
A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063 AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract: *Besides the Constitutive Act, one of the tools being used by the African Union (AU) as a guide to performing its duties within the contemporary relationships with the member states and external partners is through relying on Agenda 2063. In this paper, the genesis of Agenda 2063 and the strategies of its implementation as well as the logic behind relying on Agenda 2063 when executing AU objectives are evaluated. Thereafter an assessment of its significance for the African continent, successes and limitations is made. In the context of our discussion, the paper will endeavour to answer the question as to whether Agenda 2063 is living to its desired expectations to attain some of its core objectives. The paper also highlights the challenges and several limitations in the implementations of Agenda 2063. Notable among others is the lack of uniformity in terms of embracing Agenda 2063 priorities, the African diversity problem in terms of location and resource ownership as well as the challenges of funding by the AU member countries who are the practical direct beneficiaries of Agenda 2063*

Keywords: African Union, Agenda 2063, International Organization, African countries, regional integration

Research Area: Political Science

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1. INTRODUCTION

From the inception of the African Union in 2001, the main operating document stipulating the mandate of the continental organization is the Constitutive Act. Through this Act, the African Union's standard of operation with regard to its continental mandate and addressing the issues affecting the African continent is outlined. The challenge with this as witnessed in various literature, the African Union's execution of its mandate has been either limited, negligent or dormant which has attracted severe criticism both within and outside Africa and partly this has been due to gross haphazard approach to issues by the continental organization with no clear priority. As a way to address some of these challenges, however, in 2013 after the meeting by African heads of states, they agreed to have a unified agenda that gives the African continent one direction towards achieving the goals and transformation of the continent.¹

Therefore, the genesis of Agenda 2063 came as a result when the AU held a golden jubilee in May 2013 to celebrate the 50 years of the Organization of African Unity/AU in leading the decolonization struggle and thereafter, the African continent once again dedicated itself to the realization of the Pan African goal of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, propelled by its individual inhabitants, on behalf of a vibrant force in the globe. In order to realize this dream, the Golden Jubilee Summit of the Union came up with a firm avowal covering several spheres ranging from integration, infrastructure development, peace and security, capacity social development, among others as the laths of the idea.

In order to make the solemn declaration a reality and within the context of the African Union vision, the Golden Jubilee Summit of the Union directed the AU Commission² supported by the NEPAD, NPCA, AfDB and the UNECA, to formulate a continental 50-year agenda through a people-driven practice outlining “*The Africa We Want,*” namely Agenda 2063.

Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent covering the 50 years to come since its inception. It aims at speeding up the carrying out of the past and current African continent plans for growth and sustainable development. Some of the previous and present plans it builds on comprise; The Lagos Plan of Action,³ The Minimum Integration Programme, the Programme for Infrastructural Development in Africa (PIDA),⁴ The Abuja Treaty, The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD),⁵ the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP),⁶ Regional Plans and Programs and National Plans. It is also based on national, regional, continental best exercises in its creation. And building on national best practices means that the initiatives which some of the member states of AU have successfully embarked on are in line with Agenda 2063 with the ultimate purpose to transform the African continent. Agenda 2063 is entrenched in Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance, whereby it tries to offer a strong framework for remedying previous unfairness and fulfilment of the 21st century as the generation for the African continent (Vedaste & MUZEE, 2018, p.143).

2. RATIONALE FOR AGENDA 2063

The African leaders agreed to have Agenda 2063 as a guideline spanning a 50 years’ vision for the continent of Africa to attain. As a result, the African Union was given the leading and coordinating role as the continental organization that combines all the African states to enforce this Agenda in member states. Therefore, in a bid to achieve Agenda 2063 the African Union has put in place various methods and strategies to enable it to attain the desired results within the next 50 years for the African continent.

This has made Agenda 2063 attract international attention from several AU external partners who have conveyed both moral and material support to the African continent in support of AU Agenda 2063. Therefore, it makes assessing what constitutes Agenda 2063 of paramount importance in order to understand the functionality of AU with external partners vis-à-vis the member states when relying on Agenda 2063.

The AU is a continental Union with an extensive variety of objectives intended at reinforcement for its member countries both exclusively and cooperatively. Subsequent to Morocco’s admittance in January, the AU now encompasses all 55 African countries. As a result, the AU has set targets for itself through its stated mission for “*an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena*” (Agenda 2063, 2015. p.1) and a deadline of 2063 has been put in place to attain this target, demonstrating the centenary of the OAU's creation. Whether or not this will be achieved is yet to be seen however, under Agenda 2063 as the guiding document for this milestone it has aspirations geared towards transforming the African continent. In order to attain the objectives, put down through Agenda 2063, the AU Commission set itself

targets. This therefore, emphasizes the significance being ascribed to Agenda 2063 by the AU as the continental organization.

