue one position at the same time, and the level of development is not the same. Other states are developing meanwhile others are underdeveloped thus these two close classes cannot pursue similar ambitions. The vibrations of individual states should be to meet the needs of that particular state as per the needs of their development.

In contemporary African politics, the burning question is whether the establishment of the AU helped African economic development or whether it has instead continued to enhance the exploitation of the continent. Furthermore, whether it has improved Africa economically, and to what extent has the infrastructure in Africa developed since then.<sup>5</sup> However, the establishment of the AU did not remove the realities of the challenges faced within the continent. For instance, there is still a huge need for change to occur within the continent. Numerous treaties such as AGOA need to be transformed so that both the Western and African states benefit from the partnership.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, the treaty agreements between China and most African states also need intervention, as this state takes over the trading markets globally and takes advantage of most African states. Naumann further alludes that for Africans to ensure mutual partnership, changes need to occur and African leaders through the AU need to change the status quo and ensure sustainable, fruitful partnerships.<sup>7</sup> Scholars such as Abatan have questioned whether the AU as an organization has so far lived up to the hopes of solving African problems as it was portrayed as a solution for Africa and its problems by the leaders during the establishment.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Initiative and Kimenyi explain that even in the last few years the AU has failed to take a leading position in dealing with the continent's issues to the extent that the organization does not act in other instances.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, this, tends to show that the AU mandate has proven to be a challenging task to meet by the organization itself. One of the key foundations in the birth of the AU was to revive the economy of the African continent and alleviate poverty to create a better life for all Africans but that has since not been the case. Numerous scholars such as De Coning; Kobbie; Moolakkattu; Brosig; Van Nieuwkerk and Spandler have documented the failures of the AU in terms of security and peacekeeping missions.<sup>10</sup> However, to date, little research has been thus far documented on the failures of the AU in Africa's economic revival.

Therefore, the paper attempts to single out that the AU has again failed to reach one of its primary objectives which is to revive the African economy to alleviate poverty and create a better life for all Africans. Having said that, the primary aim of the study is to evaluate the failure of the African Union in the revival of the African economy and alleviating poverty, as the central supranational organization in Africa. Thus, the AU has failed to actively be the driving force behind Africa's economic development.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Naumann, "AGOA at 10: Reflections on US-Africa Trade with a Focus on SACU Countries"; Frazer and Van Biesebroeck, "Trade Growth under the African Growth and Opportunity Act."

<sup>4</sup> Yohanna Panshak, Irfan Civcir, and Hüseyin Ozdeser, "Explaining Nigeria's Economic Growth: Balance of Payments Constrained Growth Approach with External and Internal Imbalances," *South African Journal of Economics* 87, no. 3 (2019): 376–413.

<sup>5</sup> Peace Akudo. Jiboku, "The Quest for African Economic Integration: An Assessment of NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism" (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Naumann, "AGOA at 10: Reflections on US-Africa Trade with a Focus on SACU Countries."

<sup>7</sup> Naumann, "AGOA at 10: Reflections on US-Africa Trade with a Focus on SACU Countries."

<sup>8</sup> Jeannine Ella Adénikè Abatan, "Challenges Facing the African Union (AU) in the Implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P): A Case Study of the 2010/2011 Intervention in Côte d'Ivoire" (University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Mwangi S Kimenyi and Africa Growth Initiative, "An African Union for an Emerging Continent: Reforms to Increase Effectiveness," *Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent In*, 2015, 27–33.

<sup>10</sup> Cedric De Coning, "Peacekeeping Trends," *Conflict Trends* 2003, no. 4 (2003): 30–36; John Kobbie, *The Role of the African Union in African Peacekeeping Operations* (US Army War College, 2009); John S Moolakkattu, "The Role of the African Union in Continental Peace and Security Governance," *India Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2010): 151–65; Malte Brosig, "The Emerging Peace and Security Regime in Africa: The Role of the EU," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 16, no. 1 (2011); Anthoni Van Nieuwkerk, "South Africa and Peacekeeping in Africa," *African Security* 5, no. 1 (2012): 44–62; Kilian Spandler, "UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 14, no. 2 (2020): 187–203.

<sup>11</sup> Phemelo Olifile Marumo and Mompoti Chakale, "Mbeki on African Renaissance: A Vehicle for Africa Development," *African Renaissance* 15, no. 4 (2018): 179–91.

