IS THE AFRICAN UNION DEAD OR ALIVE?
ASSESSMENT OF THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS[i]

Udumaga, Cornel Chinedu U.[1],
Obiukwu, Christopher I.[1],
Izim, Okechukwu Declan[1],
Nwaoha, Chimaroke Chizoba[2ii]
[1]PhD,
Department of Political Science,
Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education,
Owerri, Imo State,
Nigeria
[2]PhD,
Department of History & International Relations,
Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education,
Owerri, Imo State,
Nigeria

Abstract:

The African continent is experiencing political and socioeconomic crises across its territories in the twenty-first century. Indeed, several African countries are experiencing significant challenges, such as Nigeria facing potential state failure, the Ambazonia/Cameroon conflict, political unrest and insurgency in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, as well as issues in the Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name a few. This paper critically examines the functionality of the African Union (AU) by delving into the inherent challenges and opportunities it holds for the continent. Since its establishment, the African Union has been central to Africa's aspirations for unity, development, and progress. However, its effectiveness in addressing the continent's diverse challenges remains a subject of debate. The study focused its analysis on institutional decay theory. The study employed secondary data and conducted a thorough examination using descriptive analysis and logical induction. This paper identifies the key challenges impeding the AU's functionality, ranging from institutional weakness to limited financial resources and political will. Also, the study revealed several incidences of docility in the African Union.

The study supports the perspective that the African Union is no longer functional, as it advocates for an African renaissance to create a new pan-African Union.

Keywords: African Union, conflict resolution, economic integration, good governance, peace and security

Résumé :
Au cours du XXIe siècle, le continent africain est confronté à des crises politiques et socio-économiques à travers ses territoires. En effet, de nombreux pays africains sont confrontés à d'importants défis, tels que le risque de défaillance de l'État au Nigeria, le conflit Ambazonie/Cameroun, les troubles politiques et l'insurrection au Mali, au Niger, au Burkina Faso et au Tchad, ainsi que les problèmes en République centrafricaine, en Somalie, au Soudan du Sud et en République démocratique du Congo, pour n'en citer que quelques-uns. Cet article examine de manière critique le fonctionnement de l'Union africaine (UA) en explorant les défis et les opportunités inhérents qu'elle représente pour le continent. Depuis sa création, l'Union Africaine a joué un rôle central dans les aspirations de l'Afrique en matière d'unité, de développement et de progrès. Cependant, son efficacité pour répondre aux divers défis du continent reste un sujet de débat. L'étude a concentré son analyse sur la théorie de la décadence institutionnelle. L'étude a utilisé des données secondaires et a mené un examen approfondi en utilisant une analyse descriptive et une induction logique. Cet article met en lumière les principaux défis qui entravent le bon fonctionnement de l'UA, allant de la faiblesse institutionnelle aux ressources financières limitées et à la volonté politique. De plus, l'étude a mis en lumière plusieurs cas de docilité au sein de l'Union Africaine. L'étude soutient l'idée que l'Union africaine n'est plus fonctionnelle, car elle prône une renaissance africaine pour instaurer une nouvelle Union panafricaine.

Mots-clés : Union africaine, résolution des conflits, intégration économique, bonne gouvernance, paix et sécurité

1. Introduction

The African Union (AU) emerged as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), founded in 1963, to promote unity and solidarity among African nations in the post-colonial era (Erdman & Mehler, 2011). While the OAU made significant strides in decolonisation and conflict resolution, it faced criticism for its limited capacity to address the development and governance challenges facing the continent (Murithi, 2013).

The Heads of State and Government of the OUA convened in Sirte, Libya, in 1999 and resolved to reorient the integration process in Africa. The heads of state and government also resolved that the deposit of the 36th instrument of ratification of the Constitutive Act of the African Union would meet all necessary legal requirements for the union's establishment. Nigeria fulfilled the two-thirds criteria on April 26, 2001, by

depositing its instrument of ratification, making it the 36th member state; therefore, the Act became effective on July 26, 2001 (Akuche, 2011).

Following the above, the Africa Union was officially founded on July 9, 2002, during the OAU summit in Durban, South Africa. This marked the end of the organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the establishment of the African Union (AU). The Constitutive Act of the African Union, ratified in Durban, South Africa, outlined the AU's goals, such as fostering peace, security, and stability, encouraging socioeconomic development, and safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states (African Union, 2000). The African Union's Constitutive Act of 2000 contains thirteen aims and sixteen principles that regulate and govern its activities. The Constitutive Act of 2000 equally contains 33 articles and establishes seventeen key institutions, along with nine union organs (Akuche, 2011).

The AU has aimed to take a more active role in dealing with several complex issues in Africa, such as conflict, poverty, sickness, and underdevelopment, since it was established (Murithi, 2013). The AU has created different organs and processes to accomplish its goals, like the Peace and Security Council, the African Peer Review Mechanism, and the Africa Union Commission (AUC), among others (African Union n.d.). The AU encounters various obstacles that impede its functionality and effectiveness despite its efforts. Institutional flaws like insufficient financial resources, ineffective bureaucracy, and conflicting mandates make it difficult for the institution to achieve its goals and objectives (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011). The AU's reliance on foreign funds and donor-driven agendas has prompted worries about its autonomy and sovereignty (Murithim, 2013).

