RESEARCH ARTICLE

BOB MARLEY'S 'AFRICA UNITE' AND THE CHALLENGES CONFRONTING AFRICAN UNION

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ABSTRACT

Scholarly works on International organization attempts to advocate for stronger union as a basis of addressing myriads of problems by member countries. Bob Marley's ''Africa Unite'' suggests that beyond the coming together of nations of the black race, the future lies on the people's perception of unity. This study adopts David Mitrany's Functionalist theory in addressing the challenges of African Unity especially on the basis of fulfilling the dreams of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Nnamdi Azikwe, Kenneth Kaunda and Nelson Mandela. This study adopt literally review and discourse analysis in presenting logical arguments on the challenges confronting African Union using Bob Marley's Album caption African Unite. Our finding indicated that amidst recent successes in the areas of conflict management and peace-keeping in few countries such as Liberia, Mali, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Chad, the Union still faces problems ranging from "multipolar ideological leanings of its member states, insecurity, and its inability to create a strong intra African alliances and friendships capable of lessening dependence on former colonial powers. This study recommends that African leaders should keep their differences and individual national interest aside, put-up patriotic spirits, envisage and pursue policies that would yield positive results for the growth and development of African continent generally and their individual states respectively.

Keywords: Colonization, multinational exploitation, capitalism, imperialism, pan-Africanism, African Union.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Efforts towards the promotion of African unity and solidarity had started as far back as the late 19th century with the Pan-Africanist struggles of liberated black slaves in the West Indies. The Pan-Africanist struggle asserted and recognizes the dignity of the blackman and was based on the general principles of "Africa for Africans", African Federalism, and African Communalism. Ejiofor (1981) noted that Robert Nesta Marley popularly known as Bob Marley was a music icon of Jamaican black race extraction who used his musical skills to carry witty messages against the discrimination, injustice and all forms of ill treatments meted out on blacks all over the world, beginning from the slave trade era up till the 19th century when majority of the black race were under the colonial (white man's) subjugation and domination. Bob Marley's music or what could be referred to as political communication enquiry principally investigated and checkmated institutional abuses, government excessive use of power and societal ills.

This work assesses the political messages embedded in Bob Marley's music "Africa Unite", its influence on Africa liberation struggle, eventual emancipation and the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. It also examines the challenges confronting the African Union (AU) towards the actualization of the dreams of African founding fathers of their dream united Africa.

Despite the efforts and sacrifices of African Union Founding Fathers and music icons such as Bob Marley, Ras Kimono and the Wailers among others, towards the actualization of African Union, African emancipation and the collective development of African economy for the general wellbeing of Africans which cumulated in the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and its transformation to African Union (AU) in 2002, African leaders and Africa as a continent has been challenged by series of problems ranging from conflicts, poverty, inequality, unemployment, climate change, corruption, illegal financial flow, lack of fund, among others which had continued to work against the unity and collective development of the continent.

2.0. OVERVIEW OF BOB MARLEY'S CONTRIBUTION AND COLONIALISM

2.1. Bob Marley's Contribution to African Liberation Struggle

Bob Marley is considered as one of the pioneers of reggae, a Rastafarian icon who infused his music with a sense of spirituality. Bob Marley was a Pan-Africanist, he became the most powerful cultural representative of Pan-Africanism through the uncompromising messages in his music particularly in the 1960s and seventies that spurred the liberation struggle spirit in Africans and also galvanized the masses toward full emancipation of all African countries, Zimbabwe being one of the last of African countries to shake off the yoke of colonialism in 1980 and Apartheid South Africa in 1994.

Some of Bob Marley's music that spurred the revolutionary spirit in Africans include but not limited to Catch Fire released in 1973, war, one love, and positive vibration from iconic album Rastaman Vibration, Exodus, Kaya and Africa Unite. Alake (2020) notes that the most defiant and politically charged in Marley's catalogue of songs includes 'Africa Unite' and 'Zimbabwe'. According to him, Bob Marley had specifically written Zimbabwe in support of the independence fighting rebels, which he debuted at the Amanda Concert held in Boston, USA to support the South African anti-apartheid struggle. It was therefore no surprise that he was the only artist from outside Zimbabwe invited to perform at the Zimbabwean independence ceremony.

