

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Title of the thesis:

The role of The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as an international governmental organisation in regional co-operation, development and stability: an interpretation

1. 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is primarily to analyse the role of the Organisation of African Unity. This includes an examination of the theoretical foundations of international governmental organisations (IGO's) as well as the formation and development of Pan-Africanism and its maturation into the OAU as a regional grouping in international public administration.

It is also a purpose of the study to evaluate the OAU's success or failure as the initiator of African unity and regional co-operation and stability in Africa in political, economic and social spheres.

The introductory chapter will provide a background and rationale of the study to put the problem into context. The motivation, the statement of the problem that arises, the research problems, the objectives of the study, and specific hypothetical points of departure for the research, are also provided. Since the study will be subjected to certain limitations, the demarcation of the period of the study will be highlighted. It also covers the information gathering and research method of the study. To avoid misinterpretation of terms that will feature prominently in the thesis, terms that were frequently used were concisely explained.

Thereafter, an overview of the chapters that would constitute the major part of the thesis is provided.

1. 2. Background and rationale

The role of an IGO is globally influenced by a number of constantly changing national states. These national states communicate continuously in political, social, cultural or economic spheres and form the nucleus of what is meant by the concept international relations. International relations are always categorised by means of certain trends, such as a situation of conflict, or co-operation, or both. Before the twentieth century, inter-state contact was limited to specific regional structures. This was mainly the result of unsophisticated communication networks and facilities. These international limitations disappeared during the twentieth century as a result of significant technological advances, which elevated international relations as such to the realm of sensitive international role-plays.

After the independence of former African colonial states, immediately following the end of World War II, the abuse of human rights became the official slogan in international forums. As a consequence of its internal apartheid policy, South Africa earned itself the title of violator of human rights. The fact that racism was generally regarded as a respected doctrine before World War II was no longer acceptable. The elevation of the issue of human rights by the issue, in the Hitler legacy of Jewish oppression and persecution.

The end of World War II also brought the beginning of the Cold War between the superpowers, resulting in states taking refuge in international alliances as the only way in which to maintain the balance of power in the world.

This example was also closely followed in Africa with its increasing number of independent states and their real fear for renewed domination by foreign powers. Within this context, the OAU was formed on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa, on signature of the OAU Charter by representatives of 32 governments, with the primary purpose to promote the unity and solidarity of African states.

Against this background, it is thus understandable that events in the international arena, as well as those occurring within a sovereign independent state immediately come to the attention of the world and, as such, soon become the focus of the

discussion agenda of the international community. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) could therefore not reasonably expect in any way to escape the in-depth examination of the international community, especially after the evolvement of the African Union (AU) from the OAU and AEC into one unified institution in terms of the Sirte Declaration of 9 September 1999.

The OAU and the African Economic Commission (AEC) has been a crucial platform in championing the aspirations and interests of Africa and has since its inception developed into a political and economic forum of Africa. It was a uniquely African institution, created by African national states as vehicle to serve Pan-African interests and a obvious focal point for the foreign policies of its member states. A further 21 national states have joined gradually over the years, with South Africa becoming the 53rd member in 1994.

According to Cornwall, in the years since its establishment it has undergone many vicissitudes and experienced many changes. The competing ideals that led to the organisations foundation still echo in its debates today, as it struggles with the fundamental difficulty of presenting a diplomatic forum for, and of, the world's poorest continent. The focus of its activities has altered over time, as the OAU has attempted to adjust to the changing position of an Africa increasingly marginalized in global terms (1998:57).

The formation of the OAU was however, a milestone in the decolonisation of the continent as it gave new political impetus to the African peoples struggles to rid Africa of all vestiges of colonial oppression and economic subjugation. In this context, the founding principle of the OAU laid a firm basis for the continued unity and solidarity of Africa. During the Cold War individual African countries were important global diplomatic players, courted by both the East and the West, eager to expand their spheres of influence. A large obstacle was that many African countries conducted more trade with their former colonial masters than with each other. The original preoccupation of the OAU with the complete liberation of Africa from alien political domination was augmented and eventually superseded by the quest for economic strength through unity, as envisioned in the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 (Cf. Cornwall 1998:57).