Although facing difficulties, the AU also offers chances to improve Africa's development and prosperity. The Agenda 2063 framework, established in 2013, set forth a plan for Africa's development in the next fifty years, emphasising infrastructure growth, investment in human resources, and economic unity (African Union, 2013). The AU collaborates with regional groups, international players, and the African diaspora to gather resources and knowledge to tackle difficulties across Africa (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011).

Assessing the effectiveness of the African Union is crucial for promoting Africa's development goals and achieving peace, prosperity, and unity. Through a methodical evaluation of its performance in many areas, one may pinpoint obstacles, capitalise on opportunities, and plan a path towards a stronger, more inclusive, and more efficient African Union.

This paper aims to examine the African Union's functionality by analysing its issues and investigating ways to improve its effectiveness. The focus areas of the study include peace and conflict resolution, economic development, and good governance. The article also attempts to enhance scholarly debates on African governance, development, and regional cooperation by analysing the AU's effectiveness and future potential.

2. Objectives and Principles

The African Union (AU) was established with the primary goal of promoting unity, solidarity, and development throughout the continent based on essential values and objectives.

2.1 Objectives
The Union's objectives, as outlined in Article 3 of the Constitutive Act of 2000, are:
1) Promote enhanced unity and solidarity among African nations and African populations;
2) Protect its constituent nations' sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence;
3) Promote the constituent's political and social integration at a faster pace;
4) Advocate for and defend African collective stances on matters that are relevant to the continent and its populations;
5) Promote global collaboration while considering the principles outlined in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
6) Advance for the objectives of peace, security, and stability across the continent;
7) Advocates for the advancement of democratic ideals and institutions, encourage public participation, and strive for effective governance;
8) Advance and safeguard the rights of individuals and communities in conformity with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and other pertinent human rights treaties;
9) Determine the essential prerequisites that will empower the continent to fulfil its legitimate functions in the global economy and international discussions;
10) Facilities the advancement of sustainable development in the economic, social, and cultural domains while also promoting the integration of regional economic communities;
11) To attain the objectives of the union gradually, it is necessary to coordinate and harmonise the policies of both the existing and prospective regional economic communities;
12) Accelerate the continent's progress by encouraging research in all domains, with a particular emphasis on sciences and technology;
13) Cooperate with pertinent global allies to eliminate avoidable illness and enhance overall health on the continent.

2.2 Principles
Article 4 of the African Union's Constitutive Act of 2000 explicitly states the principles. The Union will operate based on the following principles:
1) The member states of the union share equal authority and depend on one another;
2) We should respect the establishment of the borders at the time of independence;
3) The African people actively participate in the activities of the union;
4) Implementation of a unified defence policy for the African continent;

5) Peaceful resolution of conflict among member states of the union through appropriate means determined by the assembly;

6) Prohibition of the use or threat of force among member states of the union;

7) Non-interference by any member state in the internal affairs of another member state;

8) The union has the right to intervene in a member state based on a decision by the assembly in cases of serious circumstances, such as war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity;

9) The harmonious coexistence of member nations and their entitlement to live in a state of tranquilly and protection;

10) The member states have the right to request assistance from the union to restore peace and security;

11) Fostering self-sufficiency within the organisation's structure;

12) Advancement of gender equality;

13) Adherence to democratic values, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance;

14) Promoting social justice heavily relies on ensuring balanced economic development and relies heavily on the promotion of social justice;

15) Respecting the sacredness of human life while strongly condemning and rejecting impunity, political assassinations, acts of terrorism, and subversive operations;

16) Denunciation and repudiation of unconstitutional alterations in government.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study employed the institutional decay theory. It argues that social structures and order processes, known as institutions, gradually deteriorate over time as a result of internal and external forces. This deterioration causes a decrease in their efficacy, legitimacy, and functioning. Put differently, institutional decay theory posits that institutions, encompassing political, legal, economic, social, and cultural aspects, are prone to deterioration akin to natural creatures and systems. Decay can occur in various ways, such as institutional inertia, corruption, inefficiency, loss of public trust, or failure to adapt to changing society's requirements and dynamics (Huntington, 1968; North, 1990; Fukuyama, 2014).

Samuel P. Huntington is one of the prominent advocates of institutional decay theory. In his 1968 book "Political Order in Changing Societies", he posits that institutional decay might arise from the incapacity of institutions to effectively address the requirements of modernisation and societal development. Douglas North, another prominent proponent of the theory, in his 1990 paper titled "Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance", emphasises the importance of institutions in influencing economic results and emphasises how their deterioration can impede economic progress by generating unpredictability, eroding ownership rights, and obstructing productive transactions. Furthermore, Francis Fukuyama, in his publication "Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalisation

of Democracy", posits that political institutions have the potential to deteriorate gradually if not properly monitored, mostly due to phenomena such as the domination of the state by powerful individuals, the stagnation of institutional processes, and the decline of societal confidence.