## **African Union and Organization of African Unity (OAU)**

In 2002, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was replaced by the African Union (AU).<sup>12</sup> Thirty-two African states convened in Ethiopia in 1963 to give birth to the OAU and this organization aimed to promote unity and solidarity among African states, coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa, defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and independence, eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, and promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>13</sup>

The OAU had its achievements over the years but these were very brief and failed to deliver on many fronts such as saving a few areas, such as overseeing the end of white minority rule in Southern Africa, and the liberation of all African countries from colonial subjugation, and containing some border disputes.<sup>14</sup> This saw the birth of the new union, which was the AU, Ibrahim notes that the AU marked a new period in the history of Africa; a period in which peace, security, stability, sustainable development, and the insurance of human rights and democracy would be upheld.<sup>15</sup>

Although the establishment of the AU was not as sincere as many had tended to believe, the founding leaders of the organization had a much bigger vision for themselves instead of the continent. Leaders such as the former and late president of Libya Muammar El Gaddafi are those leaders that can be the realities as to why the African Union has failed to execute its objectives but cecum to the exploitation from the Western countries as many leaders were pushing for their sinister agendas under the notion of Africa first. Sore stated that the modern vision of the United States of Africa was clearer under the force of leaders such as Gaddafi.<sup>16</sup> The development of the AU seems to be held back by greed and hidden agendas which to a greater extent have to challenge the objectives to create a better life for all due to the capitalism and corruption that are leading at the forefront of this dream.

## **Challenges of the African Economy**

The economic development of the continent and countries has been challenged and thus held back the failure to alleviate poverty and find a position in the world of economics. This then opened a gap and led to Africa's exploitation by other continents.

Initiative and Kimenyi note that even though the AU has policies on economic development such as NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and "Africa 2063: Unity, Prosperity and Peace," which is the plan for the 50 years, more than a decade into the establishment of the AU the continent still finds itself in a pit of poverty and not much promise of economic growth as it is still in the periphery of the world economic trade.<sup>17</sup>

The AU has been characterized as the continent's mother of organizations but it has failed to lead the economic development of the continent such that the regional economic community is the one that has taken a lead in the economic development of the continent.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Lesufi also notes that NEPAD's role is to put Africa on a path of sustainable growth and development and alternately stop its marginalization in the globalization process, and sound economic management among others.<sup>19</sup> Though the continent's integrations in terms of regional economies have not yet fully reached maturity and unity, pan-Africanism is clearer in these as opposed to the AU.

---

<sup>12</sup> Amadu Sesay, *The African Union: Forward March or about Face-Turn?* (Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University; Nordiska ..., 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Amadu Sesay, Olusola Ojo, and Orobola Fasehun, *The OAU after Twenty Years* (Routledge, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Adamu Abdulrahman and M Peter Abraham, "Comparative Analysis of African Union (AU) and European Union (EU): Challenges and Prospects," *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 49–57.

<sup>15</sup> Abadir M Ibrahim, "Evaluating a Decade of the African Union's Protection of Human Rights and Democracy: A Post-Tahrir Assessment," *African Human Rights Law Journal* 12, no. 1 (2012): 30–68.

<sup>16</sup> Sougrynom Z Sore, "Establishing Regional Integration: The African Union and the European Union," *Macalester International* 25, no. 1 (2010): 13.

<sup>17</sup> Kimenyi and Initiative, "An African Union for an Emerging Continent: Reforms to Increase Effectiveness."

<sup>18</sup> Peace A Jiboku, "The Challenge of Regional Economic Integration in Africa: Theory and Reality," *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review* 3, no. 4 (2015): 5–28.

<sup>19</sup> Ishmael Lesufi, "South Africa and the Rest of the Continent: Towards a Critique of the Political Economy of NEPAD," *Current Sociology* 52, no. 5 (2004): 809–29.

Scholars such as Bierschenk and Spies are still on the question of whether there is something wrong with economic development in Africa.<sup>20</sup> What hinders Africa from developing with the rest of the world, but the reality of Africa is that instead of developing economically it is deteriorating opening the door for corruption, poverty, nepotism, and patriarchy to take center stage. In exploring whether there is something wrong with the economic development of Africa in Africa's failed economic development trajectory, Obeng-Odoom has argued that before viewing the contemporary economic development of Africa also the history of development must be considered.<sup>21</sup> However, the objectives of the AU and those of the OAU are different, in addition, in the consideration of reviving the African economy. Therefore, the AU must be responsible for failing to advocate for Africa in the world of economic trade.