2.2. An Overview of the Background to Colonialism and Decolonialization

The industrial revolution which occurred in the western world, Europe and America around the 19th century created a vacuum in their political and economic struggles. These industrialized nations in order to solve the perennial problems created by the industrial revolution went all out to colonize the third world countries, African countries inclusive. During the colonial era, the colonizers tailored the economy of the colonized to benefit the Metropolitan countries, with the colonies serving as satellite states. The relationship was simply unequal; it was a relationship between the exploiter and the exploited. Ndoh (1998) observes that:

> The exploiter has the wealth, prestige and power while the exploited is poor, without prestige and influence. The exploited has the means of production, appropriate the goods and maximizes profits. On the other hand, the exploited

has only his labour and does not even enjoy the products of his labour, if he does, it was at exorbitant cost. To say the least, the relationship was a phenomenon of extreme inequalities (Ndoh, 1998).

As time went on, the colonized nations of Africa and others started the struggle for their independence and with time virtually all of them gained their independence from their colonial masters. The newly independent nations or emergent nations were however bedeviled by poverty, diseases, political instability, high mortality rate, economic crisis, weak infrastructure, ethnic and religious rivalries and civil wars.

Majority of them are poor, weak and defenseless. A good number of them became vulnerable to external factors and influences. Ndoh (1998) noted that "they have marked variations in size, natural endowment, political ideologies, socio-cultural and economic structures as well as technological bases. They are equally heterogeneous based on experience and geography".

In the face of all these, and in spite of the differences in ideologies, and the emergence of different political leanings and blocs (Casablanca and Monrovia) that tended to divide or polarize them, African leaders envisaged and advocated for a common forum through which they can pursue their common and collective goals and aspirations, as well as solving their common problems as a continent. This led to the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, which was later transformed to African Union in 2002 with multifaceted aims and objectives of pulling their political will and economic resources together for the growth and development of Africa and also for the emancipation of its member states from colonial subjugation. The question that now bother the minds of majority of Africans and which begs for answers are: "how much of these have been achieved? And what are the hindrances".

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This paper is employed a literally perspective in elucidating the contemporary challenges confronting African Union from the dimension of Bob Marley's Album captioned 'African Unite'. The method draw from secondary sources and qualitatively present a discourse analysis based on view based n Marley's wording on AFRICAN Unite' and articles that relate to issues in focus.

4.0. DISCOURSES ON THE CHALLENGES OF FRICAN UNION

Some of the cardinal challenges confronting the African Union are thematically presented in the discourses that follow.

Poverty and Weak Industrial Base

At independence, majority of African leaders inherited countries with very weak economies and industrial bases. Besides, in practical terms, the decision-making process that governs the international flow of trade, capital and technology are controlled by the major developed countries of the north and their transnational and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Oil Companies among others. "On the other hand, most of the third world countries are unfavourably placed in world politics. Individually, they are powerless to influence the global decision-making processes and institutions; hence, the global economic environment virtually affects their development" (Ndoh, 1998).

In any case, Nigeria and few other countries' foreign policy objectives had been channeled towards harmonizing the African States in such a way as to present a uniform, unanimous and common approach to international problems and to provide a formidable front to enhance the bargaining status and power of African states in matters of international relations and their capabilities in world politics, but unfortunately majority of African States lacked the resources for speedy development and so had to depend on charity in form of aid, assistance or grant from the world powers, international organizations and the multilateral institutions to survive. This explains why some of them aligned themselves to the capitalist bloc and some others to the communist bloc during the cold war era and presently to their former colonial governments.

External Influence and Neo-Colonialism

The fact that majority of African countries got their political independence from their colonizers from the early sixties up to 1994 when South Africa the last to shake off the yoke, got its independence. Africans have not really completely eradicated imperialist interference in their internal affairs. Ahmadu (2016) argues that "by accepting the arrangements made by

respective colonial powers, the continental political body itself tended to have comprised neocolonialism and the process of imperialism in Africa.