Application to the study: The institutional decay theory offers a valuable framework for evaluating the current status of the African Union and determining if it is functioning effectively. The institutional decay theory posits that the African Union's ability to tackle significant crises on the continent has diminished over time. The erosion is frequently linked to bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of political will among member states to carry out AU decisions. The African Union is losing credibility and relevance due to its challenges in addressing issues like conflict resolution, economic development, human rights violations, and good governance, which are affecting its standing within Africa and globally. The AU's diminished reputation hinders its capacity to obtain support and collaboration from member states and external actors. The institutional decay theory emphasises internal dysfunctions within the African Union, such as leadership failures, factionalism among member states, and bureaucratic inertia. The AU's internal issues hinder its capacity to adjust to changing conditions and tackle rising threats to peace and security on the continent. The efficacy of the African Union in addressing the challenges faced by the continent has progressively diminished, leading to a decrease in both its legitimacy and significance (Campbell, 2011; Mamdani, 2005).

4. African Union Organisational Framework and Processes

The African Union (AU) has an organisational structure that supports its functions in peace and security, governance, economic growth, and social affairs. The AU's structure consists of its primary organs, specialist technical offices, and regional bodies, which work together to achieve the organisational goals.

The Assembly of the African Union is the AU's highest governing body, comprising heads of state and government from all member countries or their duly accredited representatives. The organ convenes yearly to discuss important continental matters and offer policy guidance to the African Union.

The Executive Council consists of foreign ministers or authorised representatives from AU member states. The body is in charge of executing resolutions made by the Assembly, managing AU operations, and supervising the functions of AU bodies and institutions. The Executive Council convenes periodically to assess advancements, tackle obstacles, and give other directions on policy issues (Article 10 of the Constitutive Act, 2000; Erdmann and Mehler, 2011).

The African Union Commission (AUC) is the administrative and executive branch of the African Union tasked with executing AU policies and decisions. A chairman and commissioners oversee the African Union, which has divisions for political affairs, economic development, and peace and security. Article 20(1) of the Constitutive Act of 2000 establishes a commission of the Union, which will function as the Union's

Secretariat. According to Article 20(2), the commission will consist of the chairman, their deputy or deputies, and the commissioners.

The pan-African Parliament (PAP) is a continental legislative assembly made up of delegates from African Union member countries. The platform facilitates dialogue, consensus-building, and legislative monitoring on common concerns like peace, security, governance, and human rights. The PAP is essential for advancing democratic government and improving the AU's accountability to the African population (Williams, 2005).

The provision in Article 5(2) of the Constitutive Act of 2000, which permitted the creation of additional organs as necessary for the Union, guided the establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC). The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is tasked with advancing peace, security, and stability throughout Africa. The organ monitors and evaluates disputes, engages in preventive diplomacy, and collaborates with regional organisations and international partners to coordinate peacekeeping missions. The PSC has a key role in conflict prevention, management, and resolution throughout the continent (Erdman and Mehler, 2011).

According to Article 14(1) of the Constitutive Act, the Executive Council is responsible for determining and forming the specialised technical committee. Specialised Technical Committees (STCs) are sectoral committees made up of ministers or experts from AU member states. They concentrate on sectors like agriculture, health, education, and trade, offering technical guidance and suggestions to the AU organs on policy issues within their specific fields. The Science and Technology Clusters have a role in ensuring consistency, cooperation, and execution in key sectors of the African Union's agenda (Murithi, 2013).

The African Union Development Agency/New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) is the technical agency of the African Union (AU) tasked with executing developing programs and projects throughout Africa. It aims to foster sustainable economic growth, regional integration, and poverty alleviation through strategic partnerships and capacity-building programs. AUDA-NEPAD is crucial in promoting the AU's development goals and improving collaboration with regional and global partners (Williams, 2005).

4.1 Analysis of Decision-making Processes within the African Union (AU)

Intricate political dynamics, institutional structures, and regional interests all have an impact on the African Union's (AU) decision-making processes. Understanding these procedures is essential for evaluating the efficiency and validity of the AU in tackling the continent's issues and promoting its goals.

The AU mostly uses consensus-based decision-making, in which member states work towards agreement through communication and negotiation. Article 7(1) stipulates that the Assembly shall take its decision by consensus or by a two-thirds majority of the member states of the Union. This strategy demonstrates the AU's dedication to pan-Africanism and the idea of sovereign equality among AU member states. Obtaining an

agreement can be difficult because of the variety of interests and priorities among AU member states, resulting in extended discussions and concessions (Murithi, 2013).

The Assembly, Executive Council, and Peace and Security Council are key organs of the AU that aid in decision-making. The Assembly, comprised of heads of state and government, has the final authority to make decisions on important continental matters, while the Executive Council and Peace Security Council offer policy direction and supervision in their specific areas (African Union, n.d.).

Regional blocs have a substantial impact on decision-making processes within the AU by influencing member states to align their viewpoints and strategies according to regional interests and alliances. Blocs like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) play crucial roles in advising and coordinating, impacting the African Union's choices regarding regional peace and security matters (Erdmmann and Mehler, 2011).

External variables like international actors, donor interest, and geopolitical dynamics influence decision-making processes in the AU. External entities, like the United Nations and the European Union, frequently offer financial and technical assistance to AU projects influencing the organisation's agenda and priorities (Williams, 2005).