Whereas it's undeniable that colonialism may have contributed to the insufficient development of Africa, the policies after colonialism by African leaders plus their methods in power have constantly led to retarded growth and development of African countries (Qobo, 2007, p.2). Therefore, Agenda 2063 comes in to try and build the gap and provide pragmatic solutions to African problems.

As observed by Falola, the objectives of Agenda 2063 brought in new potentials to surpass the colonial limitations with the economies of scale that may perhaps participate in the evolving multipolar sphere, but most of the leaders who are in power within nation-states regard the AU as a Union of states, and it's part of the reason why they consider it the nineteenth-century notions of the nation-state (Martin et al., 2018). In fact, Agenda 2063 is a 50-year strategic plan intended to advance Africa's international competitiveness through regional economic enhancements (Umar, 2019, p.132).

The role of the African Union Agenda 2063 is complementary to the mandate of the AU under the Constitutive Act of transforming the African continent in the area of peace and security, infrastructural development, Capacity Development, Health, among others. More specifically the Agenda 2063 puts particular emphasis on the same objectives that are enshrined under the CAAU by adding the aspects of the timeline when such objectives or visions should be achieved which is by the year 2063. Now this has been one of the biggest problems that have made Africa lag behind in that policies have always been put in place but with no clear implementation cross-checks and timelines, a challenge the AU Agenda 2063 is trying to address. You find that many African countries have several policies intended to develop their countries, but the time aspect in terms of deadline and urgency to implement these policies to transform their respective countries has been a big problem, a huddle that AU Agenda 2063 is trying to collectively synchronize and address.

Generally, Agenda 2063 acknowledges that Africa requires a change model in order to attain the goals anticipated to be achieved in the future. And this comprises the active participation of citizens speaking in concurrence with each other as well as getting actively involved in global matters and being accountable in terms of the results (DeGhetto et al., 2016.p.94)

2.1 The AU Domestication Process of Agenda 2063 in Member Countries

The AU embraced this Agenda with the intention of devising a roadmap for robust, peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa by 2063, 100 years after the formation of its predecessor, the OAU. Regardless of the challenges, African nations have continued with their full dedication to the Agenda. Since the unanimous establishment of Agenda 2063, African nations have made some advancement in executing the vision. Policymakers have progressively allied the new AU development plans to the Agenda 2063 objectives. This is because Agenda 2063 is a motivated scheme, which necessities the political willpower of all the nations concerned and constant execution at the level of national, regional, and continental stage (Moma et al., 2018, p.281)

Moreover, domestication implementation at national and RECs levels means integrating contents of Agenda 2063 into strategic action plans as well as budgets and these are the tools of implementation. To achieve this milestone, all African partners for development have been completely notified concerning that all development co-operation with Africa ought to from this time forth be within the perspective of Agenda 2063, which is motivating several member states to act in accordance with that request. Agenda 2063 is presently at the heart of AU leaders' aspiration for integration, prosperity and peace, highlighting the significance of proficient, comprehensive and robust countries (Karbo & Murithi, 2017)

Agenda 2063 has also been domesticated within the AU member countries with regard to the Free Movement of People and African Passport. The treaty on the Free Movement of Persons, as directed by the Assembly of Heads of States and the Government, through Assembly Decision has been considered. The purpose of the protocol is to enable the execution of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community by offering for the reformist operation of free movement of peoples, residence right and the right of establishment in Africa.⁷ Implementing procedures and roadmap is being handled by AU and RECs to better comprehend the continuing implementation of free movement in their particular region.

Similarly, Forty-four AU member countries signed an agreement creating a free trade area perceived as important to the economic development of the continent, which is vital to the AU's long-standing development plan under Agenda 2063, which appeals for the enablement of trade and travel all over the continent. All in all, there is empirical evidence to confirm that the domestication of Agenda 2063 has taken off in a bid to transform the African continent and some of the partners are helping in the process of realizing the fruits of Agenda 2063 in AU member states. It ought to be observed that the 2030 Agenda, amongst other things: reiterates the significance of backup of the AU's Agenda 2063 and the program of the NEPAD, which are both essential to the fresh Agenda (Akanle & Adesina, 2017, p.216).