Africa's political, economic, and socio-cultural crises are consequences of always being at the bottom of the food chain.<sup>22</sup> The AU establishment was supposed to be that African solution for the African problem of always trailing behind but unfortunately, the gap keeps expanding even with its presence. In addition, without solving this economic problem and having a thriving economy then the problems arising from Africa will persist with no solution or end.

### **The AU Objectives and Objectives on Economic Development**

“To accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent; to establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and international negotiations. To promote sustainable development at the economic, social, and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies. To promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples. To coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union.”<sup>23</sup>

### **The Financial Institutions**

“The Act calls for the creation of an African Central Bank, an African Monetary Fund, and an African Investment Bank. Their rules and regulations are to be defined later, most probably at inception. With these objectives and institutions put in place yet there has growth in the continent has only gotten so far, and the growth has been rooted in corruption, lack of good governance, and accountability from the African leaders and the AU.”<sup>24</sup>

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Realism**

Realism is an international relations theory that is deemed to be the foundation of states-to-state relations and direct.<sup>25</sup> Putnam and Mamadkul argue that realism declares that each state within the international system seeks to enhance its power.<sup>26</sup> Realism further deduces that all states that administer more power within the global system will thrive in the international system.<sup>27</sup> In addition, realism argues that this is because their power can easily overpower less powerful states such that they can take their resources for their own. The theory further alludes that states first seek and advocate for interests that are self-preserving and they will continuously seek to gain power in the system, particularly within a social, economic, and political dynamic perspective.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Bierschenk and Eva Spies, “Introduction: Continuities, Dislocations and Transformations: 50 Years of Independence in Africa,” *Africa Spectrum* (SAGE Publications Sage UK: London, England, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Franklin Obeng-Odoom, “Africa’s Failed Economic Development Trajectory: A Critique,” *African Review of Economics and Finance* 4, no. 2 (2013): 151–75.

<sup>22</sup> Alhaji Ibrahim, “African Union and the Challenges of Underdevelopment in Contemporary Africa,” *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science* 14, no. 4 (2016): 1–10.

<sup>23</sup> Union, African. “assembly of the African Union.” Fifteenth ordinary session 25 (2010): e27

<sup>24</sup> Union, African. “assembly of the African Union.” Fifteenth ordinary session 25 (2010): e27

<sup>25</sup> Jiraroj Mamadkul, “Realism in International Relations: An Islamic Critique,” *Journal of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University* 13, no. 1 (2022): 151–69.

<sup>26</sup> Hilary Putnam, “Realism,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 42, no. 2 (2016): 117–31; Mamadkul, “Realism in International Relations: An Islamic Critique.”

<sup>27</sup> Mamadkul, “Realism in International Relations: An Islamic Critique.”

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Archer, “Introduction: Realism in the Social Sciences,” in *Critical Realism* (Routledge, 2013), 189–205; Putnam, “Realism.”

The nature of realism further states that across the globe it is not every government that can attain an advantage over others.<sup>29</sup> There are always going to be those states that are oppressed over others that are the ones taking charge or oppressing them. Hence, violence and deceit to attain the government's goal of attaining more power to advance national interests are important. In advancing these national interests homeland defense is regarded to be the most elevated part and awarded the highest priority. Putnam and Mamadkul allude to this depicting what has been hindering the prospects of economic growth in the African continent.<sup>30</sup> Instead of coming together and working toward a better continent, African leaders have led a selfish economic development that cares about the interests of their states rather than the continents. Therefore, the realism theory was adopted to depict that the selfish nature of African leaders to pursue personal interests leads to the ineffectiveness of the AU.

Hence, it is easier for first-world states to take advantage of the states within the African continent, which has led to the AU being seen as an ineffective organization. In modern times, realism is evident in the foreign policies of China, the United States of America, and Russia amongst others as part of the global superpowers. These states continue to harness the resources of African states and ensure that they develop themselves. On the other hand, Africa continues to be a poor, heavily indebted, and poverty-stricken continent. The Chinese economic relations with most of the African states are not necessarily favorable towards the African countries. These relations have only brought about more debts for the African states, yet the AU cannot ban or intervene in these relations as each state seeks to pull itself from the trenches of poverty and inequality challenges that the AU fails to address.