4.2 Case Studies of African Union-led Peacekeeping Missions

The African Union was responsible for the establishment of the peacekeeping mission known as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). It was founded in 2007, and its goal was to assist the Federal Government of Somalia in stabilising the country, combating terrorism, and promoting peace and security (African Union, 2021). AMISOM has encountered several obstacles, including assaults from insurgent factions like Al-Shabaab, logistical limitations, and problems with countries supplying troops. Nevertheless, it has made substantial advancements in reinstating government authority, aiding humanitarian assistance, and backing political reconciliation endeavours in Somalia (UN Security Council, 2021). Last year, AMISOM transformed and became the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The Somalia National Armed Forces will fully take over security operations in December 2024, marking the end of its mission.

The African Union and the United Nations established UNAMID in 2007 as a joint peacekeeping force to work in Sudan's Darfur. The mandate involved safeguarding people, aiding humanitarian efforts, and backing the peace process in Darfur (United Nations, 2021). UNAMID encountered difficulties because of the unstable security environment, including peacekeeper attacks, logistical problems, and restraints in civilian protection. UNAMID played a vital role in mediating between opposing parties, assisting the return of internally displaced persons, and enhancing the stability of Darfur. The African Union established the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) to address security issues in Mali and the Sahel region through a regional peacekeeping initiative. MISAHEL was established in 2020 to assist with enforcing the peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali, fighting terrorism and transnational crime,

and fostering stability and development in the area (Africa Union, 2020). MISAHEL encounters obstacles stemming from the intricate security landscape, including assaults by extremist factions, inter-communal conflicts, and deficiencies in governance. The organisation is crucial in aiding national and regional initiatives to tackle these issues and promote peace and security in Mali and the Sahel area (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2021).

4.3 Successes in Promoting Peace and Stability

The African Union has effectively engaged in conflict prevention and mediation in several African nations. The African Union (AU) played a vital role in mediating the comprehensive peace agreement in Sudan, resulting in the independence of South Sudan in 2011 (Murithi, 2013). The AU's mediation efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and other countries have helped resolve political crises and restore peace (Williams, 2005).

The African Union has initiated peacekeeping operations in many conflict-ridden areas, aiding in the stabilisation of precarious circumstances. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has played a crucial role in weakening the extremist group AI-Shabab and facilitating state-building and governance in Somalia. The AU has also backed peacekeeping operations in Darfur, Mali, and the Central African Republic, among other nations, indicating its dedication to upholding peace and security (United Nations, 2021).

The AU has actively advocated for democratic governance and human rights across the continent. The AU has facilitated free, fair, and credible elections in several African countries by conducting election observation missions (Murithi, 2013). The African Union's denunciation of unlawful government changes and its enforcement of sanctions on coup leaders have helped strengthen democratic norms and principles (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011).

4.4 Challenges and Constraints in Conflict Resolution

The African Union encounters numerous obstacles and constraints in resolving conflicts throughout the continent. The obstacle ranges from institutional constraints to resource limitations and the intricacies of conflict dynamics.

AU's reliance on external parties for money, logistical support, and technical expertise compromises her autonomy and efficacy in conflict resolution. Donor-driven agendas and conditional aid could limit the AU's capacity to conduct unbiased mediation efforts independently (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011).

The involvement of many entities in conflict resolution, such as regional organisations, foreign partners, and non-state actors, results in fragmentation and coordination difficulties. Ineffective communication and collaboration among stakeholders might hinder the success of AU-led projects and make it difficult to create lasting peace (Murithi, 2013).

Political differences among member states, a lack of commitment to uphold peace agreements, and ineffective leadership all hinder the AU's ability to resolve conflict.

Conflicting interests, power dynamics, and differing objectives among AU member states could hinder joint initiatives to tackle the underlying reasons for conflicts and advance reconciliation (Erdmann and Mehierr, 2011).

Conflict dynamics in Africa are intricate and involve various factors like ethnicity, identity, governance, and resource rivalry. The African Union's conventional conflict resolution methods may not be sufficient to deal with the fundamental reasons for wars, necessitating more thorough and all-encompassing tactics that tackle the main causes of conflicts (Murithi, 2013).

4.5 An Overview of the AU's Economic Integration Development Plan

The African Union (AU) has made economic integration a primary focus of its agenda to achieve sustainable development, regional collaboration, and poverty reduction throughout the continent. The AU's economic integration initiatives strive to improve commerce within Africa, ease the flow of commodities, services, and individuals, and promote economic development and prosperity among all African nations.

The African Union's economic integration objective originates from the Abuja Treaty signed in 1991, which set the groundwork for creating the African Economic Community (AEC). The AEC is seen as a gradual process of economic integration that aims to establish a unified African market (African Union, 1991).

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) is a significant accomplishment in the African Union's economic integration plan. It was initiated in 2018 and started operating in 2021. The AFCFTA's goal is to establish a unified market for products and services, boost trade within Africa, and support economic diversification and industrial growth (African Union, 2018). The AFCFTA aims to unleash Africa's economic capacity and encourage comprehensive growth by decreasing tariffs and trade barriers, aligning trade policies, and improving customs collaboration.

The AU acknowledges the significance of infrastructure development and connectively in promoting economic integration and regional trade. The Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the African integrated high-speed railway network aim to enhance connectivity and reduce business costs by improving transport, energy, and communication infrastructure across Africa (African Union, 2021).

The African Union collaborates with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to advance economic integration on a regional scale. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) like ECOWAS, SADC, and East Africa Community (EAC) are crucial for aligning trade policy, promoting cross-border trade, and organising infrastructure development projects.

