

Confronting the Challenges and Prospects in the Creation of a Union of African States in the 21st Century

BY E. IKE UDOGU



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P U B L I S H I N G

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This work is dedicated to past and current political and academic sages in Africa and the Diaspora that have fought—and are still struggling—for the creation of a Union of African States.

FOREWORD

The contemporary global system has been brought much closer as a result of modern technology and international trade and commerce. The need to establish strong economic blocs in order to augment regional clout has found expression in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the European Union/European Economic Union, for example. Moreover, the need to address the structural and institutional weaknesses in the former socialist countries in Eastern Europe induced these societies to seek membership in the European Union within the context of the impact of the “New Globalization.” Africa cannot, and should not, be left out of this global phenomenon lest it could become irrelevant in global affairs.

In the book, *Confronting the Challenges and Prospects in the Creation of a Union African States in the 21st Century*, Professor E. Ike Udogu, a student of African Studies, brought his expertise and discourses to bear on a fundamental issue that has taxed the intellectual wits as such sages as William E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere and others of the pan-Africanist hue.

The centrality of the suppositions and argumentations in this volume is that “Africa must Unite” in the 21st century, against the backdrop of the reality of the continent’s marginalization in the international economic system and division of labor. While his postulations might seem farfetched to Afro-pessimists, Udogu is convinced that Africa will rise up in this century, using her abundant untapped natural resources and human capital to develop so that it could compete effectively vis-à-vis other regions of the world. As a consequence of such a development, Africa will be able to play a major role in global political and economic affairs.

In truth, this book falls within the context of the urgent, tough and “current” epistemological approach in African scholarship that calls upon academics to design more theories and modalities for possible short and long term solutions to the current situation of underdevelopment. In this way, the continent would rapidly be catapulted to its zenith developmentally. This book is exciting, motivating and provides possible solutions to Africa’s perennial quest for unity. It is a must read by policy makers, students of African history and Politics.

—Professor George K. Kieh, Jr.,
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, University of West Georgia

PREFACE

As is the wont with many scholars who wish to embark on a major research effort, they first debate the topic—particularly the merits and demerits of the proposal—with colleagues. In some cases, one's peers are likely to throw their weight in support of such a project because of its relevance, practicality and possibility of substantially augmenting the existing literature on the subject matter. On the other hand, some critics might express reservation on such a project arguing that the attempt may lead nowhere.

In the case of this study, however, the opinions of my associates in support of writing this important book were spectacularly encouraging. The significance of Africa's unification in the face of the enormous challenges the region faces politically and economically in this era of the new globalization, and more importantly the possibilities that a success at uniting could advance the development enterprise for the benefit of future generations of Africans, call for such an amalgamation.

Be that as it may, in contemporary discourses on African development, there are two major schools of thought, viz. Afro-pessimists and Afro-optimists. Some Afro-pessimists postulate that Africa's governing elite and wealthy oligarchs are too divided, unpatriotic and selfish in the pursuit of their insular interests vis-à-vis those of the majority ordinary citizens in a nation-state. Moreover, many are so corrupt to seriously and sincerely consider the economic, political and social benefits that may accrue from an agglutination of the current weak state-system in much of the continent. Besides, they argue, the power base from which these economic and political plutocrats had dominated their polity could be greatly curtailed and their ability to control the national coffers would be profoundly and painfully limited in a broader and all-inclusive Union of African States.

On the other hand, many Afro-optimists see Africa and the current debate on unification positively. They argue, among other factors, that the impressive developments in a number of African countries can provide important models for catapulting the continent to greater heights. Africa, they further contend, has abundant raw materials—gold, diamond, crude oil, uranium, copper, iron *et cetera* and of recent substantial human capital—with which to move the area forward in the 21st century. By pulling together these plentiful resources a united Africa can develop substantially. Indeed, some posit in a popular cliché that “Rome was not built in a day” with the

view to boosting general optimism in the pan-Africanist credo of Africa's unification and the growth project.