### Neorealist

The neorealism theory emphasizes how the structure of the international system determines state behavior especially when reacting to threats in the international system.<sup>31 32</sup> For instance, although several states on the continent such as Rwanda, South Africa, and Nigeria are working hard to grow their economies, the international system has not been made up favorably toward these African states. Similarly, such actions have led the president of Rwanda Paul Kagame to call for the unity of African leaders, so that together they can change the contemporary composition of the international system.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, economic growth and poverty alleviation as some of the objectives of the supranational organization of the African continent may prove to be difficult to reach or would depend mainly on the structure of the international system (what do those in charge stand to gain or lose should Africa develop and emancipate its population). In addition, the failure to react by the international community to provide aid to those who need assistance, particularly those in most poverty-stricken states such as would be seen to be inhumane and to some extent a violation of human rights that are universal.<sup>34</sup> Hence, over the years international organizations such as the United Nations through the support of the superpower states have donated food packages to the most poverty-stricken states.

However, this kind of assistance would only keep the status quo the same as African states would time and again need to depend on the first-world states. To some extent, this can be argued that these first-world states would take such actions to ensure that the African states do not develop rather they depend on the aid of the Western states to merely just survive. Therefore, the neorealism theory is important when it comes to understanding the shortcomings of the African continent. Thus, as they are considered to be weaker states, they are being placed at the periphery and driven to more debts and servicing these debts, as such, this does not assist in the goal of economic development and alleviation of poverty.

For instance, within the Southern African region, South Africa is the one that has more military and economic capacity, but within the international arena, it still has to rely on states such as Russia, the United States, and China to develop. Hence, it is considered to be one of the most developing states in the globe, but it does have much power to make decisions in the international system. Therefore, the structure

<sup>29</sup> Archer, "Introduction: Realism in the Social Sciences."

<sup>30</sup> Putnam, "Realism"; Mamadkul, "Realism in International Relations: An Islamic Critique."

<sup>31</sup> William Brown, "Africa and International Relations: A Comment on IR Theory, Anarchy and Statehood," *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 119–43; .

<sup>32</sup> John Glenn & Darryl Howlett. "Neorealism. In *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture*". Routledge. (2018): 20-44.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Kagame, "The Imperative to Strengthen Our Union," *Report on the Proposed Recommendations for the Institutional Reform of the African Union* 29 (2017): 1057–76.

<sup>34</sup> Floyd, Rita. "Human security and the Copenhagen School's securitization approach." *Human Security Journal* 5.37. (2007): 38-49.

of the international system is one of the most important principles/components in understanding the failure of African leaders to unite, alleviate poverty, and revive the African economy through the AU. Through neorealism, it is depicted that it is important to consider the political wings of the international system, hence this theory is noted to be very important and suited for the study.

## METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative method of research. The study used a document analysis technique using secondary sources such as accredited journal articles, books, online materials, other periodicals, and policy briefs that address the main research question.<sup>35</sup> The sub-questions that have been identified in evaluating Africa's position in the world economic trade also evaluate the role of the African Union in ensuring that Africa takes upon a position at the core and not at the periphery.

In the case and purpose of this study, different sources were consulted. Furthermore, taking into consideration the period in which the AU has existed and what this organization had inherited from the OAU to evaluate how far it has succeeded since then. The methodology of this study is based on a more detail detailed evaluation of the failure of the African Union to revive the African economy . Data were collected to achieve the result and purpose of this study. Thus, secondary data was used to enrich the article. For the collection of secondary data, published sources were utilized.

The paper employed purposive sampling and snowballing sampling. Purposeful sampling was used due to its strength in the identification and selection of information-rich literature on the AU. Furthermore, snowballing was used due to its strength of citation tracking to identify additional papers that currently exist on the AU and its economic ambitions.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the researcher used the reference list of the material found to refer to and found more related material/ existing literature on the subject. Hence, the researcher employed this snowball sampling technique to find referrals to other materials. Thus, purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used by the researcher to select books, journal articles, and government documents that address the topic of the paper.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Established in 2002, the AU was created to promote economic integration, political stability, and peace across the continent.<sup>37</sup> However, despite its ambitious goals, the AU has faced significant challenges in effectively revitalizing the African economy and alleviating poverty. At the heart of these challenges is the lack of strong leadership and political will, which has resulted in inconsistent commitment from African leaders to AU initiatives. Many member states prioritize national interests over collective continental goals, leading to fragmented and ineffective policies. African states have also failed to protect various leaders on the continent who had intentions to solve most of the issues in the region. From the early days of Thomas Sankara and Samora Machel to the recent Muammar Gaddafi, some of the African leaders who were advocating the unity of Africa were later executed.<sup>38</sup> African leaders could have done more to protect each other from external intervention seeking to assassinate leaders.