The AU aids in enhancing the economic integration agenda through supporting capacity building and institutional development. The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) offers technical support, promotes best practices, and facilitates knowledge exchange among African Union member states to help them improve their ability to implement economic integration policies and programs.

Summarily, the AU's economic integration agenda demonstrates its dedication to achieving sustainable development, regional collaboration, shared prosperity

throughout Africa, and poverty reduction in Africa by implementing initiatives like the AFCFTA, infrastructure projects, and partnerships with regional allies.

4.6 Obstacles Impeding Economic Progress and Integration

Various obstacles are preventing the achievement of the AU's objectives, slowing down progress towards sustainable economic development and integration. Thus:

Insufficient infrastructure, such as roads, trains, ports, and energy networks, hinders economic growth and integration in Africa (World Bank, 2017). Inadequate infrastructure raises transaction costs, hinders trade facilitation, and weakens the competitiveness of African economies in regional and global markets. To address infrastructure gaps, significant expenditures in infrastructure development and maintenance are needed, together with enhancements in regulatory frameworks and governance structures (African Development Bank, 2018).

Some AU member states impose high tariffs and trade restrictions that hinder market access and limit prospects for economic cooperation and integration. Eliminating trade obstacles, aligning trade policies, and simplifying customs procedures are crucial actions to promote trade and boost economic integration within the AU (UNECA, 2020). Weak institutional framework in Africa, characterised by low institutional capacities, governance issues, and regulatory inefficiencies, hinders economic growth and integration attempts (African Development Bank, 2018). Insufficient legal and regulatory structures, corruption, and a lack of transparency discourage investment, diminish investors' trust, and impede private sector growth. As a result, there have been several repercussions, such as elevated unemployment rates, insufficient inflow of foreign direct investment, inadequate education quality and standards, and a diminished standard of living. These facts suggest a significant detriment to the continent's economic expansion.

Restricted access to financial resources is a significant obstacle for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), throughout Africa. Restricted credit access, elevated borrowing expenses, and undeveloped financial markets impede investment, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Enhancing the financial stability and resilience of financial institutions, as well as supporting innovative financing structures, are crucial for unleashing the potential of African economics and stimulating economic growth and integration (World Bank, 2017).

Regional conflicts, political instability, and security risks in certain AU member states hinder economic growth and integration efforts in Africa. Regions affected by conflict face interruptions in trade, investment, and infrastructure growth, discouraging both local and international investors. It is crucial to address the underlying reason for conflicts, enhance peace and security institutions, and encourage regional collaboration to establish a favourable setting for economic development and integration in Africa (UNEXA, 2020).

According to the African Union Commission (2019), it is crucial to enhance institutional capacities, governance frameworks, and transparency while also maintaining accountability to establish a favourable climate for sustainable economic

growth and integration. The reality is that the African Union (AU) is neglecting this matter; it is one thing to devise a well-thought-out strategy, but another to execute it.

4.7 The African Union (AU) Role in Good Governance

The African Union advocates for democracy and effective governance as crucial elements in safeguarding human rights. The AU actively oversees elections in member states, carries out election observation missions, and aids in enhancing democratic institutions and processes (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011). The AU aims to improve accountability, openness, and the rule of law throughout Africa via the African Governance Architecture (AGA).

The AU acknowledges the connection between human rights, peace, and security and aims to tackle human rights abuses as a component of its conflict prevention and resolution initiatives. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) oversees human rights conditions in conflict zones, examines claims of infractions, and intervenes to stop additional misconduct (Williams, 2005). The AU's post-conflict rebuilding and developing projects stress human rights protection and foster reconciliation and justice.

4.8 Successes in Promoting Democratic Principles

The African Union has effectively carried out election observation missions in numerous African nations, enhancing the credibility and transparency of electoral procedures. The African Union monitors elections through its Election Observation Missions (EOMs) to evaluate their fairness and openness and offer suggestions to enhance electoral procedures. The missions have deterred electoral fraud, boosted voter confidence, and maintained democratic norms and standards.

The AU has been instrumental in aiding democratic transitions in nations transitioning from authoritarianism or conflict. The AU has fostered peaceful transitions of power and helped develop democratic institutions and procedures through diplomatic engagement, mediation initiatives, and technical aid (Murithi, 2013). The AU's then mediation in countries like Sudan and Burkina Faso led to successful political transitions and the reinstatement of democracy (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011).

The AU has created a normative framework for democracy and effective governance, which includes the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACEDEG). The ACDEG, adopted in 2007, advocated for democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law inside African Union member states. The ACDEG serves as a foundation for AU actions in instances of unlawful governance changes and strengthens the organisation's dedication to democratic governance.

4.9 Challenges in Maintaining Good Governance

Many AU member states have challenges due to deficient institutional capacity, characterised by ineffective government structure, inadequate legislative framework, and limited administrative capability. These shortcomings impede the adoption of effective governance methods and lead to corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011). Murithi (2013) argues that inadequate

democratic institutions, such as the judiciary, election management bodies, and legislative assemblies, present obstacles to democratic consolidation in Africa. Political meddling, the absence of autonomy, and insufficient capability weaken the efficiency of these organisations and diminish public confidence in the democratic system.

