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Special Issue

**Towards the Africa We Want: The AU and the Quest for Peace and
Development in the Era of Polycrisis
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Editorial Note

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The founding of the African Union's (AU) predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), over sixty years ago, was inspired by the desire to mobilise continental efforts (to drive the decolonial wave across the continent) and resources for collective self-reliance and sufficiency. At the centre of this continental organisation has always been the unification of Africa through Pan-Africanism. At its establishment in the early 1960s, the OAU pursued five main goals, namely, to:

- (a) Promote the unity and solidarity of African States;
- (b) Coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa;
- (c) Defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence;
- (d) Eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; and
- (e) Promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Adedeji, 1984; OAU, 1980).

These issues remained critical, even as the organisation transformed in the early 2000s. For instance, the top priorities of the AU are to (a) Achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa; (b) Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and

independence of its Member States; (c) Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent; (d) Encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; (e) Promote peace, security and stability on the continent (AU, 2015). The papers in this issue look at these issues in a markedly changed global environment than it was then.

As 2013 marked the Golden Jubilee since the founding of the then OAU, African leaders renewed their commitment to continental unity under the theme “Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance”. The 50th-anniversary solemn declaration that was adopted reinforced this commitment, paving the way for and ushering in the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Today, the Agenda 2063 is the AU’s flagship project, which defines, in no uncertain terms, what the organisation seeks and aspires to achieve. This Agenda has seven aspirations (AU, 2015), namely:

- I. Prosperous Africa, based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development;
- II. An Integrated Continent Politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of the African Renaissance;
- III. An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law;
- IV. A Peaceful and Secure Africa;
- V. Africa with a Strong Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics;
- VI. An Africa Whose Development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its Youth and Women, and
- VII. An Africa as A Strong and Influential Global Player and Partner

Against this backdrop, the papers in this volume address, in one way or another, all of these issues, from Pan-Africanism and unity of the African (people) continent to the socio-economic development aspiration. The world is emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected some countries more than others, and the continent is experiencing the resurgence of military coups. Thus, the concept of poly-crisis encapsulates and grapples with various crises emanating from and outside Africa simultaneously. The papers critically examine how the AU has grappled with some of these historical crises more than twenty years into its life. This special edition is timely and pertinent, particularly in relation to Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. This is a continental development blueprint of the AU aimed at the socio-cultural and

politico-economic transformation for the betterment of the lives and livelihoods of African people.

The paper that opens the volume, by Olawale Yemisi and Ridwan Tosho Idris, titled “African Union Agenda 2063 and the Resurgence of Military Coup d’état in Africa”, examines the challenges the AU encounters in sustaining political stability and the effects of coups on regional security and governance. It sheds light on the AU’s strengths and weaknesses, contributing to debates on regional security structures and democratic governance in Africa.

Siphumelele Duma examines how the current format of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) aids or derails the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). While the AfCFTA conceives RECs as its building blocks, as was envisioned in the Abuja Treaty, Duma argues that integrating the RECs would be nearly impractical given their current diverse intra-trade arrangements. The author notes that the Abuja Treaty had not envisaged member states belonging to up to four RECs simultaneously, with different intra-trade arrangements at varying levels of integration. Levious Chiukira examines the emerging role of women trading across borders in relation to the implementation of the AfCFTA. The author interrogates the need for achieving gender equality in trade at the continental level and how women can contribute to the growth of intra-African trade. Moreover, this research contributes to the existing knowledge by highlighting the unique constraints women informal cross-border traders face within the AfCFTA framework.

Adeoye Akinola examines the threats to human security in Nigeria and assesses the underlying causes of insecurity of lives and destruction of property in the country, exploring the governance-human security nexus. The author notes that despite the interventions of state and non-state actors, Nigeria has become one of the most unsecured countries in the world. The failure to espouse human security remains a recurrent public conversation and scholarly writings. Akinola argues that the inability of the Nigerian state to safeguard lives and promote effective governance should be a significant concern for the AU. Given Nigeria's large population, the risk of state collapse and escalating socio-economic, political instability, and insecurity could lead to mass migration and human displacements, potentially overwhelming neighbouring countries and thereby constituting a vast humanitarian disaster. Therefore, the AU should bolster Nigeria's capacity for economic development, effective governance, and the security of its population.

Abdullahi Mohammed Odowa, in his “Somaliland: Africa’s best-kept secret is in crises, causes and consequences”, evaluates emerging

institutions against Somaliland's original goals, an area often overlooked in the literature, which typically analyses state fragility factors separately without linking them to the conditions that led to Somaliland's creation. The author broadens the existing scholarship in this area by evaluating the quality of emerging institutions and polity against the initial objectives of Somaliland's creation. It is argued that weak institutions, destructive elite behaviour, and exclusive politics are the main drivers of state fragility. Immediate and sustained comprehensive interventions are essential to address root causes and guide local state-building efforts.

Stephen Phiri uses the circumstances of the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a barometer to critically evaluate the nature of the African post-colonial state in relation to African unity. The author cautions that Africa should be careful of the global powers who claim to be the saviours, giving a precautionary warning to the way Africa should deal with this possible new global reality. Invoking the work of Kwame Nkrumah as a reminder of how Africa can consolidate itself as a formidable force to be recognised, the author argues that Africa should be its voice and drive its agency in international relations.

Chigozie Udensi and Adeoye Akinola explore South Africa's performance in executing the African Union Migration Policy Framework for Africa (AU MPFA) and interrogate the roles of lead political actors in framing migration policy in the country. The authors provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes in implementing the AU MPFA. Several studies have discussed South African migration policy, but there is scanty literature on the country's performance in implementing the continental migration policy. The article found a disconnection between the provisions of the MPFA and the implementation of migration policy in the country.

Kidane Seife Tadelle ponders the conditions that make creating an Indigenous governance system possible and then puts it into practice. Kidane argues that to do this, it may be necessary to reassess the existing institutional and governance framework differently. Noting that the push for a more cohesive Africa is often dominated by a Eurocentric perspective that undermines indigenous knowledge systems. Thus, the AU cannot transition from a Eurocentric perspective to one incorporating indigenous governance principles. The current AU mandate, institutional structure, and sacrosanct sovereignty make achieving economic development and intra-African trade challenging.

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