Similarly, another issue that led to the demise of African leaders' intervention was corruption on the continent. The rampant corruption among political elites has undermined efforts to implement economic reforms and poverty alleviation programs. Funds intended for development are often misappropriated, weakening the impact of AU initiatives.

Ogunbadejo further alluded that weak economic integration on the continent is also identified as one of the leading causes of African leaders' failure to address issues faced in the region.<sup>39</sup> Regional organizations such as the South African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) do not adequately intervene in regional matters and solve prevailing issues such as economic and social challenges. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been ongoing for years, with interventions from SADC member states yielding limited results

---

<sup>35</sup> P. Bhandari, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Bhandari, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*.

<sup>37</sup> Kimenyi and Initiative, "An African Union for an Emerging Continent: Reforms to Increase Effectiveness."

<sup>38</sup> Oye Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi and Africa's International Relations," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 1 (1986): 52.

<sup>39</sup> Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi and Africa's International Relations."

as the conflict continues to impact child and women labor.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the state has seen a surge in rebel armies looting the resources of the DRC, indicating that regional intervention measures are not effective. In addition, there is limited implementation of economic policies, especially at the regional level. Although the AU has developed numerous policies and frameworks for economic integration, its implementation has been weak. The Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a significant achievement, but its full potential is hindered by inadequate infrastructure, complex regulations, and non-tariff barriers.<sup>41</sup> Chronic underfunding of the AU has limited its ability to implement large-scale economic development projects, with member states often failing to meet their financial commitments, resulting in reliance on external donors.

Many African economies remain heavily reliant on foreign aid and external financial assistance, limiting the AU's autonomy in driving its development agenda as each state seeks to advance its own economic and political interests. This has led to the failure to address structural economic issues in various fields such as agriculture and industrialization, as a result of neoliberal policies in certain African states.<sup>42</sup> The AU has struggled to transform Africa's largely agrarian economies into diversified, industrialized economies, leaving large segments of the population in poverty. Youth unemployment continues to plague the continent, with many young people lacking access to quality education and job opportunities, exacerbating poverty and social unrest.

Ineffective governance and policy implementation on the African continent have led to poor governance, with weak governance structures within many AU member states resulting in poor policy implementation and lack of accountability.<sup>43</sup> This has hampered capacity and resources the AU's institutions to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of its policies, leading to a disconnect between policy formulation and tangible results and hindering efforts to reduce poverty and promote sustainable economic growth. Cardoso explains that ongoing conflicts and instability in regions, such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Central Africa have diverted attention and resources away from economic development, further entrenching poverty.<sup>44</sup>

African economies are vulnerable to global economic fluctuations, commodity price volatility, and external debt burdens. These factors have constrained the AU's ability to foster economic resilience and adapt to the constantly changing international and political space.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study can be noted in its contribution to bringing light to the fact that the AU is the supranational organization on the African continent. Therefore, leaders must rally behind the organization to bring about an African renaissance and ensure that the continent's economic ambitions are acknowledged and archived. However, this dream has not yet been archived by this organization. To this extent, sub-organizations such as the regional development communities (SADC, ECOWAS, and COMESA amongst others) are the ones that strive for the continent's economic growth. Therefore, this study was conducted to shed light on the failures of African leaders to unite through the AU, economic revival and stability being some of the major concerns in the continent currently.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The paper recommends having policies will improve the lives of Africans on the continent and present the opportunity for growth in the economy, health, and political stability. Moreover, the AU needs to see more unity of countries in the organizations to achieve the objectives in terms of economy. Similarly, to ensure

---

<sup>40</sup> O. R. Olaopa and V. Ojakorotu, "Conflict about Natural Resources and the Prospect of Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)," *Journal of Social Sciences* 49, no. 3-1 (2016): 244-56; Martha Mutisi, "SADC Interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *Conflict Trends* 2016, no. 3 (2016): 27-35.

<sup>41</sup> Madingwaneng Mosehlane Johannes and Thabang R Motswaledi, "The Impact of AFCFTA on African Economy and the Reconfiguration to Integrate Sustainably Competitive on World Free Trade: A Critical Review.," *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>42</sup> Carol C Ngang, "The Right to Development in Africa: Implications of Its Ineffective Implementation to Prospects for Development on the Continent," *The Right To Development In Africa: Issues, Constraints*, 2020, 151.