Africa's collective main concern as drawn in Agenda 2063, have contributed to Agenda 2030 through the African common position (2014) on SDGs, emphasized in paragraph 42, where UN member states indicated that they 'confirm the significance of supporting the AU's Agenda 2063 and the programme of the NEPAD, all of which are essential to the new Agenda 2063 (Katarzyna & Amanda, 2018, p.49) African nations confirmed they were resolute to eliminate poverty and construct collective wealth through continental social as well as economic transformation (Katarzyna & Amanda, 2018, p.49) Consequently, Agenda 2063 constructs on the features and main concerns of African common position, which means that numerous priorities in Agenda 2030 are also echoed in Agenda 2063 (Katarzyna & Amanda, 2018, p.13). When Agenda 2063 is compared to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, that is the contemporary international development agenda, it is apparent that the SDGs have also been unsuccessful in reflecting an integrated attitude (Omorogbe & Ordor, 2018, p.269)

2.2. Success Registered So Far With Regard To Implementation of Agenda 2063

There has been some progress with regard to the success and implementation of Agenda 2063 on the African continent. For example, the Single African Air Transport Market

(SAATM) is a scheme by AU to make a specific market for air transport in Africa with the intention of allowing freedom of air transport in Africa as well as promoting and achieving Agenda 2063. It is based on the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision and the main aim of SAATM is to make sure that all AU member states participating in it accept to lift market access restrictions for airlines, remove restrictions on ownership, allow each other comprehensive air traffic rights and liberalize flight frequency and capacity limits. The AU is offering oversight over the SAATM including supervision and settlement of disputes.

In 2015, the Declaration for the Establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market put up the structure for a single market implementing the Yamoussoukro Decision to be established by 2017 although it was later extended with plans to inaugurate the single market during the 30th AU Summit in Addis Ababa, of which SAATM was made official on 28 January 2018 by Rwandan President Paul Kagame, as new Chairperson of the AU. And this has garnered support from external partners, for example, China was quick to concur and offer its backing towards Africa's efforts in a Single African Air Transport Market mainly through investing in the development and operation of aviation infrastructure. The challenge is that little has been done practically and consistently to execute the project.

Another problem is that only 23 AU member states have accepted to join the SAATM as beginning members. This means that the implementation in a number of AU member countries in a bid to pursue protectionism by declining to give fifth freedom rights to foreign airlines poses serious challenges. Indeed, some AU member states and airlines have condemned the scheme. The government of Uganda and some smaller airlines claim that the agreement would result in few big airlines taking over the market, thus stifling competition. Therefore, much as the AU project may result in cheaper flights, greater passenger volumes and economic benefits more work is still needed to efficiently put the policy into practice across all the member states.

Agenda 2063 provides that;

“The political unity of Africa will be the culmination of the integration process, which includes the free movement of people and the establishments of continental institutions, leading to full economic integration. By 2030, there shall be consensus on the form of the continental government and institutions (Aspiration 2, section 23, Agenda 2063)”

As a result, there has been growth in Regional integration for the past few years. Currently, there are eight Regional Economic Communities acknowledged by the AU which has indeed realized substantial advancement in integrating their economies like the EAC, SADC, COMESA, and ECOWAS. For instance, in 2015, EAC, SADC and COMESA, covering 650 million people in 26 nations and with a collective GDP of over US\$1.5 trillion, signed the groundbreaking Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement. Basing on this, other regions are also sought to accelerate their integration to attain a Continental Free Trade Area between the 55 nations, with free movement of people, goods and services. It will comprise 1.2 billion people and with collective GDP of over US\$3.5 trillion. And this will enhance industrialization and generate wealth and new employments; however, its total success is reliant on national, regional and continental strength. For instance, the CEMAC which comprises six nations Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville,

Equatorial Guinea and Gabon removed visa prerequisites for one another's citizens, in other words, implementation was affected by individual AU member states.

The Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 for Good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law is essential on the continent because of its bad record in Africa. The AU has tried to play a part in achieving this goal by expelling a member in case of a military coup d'état in that particular nation for example; Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Mali and Togo and this has sent a message of deterrence or discouragement of similar military takeovers in other nations. For example, when President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe was ousted, the military made sure its brief takeover was not perceived as a coup d'état. Nevertheless, democracy is still weak on the African continent much as there are regular elections and peaceful transfers of power; more is needed to reinforce democratic institutions.

2.3. Limitations of AU Agenda 2063 Implementations

The challenges are that the practicality and sustainability of the Agenda 2063 projects basically are contingent on the degree to which development is related to the planning, development and operation of prevailing and planned national and regional projects such as high-speed railway networks, electrical power and ICT infrastructure amenities of the African continent. And for some of these initiatives to succeed it requires the political will from African heads of states.