As a result of the weak economic, political and technological bases they inherited from the former colonial governments, most African countries could not and can still not stand on their own in achieving the goals of the AU in the area of economic and technological development, hence they often fall back to their former colonial allies for protection, economic and financial assistance which comes with stringent conditions attached. Such foreign influences often times make the recipient African countries to have divided loyalty to the continental body (AU)

Lack of Financial Support from Member States

The African Union as a body has neither centralized administrative unit nor common purse to enhance the smooth running of the organization. In most cases, the body often relies on the strength and contributions of its member states to carry out its functions effectively but unfortunately due to the economic crisis and debt burden that characterize most African countries, they failed to fulfill their obligations to the body thereby contributing to its weakness and inactiveness.

Lack of Power to Enforce its Rules and Regulations

Apart from not having a strong and centralized common purse for the effective running of the organization, African Union does not as well have a centralized military force or security outfit such as army or police to enforce most of its rules and resolutions or to sanction member states who breach its resolutions, rather it depends on adhocracy or ad hoc provision by members which most often do not come as most of the member states are reluctant in supporting the body financially and militarily either because they have affiliation or are in alliance with the aggressor state or are nonchalant of the affairs of the body. This directly or indirectly affect the effective functioning of AU.

In the early 1990s when Liberia was engulfed in civil war which was considered a regional responsibility, the AU could not do much because of lack of support by its members, in which Nigeria decided to take the bull by the horn. In a treatise, it is observed that:

Nigeria's military efforts and involvement in the Liberia civil war was approved by ECOWAS, which set up a regional monitoring group to be known as ECOMOG. The expenditure of some 12 billion United States Dollars by Nigeria for the ECOMOG operations in Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone was to affect Nigeria's capacity to meet internal infrastructural and welfare needs, to the extent that "donor fatigue" set in, leading to a reluctance to single-handedly undertake to find what otherwise should have been an international responsibility (Ogunsanwo, 2015).

Political Instability

At independence, most African leaders inherited political structures that were not strong and stable. There has been constant coups and overthrow of governments. Constant changes of leadership due to military coup in some member states had resulted into policy changes which inadvertently affect the degree of support of the organisation's decisions, most especially in the area of enforcing its resolutions in conflict management and resolutions, and climate change among others. Ahmadu (2016) noted that inter-state rivalry and suspicion leads to supremacy struggle between leaders and different interpretations were given to motives for the suggested proposals. Frequent and reoccurring wars and conflicts internally and externally have impeded greatly on peace and security of the continent.

To say therefore that political instability is a sine qua non to the effective functioning of the Africa and the overall transformation of any economy is stating the obvious. One could thus say, without fear and contradiction, that peace is a prerequisite for actual development of any society. Any nation that lacks it is bound to remain behind in the match towards socio-political and economic transformation (Ndo, 1998). In the recent time and from the inception of President Muhammadu Buhari's led APC government in 2015, the level of in security, wanton killings and destruction of lives and properties by the Boko Haram insurgents, bandits and Fulani Herdsmen had increased more than ever before in the history of the country. Police stations have been burnt, policemen disarmed and killed at will by faceless groups called "Unknown gunmen". This is more prevalent in the South-South, South-East and some parts of South-West of Nigeria. Yet in face of all these, the government of the day seems unconcerned, untroubled and clueless. This explains the reasons why in some quarters it has been alleged that the APC led government in Nigeria are colluding in the crime and that some members of the Boko Haram insurgents and bandits are within the government circle.

The allegation against the Minister of Communication and Digital Economy under Buhari's government Isa Pantami who was accused of having link and affiliation with Islamic terrorist groups because of the controversial comments he allegedly made several years ago in support of global terrorist groups Al-Qaeda and Taliban, a Sunni Islamic Movement and Military Organisation in Afghanistan which ignited crisis within the country, is a clear case of such insinuations. Despite Pantami's renunciation of his controversial comments on terrorism, Nigerians demanded for his resignation, saying that his alleged comments were too weighty to be discarded and that Nigerians and their data were no longer secured with somebody who had wept sentiments with terrorists (Nnodim, Alagbe, Hanafi and Okere, 2021). The worsening security situation in Nigeria has been captured by the secretary of an apex Islamic Organisation in the northern part of Nigeria, Jama'at Nasril Islam (JNI), Dr. Khalid Abubakar Aliyu who stated thus in a press conference in Kaduna.

