Achieving a United States of Africa: Practical Vision or Utopian Ideal?

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War ushered in an era of anticipation and hope in Africa, a continent that still suffers the adverse effects of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and cold war politics. The making of the African Union (AU) was a corollary of the necessity to redefine Africa in the framework of a global environment that is principally directed towards achievement of security not only of member states and the continent at large but also of individual citizens. It was also an upshot of the need to determine African economic independence, which was envisaged as part of the last struggle against imperialism. In June 2007 African leaders met in Accra, Ghana, with a view to establishing a union government that would bring Africa together, at the end of which was observed some back-pedalling on the issue. This article is an expose of the multifarious challenges that have to larger extent crippled the reality of united African. It seeks to examine the causes of insecurity that seem to

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have emerged from a multiplicity of factors that cut across all spheres of human interaction. In essence the paper deals with the following questions: who conducts global policy and who owns global strategic resources? What is the place of Africa in the international system at most for it to determine the course of its development on its own terms?

The origins of the concept of establishing an African government that has proved to be illusory thus far can be traced far back to Kwame Nkrumah. The 'African failure' should not to be treated as if its roots lay no more than a few years in the past rather than spending decades or centuries. The history of Africa presents images founded on slavery, colonialism, and racism. A survey of Africa reveals that the end of colonialism and its systems of oppression like apartheid did not end problems bedevilling African societies currently. Leadership failure, one-party states or personal rule, coups and counter coups, recurrent drought, rampant corruption; and mismanagement, ill-conceived or poorly-applied policies, skills shortages, political risks, stringent regulations and bureaucratic obstacles are some of the momentous problems faced by the emerging states. Accordingly the paper examines how these problems have hindered the creation of a union government in the form of the United States of Africa, and reflects on prospects of realising this dream.

The Emergence of the Concept of United States of Africa

The concept of unity of Africa is rooted in the development of pan Africanism and was well articulated and chronicled by Kwame Nkrumah[1]. In the beginning,

> Africans in the Diaspora led by the Trinidadian, Henry Sylvester Williams, played the leading role in promoting Pan Africanism. It was not until 1945 that Africans on the continent became leaders of the movement through the anti-