<sup>43</sup> Ngang, "The Right to Development in Africa: Implications of Its Ineffective Implementation to Prospects for Development on the Continent."

<sup>44</sup> Nilton César Fernandes Cardoso, "Regional Security in the Horn Of Africa: Conflicts, Agendas and Threats," *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Africanos= Brazilian Journal of African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016).

that the AU plays a meaningful role in the international community. African leaders must push and advocate for reforms in international organizations such as the United Nations Security Council, World Trade Organizations, and the United Nations to place Africa in a better position to receive benefits along with the global superpowers. This will assist in the fight against sanctions of the African states by these organizations as per orders of the super-powerful states.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that in the contemporary world, for any state or continental organization to thrive, economic stability is the key objective in ensuring that it happens. So, in the case of the African continent, to eradicate the major issues such as unemployment, poverty, and war the economy needs to be stable and also be in a position of growth. The AU has to ensure that the position of the continents is lifted from the periphery to the core because history has indicated that whoever is closer to the core, gets to receive the benefits better than those at the periphery.

The AU lacks funding, making it to be ineffective when it comes to combating issues. Also, their reliance on aid from Western countries or organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has drowned many African countries in debt leaving them in a devastating situation, worse than what they were experiencing before. The reliance of the African continent on the Western continent has left the continent in bad financial shape. Regardless of this Europe remains Africa's biggest trade partner with over 30% of the goods being exported to Europe, which has made the African countries alternately the African Union to rely much on the European countries and/or the European Union.

The AU needs to take advantage of the Western need to form a partnership with African states which therefore tends to indicate that there is potential in the African states to have a production that is of good quality for trading with other international states. This can be a mechanism to bring about change in the continent's economic issues and allow for room for improvement for the AU. In a nutshell, the AU has thus far failed to reach its economic objectivity and the only way to turn the situation around is to position Africa as one of the role players in the world economic trade which is not at the periphery.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abatan, Jeannine Ella Adénikè. "Challenges Facing the African Union (AU) in the Implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P): A Case Study of the 2010/2011 Intervention in Côte d'Ivoire." University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2015.
- Abdulrahman, Adamu, and M Peter Abraham. "Comparative Analysis of African Union (AU) and European Union (EU): Challenges and Prospects." *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 49–57.
- African Union. "assembly of the African Union." *Fifteenth ordinary session 25* (2010): e27.
- Archer, Margaret. "Introduction: Realism in the Social Sciences." In *Critical Realism*, 189–205. Routledge, 2013.
- Bhandari, P. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 2020.
- Bierschenk, Thomas, and Eva Spies. "Introduction: Continuities, Dislocations and Transformations: 50 Years of Independence in Africa." *Africa Spectrum*. SAGE Publications Sage UK: London, England, 2010.
- Brosig, Malte. "The Emerging Peace and Security Regime in Africa: The Role of the EU." *European Foreign Affairs Review* 16, no. 1 (2011).
- Brown, William. "Africa and International Relations: A Comment on IR Theory, Anarchy and Statehood." *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 119–43.
- Cardoso, Nilton César Fernandes. "Regional Security in the Horn Of Africa: Conflicts, Agendas and Threats." *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Africanos= Brazilian Journal of African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016).
- Coning, Cedric De. "Peacekeeping Trends." *Conflict Trends* 2003, no. 4 (2003): 30–36.
- Floyd, Rita. "Human security and the Copenhagen School's securitization approach." *Human Security Journal* 5.37. (2007): 38-49.
- Frazer, Garth, and Johannes Van Biesebroeck. "Trade Growth under the African Growth and Opportunity Act." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 92, no. 1 (2010): 128–44.