Two popular names (among others) have been invented in the literature for a politically amalgamated Africa. These are the **Union of African States** (UAS) and **United States of Africa** (USA). Regardless of the nomenclature to be applied to this formation, they both capture the true essence and vision of African integration in this century. Accordingly, let it suffice to say that I used both the Union of African States and United States of Africa interchangeably in this text.

Incontrovertibly, this undertaking is audacious and challenging against the backdrop of a measured approach of political actors to political development in Africa. All the same, my conceptual, analytical and theoretical argumentations in this volume call for a logical reexamination of the character of Africa's current oligarchic state that serve the narrow interests of a few political and economic entrepreneurs in the continent. In other words, Africa's current nation-state system may have to be "born again" in such a way as to be able to meet the needs of citizens and thereby command and advance political legitimacy from a majority in the polity. An enactment of such a policy strategy could make the state attractive for the region's eventual amalgamation. Africa, as I argue in this text, has limited choices against the backdrop of its politico-economic marginalization in the contemporary globalization phenomenon. Thus, is reassuring that a resolve for the continent's revival and eventual political assimilation is demonstrated in the spirit of the African Union and its various organs and agencies. These developments are not only promising but also critical to providing Africa with fiscal and political clout in global affairs.

Even so, any aspiration to move the continent forward toward the creation of a Union of African States must be pursued collaboratively. In short, a drive for unification may rest, in part, on the works of Africanist scholars who, in the tradition of great sages of the past, must provide appropriate modalities and instrumentalities for its actualization; political actors, whose task will be to develop adequate infrastructures and implement the frameworks constructed by academics; the oligarchs, who will supply entrepreneurial and industrial base to boost relevant development schemes; civil society, that will monitor good governance performance, economic growth indicators, and other worthwhile programs in order to ensure their efficacy; and the grassroots, who would offer their labor and other necessities to sustain the union.

Within the context of the foregoing suppositions, I examined a potpourri of issues that are important in the process of amalgamating the continent under the following rubrics: a general introduction with a concise summary

of chapters in the text; the issue of leadership; a history of the pan-African movement that enlightens the reader as to the attempts made so far toward unity; the issue of democracy and good governance; the role that political parties and effective elections can play in promoting the vision of a united continent; and concluded with a suggestion that a federal structure could be useful in a potential Union of African State. In all, this book is probing, incisive and visionary; it is a significant contribution to the literature.

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It would be perverse to assume that this volume was put together without assistance and support from many who have crossed my academic, professional and social paths. To this end, I would like to thank the Chair and faculty of the Department of Government and Justice Studies, Appalachian State University, for granting me off-campus scholarly assignment or sabbatical leave in spring 2009. This leave of absence provided me an opportunity to complete this work and a co-edited volume, *African Mosaic: Political, Social, Economic and Technological Development in the Millennium*, published in 2009.

Professionally, my thanks are extended to members of the Association of Third World Studies (ATWS), the oldest and largest multidisciplinary Third World Association in the world. In addition to maintaining a life membership in this prestigious association, it was a real privilege to have served as its president in early 2000s. The lessons learned, and experience gained, from my tenure as chief of this organization helped sharpen my analysis in this work. It was also within the context of my relationship with members of this organization and African Studies and Research Forum (ASRF) that I have augmented my scholarly works. For example, I met and worked with such erudite Africanists as professors Julius O. Ihonvbere, John Mukum Mbaku, George Klay Kieh, Jr., Pita Ogaba Agbese, Toyin Falola, A.B. Assensoh and Philip Aka whose impressive works and publications in African studies added so much to the “flavor” and wholesomeness of this study, my other texts, and scholarly articles.

Moreover, as an African adage goes, “a tree can’t stand solidly without firm roots to support it.” Accordingly, other scholars who have collaborated with me and whose works continue to inform my scholarship and epistemology are professors Alfred B. Zack-Williams, Joseph Takougang, Mojubaolu O. Okome, F. Wafula Okumu, Olufemi Vaughan, Peyi Soyinka-Airewele, Bennett A. Odunsi, Kelechi A. Kalu, John B. Ejobowah, Abdul K. Bangura, Ufo O. Uzodike, Julius E. Nyang’oro, Paul T. Zeleza, Kidane Mengisteab, Mobolaji Aluko, and the late Nwafejoku O. Uwadibie. In the same spirit, I would like to extend special thanks to those academics whose works I cited in this project.