One of the challenges that can be observed from the domestication and implementation of Agenda 2063 is dealing with diversity on the African continent. Diversity on the African continent is a problem because much as Africans have shared aspirations, diversities exist in areas of present positions of member countries in the development. For instance, in terms of possession of resources, some AU member countries possess vast resources whereas other countries have little or no resources at all.

Similarly, the geographical aspects come in as well, in that other AU member countries are more strategically located to the geographical and geopolitical interests of major partners compared to others, while others are Islands and others landlocked. Also, the capabilities in development and economic administration vary considerably, it's the reason why such multiplicities ought to be included through objectives, areas of priority and aims so that the consequences structure reveals the multiplicities through member countries and diagonally stakeholders in member nations. Failure to consider diversity issues on the African continent is propagating a disjointed approach to the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063.

Similarly, another limitation that prevails is that there is a need to harmonize strategies and practices in that whereas managing Africa's multiplicities ought to be made into the method of "*Making It Happen*", it's necessary to guarantee that it is universal in specific spheres if the reliability of the process is to be upheld. Some of the spheres of concentration earmarked as pointers which are selected by member states to monitor the advancement towards the realization of the targets, ought to be related and the process for their calculation and confirmation must too be matching. If that synchronization is not upheld, it becomes a challenge to combine or equate the performance of member countries at the regional and continental stages using evaluation and monitoring strategies and this means that whereas member countries are cheered to leverage on their national strong point, a

minimum set of strategies is needed which will be identical and increase ways to compare of results between or within member nations in a region and between member nations traversing regions.

In the same way, leadership at all stages, national, regional and continental for driving the Agenda 2063 application, evaluation and monitoring practices is essential for success. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the leadership arguments at each level and confirm their awareness together with the tasks allocated to them, however, this proves to be a long process, which affects the speed of implementation. Furthermore, the arrangement of the leadership relations within the stage of national, regional and continental and more significantly between the numerous stages in the order of hierarchy is breeding role vagueness and stimulating inconsistencies in the determination of the implementation of Agenda 2063.

Agenda 2063 is encountering the problem of deficiency of commitment from leaders of African countries because of the rooted perception that most of the times leaders in Africa normally publically approve matters that they don't essentially believe in or entirely support. The past tells again of the numerous unsuccessful continental agendas approved by the AU subsequently after its inauguration that wanted to drive united growth, security, and sustainable development through the progression of transforming in the field of economics, politics, social, and technology comparable to the present Agenda 2063. However, the AU has efficaciously enhanced widespread notions like adopting 'African solutions to African problems and 'African Renaissance which even though much contestations appears to be acknowledged as the strategy in constructing Africa we need by 2063(Onuora-Oguno et al., 2017, p.182).

Similarly, the absence of regime stability that is prevailing in the politics of Africa as well as the unscrupulous and technocratic power of international corporations all lead to obstructions to the pursuit of a genuine process of integration in Africa (Biswaro,2011, p.415). Look at the current conflict and mistrust between Kenya and Somalia where the ambassadors have been expelled from both countries. Then when we see the current tension between Uganda and Rwanda accusing each other of spying and espionage to the extent of Rwanda closing its border and limiting the trucks going to Rwanda are all signs of impediments to integration and working together as Africa as one country as projected by Agenda 2063.

The Agenda 2063 likewise tries to deal with Africa as a single component of exploration, and this could be a mistake, the reason being that Africa is so varied that the matters deliberated upon during the process of consultation and implementation may not mean the same things for inhabitants of diverse African regions. As a result, the apparent variances are prone to make it difficult for the scheme, application, monitoring and evaluation of the strategic approach of Agenda 2063(DeGhetto et al., 2016.p.98)

For example, fragile nations could be a staggering obstruction to the growth of strong procedures grounded on regional integration agreements reason being that they are incapable to develop, manage and apply an all-inclusive regional integration plan. Likewise, Geda and Kibret argue that an integration system, where nations are at diverse stages of development will incur unbalanced achievements from integration and their obligation to implement the

treaties agreed on may perhaps be badly affected (Geda & Kibret, 2002, p.12). And if Agenda 2063 does not remedy this challenge it may fail like the previous programs. Minus common values and mutual interest, the regional integration progression will be complex (Qobo, 2007, p.6). Much as integration as projected by Agenda 2063 is anticipated as a plan for defeating individual member states' fragilities and developmental hindrances, on the contrary, it may possibly produce conflicts and strains inside and amongst member nations particularly when contrasting beliefs and political structures participate in the presence of a perceived unbalanced economic gain (Chingono & Nakana, 2009, p.397).

