

UNITED AFRICA REVISITED

Serhat Orakçı



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IHH İNSANİ VE SOSYAL ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
IHH HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTER
مركز البحوث الإنسانية و الاجتماعية

To cite this article: Orakçı, Serhat, "United Africa Revisited", INSAMER, 30.03.2018.

 Analysis

For many, uniting all the African states under a single unit has been a longing-dream for decades. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of independent Ghana, was one of the dreamers and advocates of pan-Africanism until his death in exile. He knew very well that after the liberations artificially created new African states would be easy bait for hungry global powers. For that reason, like other pan-Africanist intellectuals and leaders promoting united Africa model more than territorial nationalism, he defended his dream, united Africa.

In an idealistic way, pan-Africanism is a mega-sized idea for the unity of the whole Africa as one body. Although its philosophical roots go back to 18th century, its institutionalization started with the first pan-Africa conference in 1900. As said, it was highly promoted during the liberation era by leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Haile Selassie,

Thomas Sankara and Sékou Touré. However, territorial integration and nationalist approaches gained more momentum and it later became unfavorable for the sake of nation-states. But the idea remained and at least it paved the way for the establishment of Organization of African Union (OAU) in 1963, later came to known as African Union (AU).

As Nkrumah had seen after the 60's, new African states struggled to preserve their territorial existence in an environment dominated by the inter-state upheavals and Cold War polarization. For the new African state, poverty and income inequality became major problems due to the poor economic performance caused by dependency brought about by the economic structure left by colonialism.

It is highly criticized that the post-colonial administrations after the liberations have



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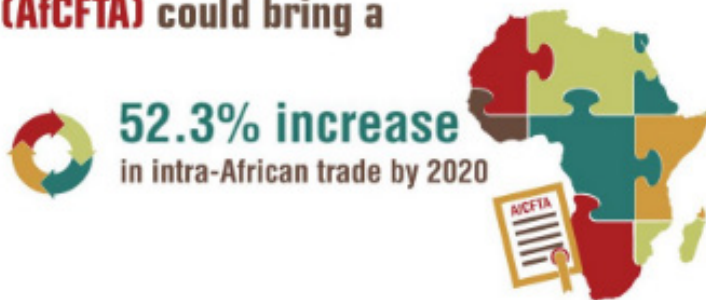
preserved same political and economic structures built by the colonial administrations without implementing effective reforms in both areas. It seems that creating fragmentations rather than unity and creating dependency on the ex-colonial powers rather than development were certain characteristics of this structure. So, African states needed more than political unity. Or we should say that there is no other option than to unite the African states under certain goals to be able to increase the efficiency of Africa in the world politics and global market.

As can be remembered, during the 70's Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi became the most outspoken leader of pan-Africanism in an opportunistic way. To break the Western pressure on his country, Muammar Qaddafi sought to revive the idea of united Africa to create a block that might support him against the West. Further, he offered the vision of United States of Africa resembling the U.S. federative unity model. But Qaddafi's way was more pragmatist than idealist. And, as is known, his end was much more tragic than that of Pan-Africanist Nkrumah.

volume across the continent has remained quite low for decades. Today, it is estimated that intra-Africa trade volume holds only 10% of Africa's total trade volume of 2.5 billion dollars per year. The current economic structure of Africa presents more advantages to global actors than the African states themselves. The raw materials and agricultural products go overseas first and then turn back to the continent as high-skilled products. The income of the exported raw materials is much lesser than the cost of the imported processed products, which gradually drags the economy into an impasse. This reality shows that Africans are not buyers of African products, rather they are buyers of non-African products.

Last week, African countries have signed for a mega project called African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Rwanda's capital Kigali, paving the way for one free trade region. By offering free movement of goods and services with this agreement, the main expectation is to increase trade activities within the continent that already on a sluggish level. Although 10 countries (including giant Nigeria) seemed reluctant to sign it, the agreement was signed by 44 member states aiming to boost intra-Africa trade volume by removing tariffs on 90% of goods and 10% of sensitive items. The move has already created great expectations and considered as the world's largest free trade zone. While Nigeria's President Muhammad Buhari declared that he needs more domestic consultations on impeding the effect of the agreement, the chair of the African Union Moussa Faki Mahamad declared it as a historic turning point for Africa.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could bring a



It is obvious that African states have been in need of solidarity in trade activities as well as political togetherness against the pressure imposed by external and internal challenges since the liberations following the colonial era. While African Union played a critical role in many occasions by representing Africa's voice, in the economic field countries preferred joining in regional blocks like ECOWAS, IGAD, COMESA, and SADC. Interestingly, inter-trade

After the ratification process which is expected to be completed until 2019, Kigali declaration might increase the power of Africa in the near future in the global market by boosting the intra-trade. The move is definitely a step forward towards the pan-Africanism ideal. Moreover, it is planned to adopt a new policy for free movement of people and using single currency on the continent. However, it should be noted that Africa needs urgent structural reforms

either. As long as the African economy depends on the exportation of mono-mineral or mono-agricultural products, the effect of the agreement on trade volume would be very limited since

raw materials of Africa are being used to buy finished products of non-Africans. For a better competition, Africa needs to accelerate its industrialization process.