- Ibrahim, Abadir M. "Evaluating a Decade of the African Union's Protection of Human Rights and Democracy: A Post-Tahrir Assessment." *African Human Rights Law Journal* 12, no. 1 (2012): 30–68.
- Ibrahim, Alhaji. "African Union and the Challenges of Underdevelopment in Contemporary Africa." *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science* 14, no. 4 (2016): 1–10.
- Jiboku, Peace A. "The Challenge of Regional Economic Integration in Africa: Theory and Reality." *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review* 3, no. 4 (2015): 5–28.
- Jiboku, Peace Akudo. "The Quest for African Economic Integration: An Assessment of NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism," 2016.
- Johannes, Madingwaneng Mosehlane, and Thabang R Motswaledi. "The Impact of AFCFTA on African Economy and the Reconfiguration to Integrate Sustainably Competitive on World Free Trade: A Critical Review." *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2023).
- John Glenn & Darryl Howlett. "Neorealism. In *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture*". Routledge. (2018): 20-44.
- Kagame, Paul. "The Imperative to Strengthen Our Union." *Report on the Proposed Recommendations for the Institutional Reform of the African Union* 29 (2017): 1057–76.
- Kimenyi, Mwangi S, and Africa Growth Initiative. "An African Union for an Emerging Continent: Reforms to Increase Effectiveness." *Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent In*, 2015, 27–33.
- Kobbie, John. *The Role of the African Union in African Peacekeeping Operations*. US Army War College, 2009.
- Lesufi, Ishmael. "South Africa and the Rest of the Continent: Towards a Critique of the Political Economy of NEPAD." *Current Sociology* 52, no. 5 (2004): 809–29.
- Mamadkul, Jiraroj. "Realism in International Relations: An Islamic Critique." *Journal of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University* 13, no. 1 (2022): 151–69.
- Marumo, Phemelo Olifile, and Mompoti Chakale. "Mbeki on African Renaissance: A Vehicle for Africa Development." *African Renaissance* 15, no. 4 (2018): 179–91.
- Moolakkattu, John S. "The Role of the African Union in Continental Peace and Security Governance." *India Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2010): 151–65.
- Mutisi, Martha. "SADC Interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo." *Conflict Trends* 2016, no. 3 (2016): 27–35.
- Naumann, Eckart. "AGOA at 10: Reflections on US-Africa Trade with a Focus on SACU Countries." *Stellenbosch: Tralac Working Papers*, 2010.
- Ngang, Carol C. "The Right to Development in Africa: Implications of Its Ineffective Implementation to Prospects for Development on the Continent." *The Right To Development In Africa: Issues, Constraints*, 2020, 151.
- Nieuwkerk, Anthoni Van. "South Africa and Peacekeeping in Africa." *African Security* 5, no. 1 (2012): 44–62.
- Obeng-Odoom, Franklin. "Africa's Failed Economic Development Trajectory: A Critique ." *African Review of Economics and Finance* 4, no. 2 (2013): 151–75.
- Ogunbadejo, Oye. "Qaddafi and Africa's International Relations." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 1 (1986): 33–68.
- Olaopa, O. R., and V. Ojakorotu. "Conflict about Natural Resources and the Prospect of Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)." *Journal of Social Sciences* 49, no. 3–1 (2016): 244–56.
- Panshak, Yohanna, Irfan Civeir, and Hüseyin Ozdeser. "Explaining Nigeria's Economic Growth: Balance of Payments Constrained Growth Approach with External and Internal Imbalances." *South African Journal of Economics* 87, no. 3 (2019): 376–413.
- Putnam, Hilary. "Realism." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 42, no. 2 (2016): 117–31.
- Sesay, Amadu. *The African Union: Forward March or about Face-Turn?* Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University; Nordiska ..., 2008.
- Sesay, Amadu, Olusola Ojo, and Orobola Fasehun. *The OAU after Twenty Years*. Routledge, 2019.
- Sore, Sougrynoma Z. "Establishing Regional Integration: The African Union and the European Union."

*Macalester International* 25, no. 1 (2010): 13.

Spandler, Kilian. "UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 14, no. 2 (2020): 187–203.

#### **ABOUT AUTHORS**

**Prof. Phemelo Olifile Marumo** is a Senior Lecturer and Deputy Director in the Faculty of Humanities, School of Philosophy, at Northwest University. He primarily focuses on the philosophical perspectives in teaching and learning. He is an active member of various academic committees and has worked with NWU's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Prof. Marumo's research area of interest is African Philosophy and its attributes. He has contributed to several book chapters and has published in different accredited local and international journals.

**Thabang Motswaledi** is a temp lecturer at the Department of Political Studies and International Relations at North West University. He recently graduated his MA in political studies with cum laude where he investigated the responses of SOE's to the energy crisis in South Africa and Nigeria through a comparative study. Henceforth, he is currently pursuing his doctoral degree in political studies, specializing in human security, energy poverty, and the political economy of energy in South Africa as well as the African continent.