> *It is becoming increasingly glaring that our dear nation, Nigeria, and especially northern Nigeria, is drifting towards serious situation of violent conflicts, insecurity and destruction. One needs not be told that almost the whole North is on fire. While almost the entire North-East is engulfed by recurrent killings and bombings in the name of the supposed Boko Haram, in Birnin Gwari (Kaduna State), some parts of Zamfara, Kebbi and other parts of the North-West, the killings are perpetrated by unidentified criminals. In Benue state, the Tiv/Fulani conflict has long been hijacked by terrorists and political criminals; in Nasarawa state it is Ombatse. A few days ago, various attacks were reported in Kaduna and Taraba; the most recent was the Giwa Barrack attack in Maiduguri, Borno State.*

4.2. Ideological Diversities versus Corruption among the African Leaders

One of the major purposes or goals of establishing AU was to enhance the economic, socio-cultural and political growth and development of African States through collective efforts and to reduce or possibly eradicate their dependence on the Western powers. Unfortunately however, most African States had carried over their colonial ideological leanings and affiliations with former colonial masters to the present dispensation, thereby reducing the level of co-operation and commitment to the continental body.

This tendency is more prevalent and common among the Arab countries of Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia etc. who have dual identity and strong affiliation to the Arab League. Others are the former Francophone countries of Cameroon, Togo, Gabon etc.

who still maintain their economic and political leanings to their former colonial master France. Besides some member states practice capitalism, others practice socialism or mixed economy and this has continually made it very difficult for member states to have a common stand on certain major issues affecting the Union and the continent generally.

In context of corruption among African leaders, research evidence had shown that apart from the constant changes in government and policy formulation, and the resultant socio-economic backwardness that arises from it, another factor that has continued to work against the success of the continental body (AU) is the obvious insincerity and corrupt tendencies of the political class and their junta counterparts. Ndoh in Emezi and Ndoh (1998) captured the disturbing political situation and atmosphere in Africa and among African leaders when he stated "it is a common notion today to talk of the militarized politicians and the civilianized military in Africa and indeed the third world. Consequent upon the uncertainties that hover in their political atmosphere, people tends to be less patriotic, more greedy, less labour-conscious, and virtually plan less".

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From our preceding discourses, it is clear that the objectives and goals of African Union founding fathers of actualizing a United Africa, stable and well-structured economy for the growth and development of Africa and African people, which led to the formation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 has not really fully been realized. Our finding indicated that amidst recent successes in the areas of conflict management and peace-keeping in few countries such as Liberia, Mali, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Chad, the Union still faces problems ranging from "multipolar ideological leanings of its member states, insecurity, and its inability to create a strong intra African alliances and friendships capable of lessening dependence on former colonial powers as attested for in Ahmadu (2016).

Retrospectively, the Union had right from its inception been challenged by a number of issues, which has slowed down its functions, operational speed and high degree of achievements. Currently the African Union has series of problems ranging from managing and combating surging health issues such as Malaria, HIV/AIDS epidemic, Covid-19, lack of portable drinking water and good environment. They also face economic issues such as

improving the living standards of millions of improvised Africans, the management of heavy debt burden of most African States. Handling ecological issues such recurring famines, erosion, landmine and propelling ecological sustainability.

Currently most African states are confronted with heavy security challenges ranging from terrorism, banditry, Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen attacks and wanton killings in virtually all parts of Nigeria. The continent had also been challenged by the problem of mediating in undemocratic regimes and civil wars in Mali, Sudan, Liberia, and Chad where the head of state Idriss Deby Itno was killed in war front by a rebel group known as Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT).

In the face of all these challenges, therefore, this paper recommends that a lot needs to be done differently in order to achieve different and better results if the vision and dreams of African foremost nationalists and founding fathers are to be actualized. Also, African leaders should keep their differences and individual national interest aside, put-up patriotic spirits, envisage and pursue policies that would yield positive results for the growth and development of African continent generally and their individual states respectively.

Competing Interest

The authors have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this paper

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