Moreover, by the nature of Agenda 2063, it tends to eliminate the biggest portion of the population who are not well educated. This can be attributed to the fact that it is being translated only in four formal languages of the AU thus English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. This means that there is a danger of the majority of the inhabitants failing or miss to understand and appreciate it, and this, therefore, calls for a vigorous exercise for the Agenda to be translated into the main native African languages. As a result, the current language marginalization weakens the consultative essence of Agenda 2063 (DeGhetto et al., 2016.p.98-99).

3. CONCLUSION

Basing on the research in this paper, it is clearly evident that at the moment it is very difficult to talk about the African Union and you omit the current working document of the focus known as Agenda 2063. It has manifested that there is great weight and consideration subscribed on Agenda 2063 by the AU and its member states to ensure its execution, the only challenge is that to some extent there is a disjointed approach on the implementation of the priority areas of Agenda 2063 by the AU member states resulting into lack of uniformity in the executions of the goals and aims.

Nevertheless, basing on the qualitative interviews I carried out at the African Union Headquarter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, there is empirical evidence that the AU is determined to utilize Agenda 2063 as a tool for transforming the African continent. This belief has been fed into the AU member states, although at varying pace considering the fact that the way the AU functions in a bid to tilt the whole of the African continent to focus on the Agenda 2063 is more persuasive and voluntary than cohesive because the continental organization lacks the funds to give to these member states which is a prerequisite to implementing the priority goals under Agenda 2063. And therefore, to some degree, this makes the implementation of the Agenda 2063 in the AU member states non-uniform and unsystematic. This notwithstanding, there has been some majority uniform implementation of some areas of Agenda 2063 like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by AU member states, but still much as many AU member states signed the agreement, domestic implementation is still disjointed, unfortunately.

Having said that however, predominantly consistent results of implementation have been registered in the field of infrastructure as well as other key priority areas, but still these implementations have come at a heavy price of seeking loans and bilateral partnership support from external partners who use their relationship with AU as leverage to help its member states execute the Agenda 2063 objectives as they pursue their own interests to a great extent.

However, one question that remains unanswered with regard to the Agenda 2063 project is the rationale why Africa should wait for 50 years before it is delivered from economic weakness with all the available technology in these modern times. Indeed, the achievements of Agenda 2063 can still be enhanced if some issues are addressed. For instance, the concept of constant devotion to sovereignty by some nations necessitates being dissipated. States ought to be prepared and devoted to taking the required steps to internal socio-economic reformation and ratification of the several instruments. The AU needs to look at other versions of integration, as in some examples other modes of the EU may not be suitable to Africa which could result in failure. For example, Draper suggests that instead of “hard” sovereignty, “soft” sovereignty will result in inter-governmental rather than supranational compositions that call for main sovereignty concerns (Draper, 2010, p.21).

Several times African nations tried to get Africa-driven solutions that are propelled by Africans but all in vain because Africa was frail, politically and economically. Agenda 2063 objectives are to form an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. This means that African development is to be people driven by Africans themselves. Agenda 2063 is different from the previous schemes by the African continent because its mode of execution being a bottom-up method and result-oriented in nature. Consequently, if Agenda 2063 is well implemented, a lot could be achieved on the African continent.

Notes:

¹ AU member states amount to 14 put in written contribution to Agenda 2063, they include; Algeria, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

² The African Union Commission is the secretariat of the Union as provided for under Article 20 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union

³ It was OAU supported plan requesting for urgent action to provide the political support necessary for the success of the measures to achieve the goals of rapid self-reliance and self-sustaining development and economic growth. (Organization of African Unity, Lagos plan of action for the economic development of Africa 1980-2000. p. 4
https://web.archive.org/web/20070106003042/http://uneca.org/itca/ariportal/docs/lagos_plan.PDF)

⁴ Infrastructure is Africa’s top priority. (<http://www.nepad.org/programme/programme-infrastructure-development-africa-pida>)

⁵ NEPADQA is an African Union program which intends to offer an all-encompassing vision and policy Framework for hastening economic co-operation and integration among African member states. P.1 Document on The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance 18th, June, 2002.

⁶ Pledge by African leaders to eradicate poverty individually and collectively from their countries, p.1. Document on Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme.

⁷ Protocol to The Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment

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