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ACRONYMS

AAPO	All African Peoples Organization
AG	Action Group
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMB	Electoral Management Bodies
FLN	National Liberation Front
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICES	International Center for Ethnic Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons/National Council of Nigerian Citizens
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NPC	Northern People's Congress
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PR	Proportional Representation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMD	Single-Member District
UN	United Nations
UNR-UDR	Union for a New Republic-Democratic Union for the Republic
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND A SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Without suggesting that the achievements of the ancient Africans were “the same” as those of the Greeks, it may be reasonable to think that they were in one great aspect superior. They really did evolve much out of little or out of nothing at all. If one should praise “the Greek spirit” as splendidly creative and inventive, one may perhaps express some admiration for an “African spirit” which was far less favorably placed for the elaboration of the arts of life, but nonetheless made this continent supply the needs of man. Where, after all, lay the precedent for the social and ideological structures built by the Africans, so variously resilient, so intricately held together, so much a skilful interweaving of the possible and the desirable? Where did these systems draw their sap and vigor except from **populations** who evolved them out of their own creativeness? Even allowing for the distant precedents of Egypt, the peoples who settled Africa had surely less to go upon than the ancestors of Pericles. The balance needs adjusting here.¹

—Basil Davidson

A major rationale for writing this provocative book, *Confronting the Challenges and Prospects in the Creation of a Union of African States in the 21st Century*, flows from the notion that in almost all polities, in all regions of the world, there comes an epochal moment when groups would examine their political, social and economic formation. The purpose of such a re-examination is to restructure the community so that it could become more relevant to the character of the zeitgeist. After the Berlin Conference of 1884/5 in which parts of the continent were ceded to various colonial hegemonies, and the wobbly political systems in post-independence, that critical moment of transformation is now—in the 21st century.

¹ Basil Davison, *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Social and Cultural History* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), p. 37.

That Africans have from time immemorial had the propensity for making progressive and creative adjustments to their situation is a given as noted in Davidson's preceding excerpt. Long ago, in the European context, Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704), among others, in their treaties on the problematic character of society in the state-of-nature were for the most part in sync as to how to bring about stability. In this regard, their argument for the development of a social contract of sorts between the rulers and governed as a strategy intended to move a population in a community from its "brutish" disposition in a state-of-nature to a civil society is instructive.

Historically, "atrocious" and sometimes "practical" methods for deconstructing the character of a polity and reconstituting it so that society could serve the interest of the greater population as defined by the elite have been applied. For example, the beheading of King Charles I of England;² the French Revolution of 1789;³ the American Civil War of the 1860s;⁴ the Russian first revolution (1917)⁵ and second revolution of 1989-1990, and South Africa's all-race elections of 1994⁶ (that struck a blow at the heart of apartheid) are some cases in point. In almost all of these social and political upheavals members of the well-informed public (scholars and politicians) of different hue have ruminated, debated and written essays intended to improve the socio-political and economic conditions in a community for the purpose of advancing harmony and peaceful coexistence. Thus from Plato to Marx in the Occident and from William E. B. Du Bois to Claude Ake in the African political theater theories and suppositions have been proposed as to how best to construct

² C. V. Wedgwood, Mary Coate, M. A. Thomson & David Piper, *King Charles I 1649-1949* (London: George Philip & Son, Ltd, 1949), 18-19.

³ Simon Schama, "The Fall of the Bastille," in Don Nardo (ed.), *The French Revolution* (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1999), 70-75; Norah Lofts and Margery Weiner, "The King's Fall from Power, Trial, and Execution," in Don Nardo (ed.), *The French Revolution* (San Diego, CA: Greenhave Press, Inc., 1999), 90-96.