Political instability, such as coups, civil wars, and political unrest, hinders the promotion of positive governance in numerous African countries. Weak governance mechanisms and disregard for democratic values worsen tensions and create circumstances for more instability, impeding the AU's attempts to enhance governance institutions (Murithi, 2013). Corruption and nepotism are pervasive problems that undermine efficient governance and erode public trust in government institutions. Efforts to combat corruption via anti-corruption agencies and legislative structures have proven to be ineffectual, as corrupt practices continue to flourish and impede the proper functioning of governance institutions (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011).

Limited civic engagement and involvement present obstacles to effective governance in numerous African nations. Civil society organisations with limited power, constrained freedom of speech, and restricted political involvement impede citizens from holding the government accountable and participating in decision-making processes (Murithi, 2013).

Ethnic and tribal politics hinder attempts to encourage inclusive governance and cultivate national unity. Politics that create divisions along the lines of ethnicity, religion, or regionalism lead to the separation, exclusion, and isolation of specific groups, which undermines social unity and obstructs the development of democratic structures (Erdmann & Mehler, 2011).

External involvement from international entities such as foreign governments, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions hinders good governance efforts in African nations. Economic interest, geopolitical factors, and conditional aid all have an impact on governance policies and actions, compromising sovereignty and democratic processes (Murithi, 2013).

4.10 The Incidences of African Union Docility
4.10.1 On Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping

The frequency and intensity of eruptions and escalations of confrontations on the continent indicate that the African Union is neither taking proactive measures nor meeting expectations. The African Union frequently lacks the essential capacity and resources to efficiently avoid and resolve crises. The Union faces challenges in deploying peacekeeping missions, providing humanitarian aid, and supporting mediation efforts due to limited funds, logistical restrictions, and a shortage of skilled personnel (William, 2005).

We have observed numerous important political, diplomatic, security, and socioeconomic developments in Africa. These events encompass elections in numerous African states, military coups, presidential assassinations, and constitutional modifications in various countries. Specific events include the ongoing Biafra independence struggle, constitutional modification in Togo, the escalation of the crisis in

Libya, the nonviolent revolution in Algeria, the change of government in Sudan, the recent assassination of Chad President Idris, and the ongoing hostilities in southern Cameroon, Somalia, and South Sudan. Unfortunately, the African Union has not addressed several of these troubling issues. For example, Matsanga (2021) expressed great worry about the worsening security, human rights, and humanitarian conditions in the former British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) and criticised the AU for its lack of action in addressing these issues. The AU's lack of response led the United States to organise and lead an unofficial meeting of the UN Security Council in New York on Monday, May 13, 2019, to address the deteriorating situation in Southern Cameroons.

The absence of an African Union resolution on Africa's issues is very noticeable. African Union's lack of action against Southern Cameroons led to a vacuum that the United States felt compelled to fill. The African Union disregards the continuous mass killing of Southern Cameroonians by a genocidal dictator who has held power for four decades and above, as well as inaction on the continued conflict between Biafra and the Nigerian federal government, which includes a worsening security situation. Similarly, Matsanga (2021) maintains that General Haftar's current endeavour to seize the Libyan capital, Tripoli, and unify the entire country under his authority has disrupted the delicate calm and reignited a violent civil war, resulting in around a thousand casualties. The African Union's leadership has made urgent visits to Libya, although they appear to be ineffective, similar to their lack of influence during the overthrow and killing of Gaddafi by French President Sarkozy.

In the 21st century, Africa is witnessing foreign countries utilising its territory to further their international objectives, which is cause for concern. The African continent is experiencing a significant increase in the number of foreign military bases and militarisation processes. This has resulted in a renewed competition for control and influence over Africa. Frequently, these external forces are actively involved in promoting terrorism throughout Africa. As a result, it continuing to maintain arms agreements that are intended to favour multinational companies from foreign countries. This perpetuation of the cycle of exploitation serves as a hindrance to Africa's progress and development. The African Union appears to adopt a passive approach, observing events from afar and relying on the hope that the situation will improve without intervention. Despite its more than two-decade existence, the African Union has not made significant efforts to liberate Africa from the presence of foreign armed forces. To achieve complete sovereignty over its natural resources, economics, and politics, Africa should cease its dependence on foreign military outposts.

The African Union has strayed from the founding fathers' principles of solidarity and African unity, showing a lack of care for its inhabitants' welfare. The African Union (AU) is currently composed of ineffective African presidents under the leadership of a puppet chairman, making it susceptible to foreign influence. Matsanga (2021) stated the African Union is more prominent in Paris than in Addis Ababa.

The main purpose of establishing the African Standby Force (ASF) was to enable the Peace and Security Council to effectively deploy peace support operations. These operations aim to prevent, control, or aid in the resolution of crises. The peace and

security protocol of the African Union also includes provisions for carrying out enforcement actions in response to war crimes, crimes against humanity, human rights abuses, and genocide. The primary goal of African institutions' peace operations has been to assist nations in addressing armed insurgencies or establishing stability within political institutions. The African Union has yet to authorise the implementation of such a coercive operation (The Conservation, 2024). The African Union, utilising its eight regional economic communities and other institutions, has implemented 27 peace operations since the inception of the African Standby Force. Nevertheless, both the Peace and Security Council and African Union member states have not implemented the standby force system as originally planned (Conservation, 2024).

4.10.2 On Economic Integration and Development Initiatives

The implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) is commendable, but it falls short of being sufficient. The African Union has not yet accomplished more definitive measures, such as implementing a unified African currency supported by African gold. Instead, what has been observed is the presence of over thirty-three weak currencies throughout Africa, with over 80% of transactions taking place in US dollars. The AU's failure to establish a unified market, a single currency, a single telephone number, and a common passport has compromised Africa's political and economic strength. Without completing these tasks, economic development in Africa will remain an illusion.

The humanitarian situation in Africa is worsening due to several crises, including climate change, conflicts, chronic poverty, starvation, violence, ineffective governance, political instability, and state- and non-state-sponsored terrorism. This condition is particularly prevalent in countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Burundi, Zambia, and Senegal, among others. The United Nations predicts that over 300 million individuals will require humanitarian aid in 2024 (Yusuf, 2024). While possessing abundant natural resources, African nations generally rank low on indices measuring economic activity, such as per capita income or per capita gross domestic product. In 2009, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 22 out of 24 nations categorised as having "low human development" on the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (European Investment Bank, 2022). Shreds of evidence show that from 2019, an estimated 424 million individuals in sub-Saharan Africa were living in conditions of extreme poverty. Research projected that by 2022, 460 million people will be living in extreme poverty, a rise of 36 million in just three years. This increase is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian war (World Food Program, 2022).

The African Union has not adequately addressed important concerns impacting member states, including the well-being of their citizens, human rights violations, humanitarian situations, and breaches of international laws and agreements. The economic community of West African states orchestrated the withdrawal of energy from Nigeria and Cote-d'Ivoire to Niger and Mali, respectively. This resulted in socio-economic difficulties and numerous fatalities in countries affected by sanctions due to

inadequate access to energy and medicine. AU has been observing passively without issuing any explicit denunciation or taking any type of action.

The African Union (AU) has consistently disregarded the detrimental effects of colonial legacies on African governments, therefore impeding their economic progress. France's actions, including the decolonisation pact, forced francophone states to sign it in return for handing independence to their black African colonies. The treaty included provisions such as the perpetual responsibility to repay the colonial debt, the requirement to have all currency printed in France, and the commitment to keep a substantial share of bank reserves in France. France will invest the former colonies' bank reserves in global financial markets, taking advantage of income and dividends. Furthermore, France will possess the initial opportunity to accept or decline any identified or undisclosed natural resources within their former colonies. Africa cannot achieve victory by engaging with France on an individual basis; it is imperative for the African Union, as a collective entity, to resolve this chaotic situation. The ongoing efforts of Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Niger Republic to fight French hegemony deserve praise.

4.10.3. On Human Rights and Good Governance

Despite the AU's effort to encourage democracy, authoritarianism persists in numerous African nations. Some leaders have utilised electoral processes, limited political liberties, and weakened democratic institutions to remain in power (Erdmann and Mehler, 2011). The African Union's reaction to these difficulties has been irregular, with complaints directed at its hesitance to address leaders accused of electoral fraud and human rights violations (Murithi, 2013). The AU, like its predecessor, the OAU, still maintains the image of being an association of leaders who were dictators; hence, the Union has directly or indirectly actively supported oppressive government.

The African Union Constitutive Act of 2000 has allowed for collective intervention in grave circumstances such as war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity, but the AU still behaves as in the ear of the OAU's state of non-interference, which allowed acts of impunity in member states. The African Court of Justice has not prosecuted errant leaders for crimes in their countries or other states. The AU Constitutive Act 2000 contains provisions that allow respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law, and effective governance through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). However, it rarely takes clear actions instead protecting despotic regimes that lack any semblance of democracy, rule of law, or good governance.

Electoral violence, anomalies, and conflicts persist in several African countries, diminishing the credibility and legitimacy of democratic processes. The AU's election observation missions have recorded cases of voter intimidation, electoral fraud, and violence, which have raised doubts about the credibility of the results. The African Union has attempted to tackle these issues by engaging in post-election discussions and implementing reform projects, but advancement has been sluggish. The AU and their Western allies consistently prioritise the timing of elections. Conducting elections at the end of each term, irrespective of their level of freeness or fairness, is synonymous with the concept of democracy. The popularity of the winner is irrelevant. African democracy

has consistently proven to be ineffective in fostering growth on the continent. Instead, it has devolved into a political system that allows affluent politicians to use their wealth to secure positions of power and embezzle public funds intended for national development. In African democracies, politicians have been able to exploit the constitution to extend their rule indefinitely. They can manipulate the system to remain in power for as long as they choose, and in cases where they are unable to continue, they often hand over the post to their offspring. Their Western allies see these actions and nevertheless label them as democracy because politicians conduct elections at the end of each term. African democracy, in actuality, is a deceptive façade that justifies its demise. In addition, Western countries prioritise African democracy since it enables them to effectively retain control over African resources. Under civilian control, they can strategically place politicians motivated by personal gain, lacking integrity and malicious intent, and inclined to serve their interests to maintain their positions of authority.