⁴ Austin Ranney, *Governing: An Introduction to Political Science 4th Edition* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 18-19, 349, 377, 396.

⁵ Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (Cambridge, EN: Cambridge University Press), 232-254.

⁶ Richard Calland, "Democratic Government, South African Style 1994-1999," in Andrew Reynolds (ed.), *Election '99 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 1-15.

societies that could strengthen the state and offer hope to every citizen.⁷ Indeed, the strategies for deconstructing the quality of a less efficacious social and political society, and the reconstitution of the polity so that it could become more stable and create an enabling environment in which most citizens could see themselves as stakeholders in the system continues to tax the intellectual wits of scholars.⁸ In truth, one of the central theoretical questions in the discourse on how to construct a viable Union of African States or United States of Africa that could meet the needs of most citizens might always be that of the peculiar character of human nature. Philosophically, it is arguably this complex temperament inherent in the governor and governed in a social and political system that may determine the nature of a constructed society in which people live and interact. Accordingly, in a general discussion on epistemology—particularly on how the acquisition and utilization of knowledge is to be applied to promote a community’s wellbeing—it might be useful to briefly allude to the crux of the viewpoints of some of the sages who confronted a somewhat similar phenomenon at their historical moment. In this regard, I refer to the ideas on human nature and society.

All the same, as noted in my earlier supposition, the character of human beings that is often framed by his or her milieu cannot be taken lightly in the way, as leaders and followers, a society is structured and governed politically, socially, economically and religiously. In regards to explaining the foregoing assumptions, the opinions of some past philosophers on human nature⁹ (for the purpose of later making some general references to the African situation and circumstances) are edifying and instructive.

- For Plato all things can and must be judged as good or bad, whether a desk, a person, or a political regime, depending on how well each fulfills its nature or essence. The form of good is the basis for such

⁷ E. Ike Udogu, *African Renaissance in the Millennium: The Political, Social, and Economic Discourses on the Way Forward* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 121-122.

⁸ J. D. Mabbott, “Is Plato’s Republic Utilitarian?” in Gregory Vlastos (ed.), *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), 57-65; Glen R. Morrow, “Plato and the Rule of Law,” in Gregory Vlastos (ed.), *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), 144-165; Ronaldo Munck, *Marxism @ 2000: Late Marxist Perspectives* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 60-76.

⁹ See Donald G. Tannenbaum and David Schultz, *Inventors of Ideas: An Introduction to Western Political Philosophy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998).

judgments. But it is also political, because it can serve as the solid foundation for the government (or state) established according to true human nature. Only by fully serving people's true natures can any state be judged as good. **Thus, realizing the good in the state and its citizens is the foundation of justice.**¹⁰

- Drawing from his classic book, *Leviathan*, Hobbes discusses the character of human nature from the standpoint of the individual whose *raison d'être* is the acquisition of force [or power]. He affirmed: I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceases only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with the moderate power, but because he cannot assure that power and means to live well which he has... without the acquisition of more.¹¹

In the African context, many intellectual activists have written copiously on the issue of the interlacement between human nature and the quality of the state. Particular attention was and is paid to the disposition of the state that should be invented in post-colonial Africa. Other academics, too, have expressed concern on the character of leadership in which the chiefs were and are still hell bent in Hobbesian foregoing caricature on acquiring more power as a strategy for maintaining their position of privilege. But the kind of society envisaged by most scholars is that which encourages the genre of captainship that would advance a state's constitutional principle of equality of opportunity for all. In this respect the views of two philosophers and theorists in post-independent Africa on human nature and the personality of the state are enlightening and should suffice for the purpose of illustration.

- For Claude Ake the quality of the post-colonial state did not change significantly at independence [and after] since with few exceptions, the colonial state was inherited rather than transformed. Like the colonizer before them most of the national leaders regarded the state as the instrument of their will. They privatized, and exploited it for

¹⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹¹ See H. W. Schneider, *Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Publishers, 1958), Ch. 11; Arnold W. Green, *Hobbes and Human Nature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993); Tannenbaum and Schultz, op. cit., 153.