The prevalence of gerontocracy and familocracy is eroding the efficacy of governance in Africa. Several African presidents have maintained their positions of power for almost two decades. Paul Biya of Cameroon and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda serve as two examples. The latter even went to the extent of appointing his close relatives to key posts in the government. Therefore, the wife holds the position of education minister, and the son is the Chief of the Defence Force. The African Union has not found any issue with this. She will awaken soon as patriotic military officers remove them and the AU will remember constitutional government and democracy. Remember that military coups are not the only type of coup; when elections are manipulated, it can also be considered a civilian coup. Civilian coups have been prevalent across the continent, but the African Union only identifies military takeovers as coups, particularly when they target authoritarian leaders. The African Union should denounce coups when leaders of member nations manipulate elections or unlawfully alter the constitution to seize or retain power.

The African Union has failed to advocate for Africans who experience mistreatment and intimidation in any global community. The African leadership is unable to protect Africans due to its weak nature, as it primarily prioritises the interests of Western countries and, at times, the Chinese. The African Union (AU) maintains a state of both independence and dependence, consistently relying on assistance from the international community. Quite unfortunately, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the African Union did not possess a vaccine indigenous to its country.

5. Recommendation

The study advocates an African renaissance to establish a new pan-African Union. The AU requires strong leaders who can make firm decisions that will benefit the entire continent and its citizens, united in their pursuit of genuine emancipation for Africa. Additionally, strive to uphold a cooperative, equitable, and environmentally responsible alliance with other independent nations across the globe. Above all, establishes itself as

a powerful entity promoting peace, security, growth, and integration for the benefit of all member states.

The AU should enhance its conflict prevention and resolution capabilities by improving early warning systems, mediation efforts, and peace-building projects. This involves improving collaboration with regional organisations, bolstering the AU Peace and Security Council's influence, and fostering dialogue and reconciliation procedures to tackle the root causes of grievance and avert conflicts from intensifying.

The AU should prioritise fostering democratic governance, human rights, and the rule of law across member states to enhance democratic governance and human rights. This involves aiding in democratic transitions, enhancing electoral procedures, safeguarding human rights advocates, and tackling governance obstacles like corruption, impunity, and political oppression. The African Union should utilise its tools, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance, to ensure that member states adhere to democratic norms. Also, the African Union should work to prevent the civilian coups currently developing in countries like Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Nigeria. If the illegitimate regimes are removed by outraged and patriotic soldiers, as seen in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, and Niger, among other countries, then we should stop condemning them. We commend Mr. Mackey Sall, the former president of Senegal, for deviating from his original course of action and heeding rational advice.

The AU should focus on improving its financial self-sufficiency by diversifying funding sources, mobilising local resources, and exploring innovative financing arrangements. This involves enacting the AU import levies and other continental levies, enhancing tax collection methods, and encouraging public-private partnerships to lessen reliance on external finance.

The AU should focus on improving its institutional capacity and effectiveness to effectively tackle continental challenges and achieve desired outcomes. This involves upgrading governance structures, optimising decision-making processes, and improving transparency and accountability systems. The AU should focus on capacity-building activities for staff and member states to enhance their ability to implement AU policies and programs.

6. Conclusion

Ultimately, evaluating the functionality of the African Union (AU) shows both obstacles and opportunities for the organisation as it fulfils its duty in tackling continental issues and pursuing its goals. The African Union encounters various obstacles, such as financial limitations, geopolitical concerns, governance shortcomings, and internal and external conflicts among member states. The problems impact the AU's autonomy, competence, and credibility in addressing the different demands of the African continent. Nevertheless, among these obstacles are hopeful opportunities for the AU's future. By focusing on financial self-sufficiency, improving conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, promoting democratic governance and human rights, and enhancing institutional capacity and effectiveness, the AU can overcome its challenges and become

a leading force for peace, stability, and development in Africa. Additionally, collaborating with external partners provides potential for resource mobilisation, capacity-building, and strengthening the AU's ability to tackle continental concerns. To adapt to the shifting dynamics of the African continent, the AU must maintain its commitment to African-led solutions, inclusivity, and solidarity among member states. The African Union (AU) can attain its objectives of fostering peace, stability, and prosperity for all Africans by surmounting its challenges and capitalising on its prospects, thereby contributing to the continent's improved future.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors
Udumaga, Cornel Chinedu Uzodinma, is presently a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. He has obtained several academic degrees, which include a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Government and Public Administration from Abia State University, Uturu (ABSU), a Master of Science in Industrial Sociology and Personnel Management from Imo State University, Owerri (IMSU), a Master of Science in International Affairs and Diplomacy from ABSU, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education from ABSU, and a Doctorate in International Relations from the University of Nigeria Nsukka. His research interests include good leadership, good governance, global peace and security.
Email cornel.udumaga@alvanikoku.edu.ng.
Obiukwu, Christopher Ikechukwu, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. He holds several academic degrees in Political Science and has many scholarly articles to his credit in national and international journals.
Izim, Okechukwu Declan, is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Political Science, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. He holds PhD, M.Sc., (Ed.) and NCE. Izim majored in Public Administration and has several scholarly articles to his credit in national and international journals.
Nwaoha, Chimaroke Chizoba, hails from Ndiuhu Amuzi in Obowo LGA, Imo State. He is Lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. He has BA (Ed.) in History and MA in History and International Studies from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, and PhD in History from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

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