By 1990 the end of the Cold War had ushered in a new set of priorities: those concerned with proliferation of violent conflict in the continent and its prevention and the promotion of economic trade within Africa (Cf. Cornwall 1998:57). The AU is an attempt to promote this situation by making trade within Africa easier and reducing bureaucratic obstacles to encourage economic union. It still remains a key consideration for the AU to stop conflict and wars among member national states. The United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that unless conflicts end, “no amount of aid or trade will make the difference ([http:// news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk)).” The AU has redefined the principal mission of the OAU and redesigned parts of its structure accordingly. Whether it is going to be enough to solve Africa’s problems, or is capable of doing so, is a matter for conjecture. There is also room for discussion about whether the AU has accurately identified the causes of failure, direct or contributory of the OAU.

Of all the regional organisations representing what used to be called the Third World, the OAU is the largest in terms of its membership. For all its shortcomings, it has also been acknowledged by some experts as the most effective of those organisations (Cf. Clapman 1985:131 in Cornwall 1998:57). It has, for instance, provided an important bridge between the Arab North and the Black South, between francophone, anglophone and lusophone, and between governments of all ideological persuasions (Cammack in Cornwall 1998:57).

Regional co-operation in political, economic, cultural and social spheres in Africa is crucial for Africa’s survival. The myth that complete independence from and non-alignment to the international state system are viable, has been finally debunked by the practical experience of South Africa, which increasingly experienced international isolation after the election victory of the National Party in 1948. Against this background, it became necessary to find the most powerful resources available within the regional context through which South Africa could transform its current position from international isolation to international co-operation.

1.3. Motivation for the study

As the chosen driver of regional co-operation in Africa, it is important to establish the value of the role played by the OAU in regional co-operation, as this could have a direct influence on the regional role played by South Africa in Africa, as well as in the rest of the world in general. If the value of the contribution made by the OAU in driving regional co-operation can be demonstrated, it would be of importance in supporting the new African Union to build on existing successes, while actively avoiding the mistakes made by its predecessor in the past.

Another reason for researching the role of the OAU, is not only because of the important regional role it played in political, economic, cultural and social issues in Africa, but also because it was instrumental in internationally isolating South Africa in the past. South Africa's newly found recognition in the international community as a result of its peaceful transition to a democratically elected government could therefore play a tangible part in the reconstruction of Africa. The potential brought about by these changes merits focused research into the role of the OAU as chosen initiator of regional co-operation and as mouthpiece for the African continent on global political forums. The results of such a study could create the opportunity for South Africa to understand the African approach to international relations, and thus to move away from the perception that, without any kind of adaptation, generally accepted Western political value systems and beliefs can be made applicable to Africa.

1.4 Statement of the problem

The role of the OAU as an international governmental institution in regional co-operation has a multiplicity of goals and objectives and is, above all complicated. The OAU has distinctive functions, and its role is often a source of focus but more importantly is a source of controversy because of its failure to achieve its goals. This is despite the edifice of the OAU having been designed by Africans to solve Africa's problems. No reminder is worth a request about centuries old political, social and economic ills that have inflicted Africa and the urgency for Africans to develop appropriate mechanisms that would warrant enhanced democracy, promote economic

growth and reconstruction, foster social equity, and ensure stability in Africa. To this end, the establishment of the AU was perceived as the answer to Africa's problems and premised on the pledge that Africa would first put its house in order, and only then look to the developed world for assistance in a partnership kind of way.

To many, the OAU was presented to the global world as the quintessential redeemer of the African continent, and accordingly be worthy of fellowship in the global community. The OAU was perceived as a vital instrument in pursuance of the interest of the African continent. After the inauguration of the OAU there has been understandably a main disquiet about its continued existence. Central in such disquiet had been an enthusiastic desire to create an organisation intended to eradicate poverty in Africa and to place Africa's countries both individually and collectively on a firm basis towards democracy and the rule of law. It was indeed the case of the new struggling to evolve from the old for the old has given a context through which the new could exist.

South Africa has an important role to play as a member of the African Union. This process is unfolding in a period in which South Africa joined the AU leadership as one of the countries that will preside over this transformation process. In consideration of the background provided above, the most important problem to be addressed by this study will, therefore be:

What was the influence of Africa's political history on the role of the OAU as an international governmental organisation in regional development and co-operation and does it allow the continuation of the AU to ensure economic and political union on the African continent?

1. 5. Research questions

The necessity for such an examination and evaluation of the OAU as stated in the problem statement is crucial, for the reasons that the continuation of the OAU to ensure stability and economic progress in Africa cannot be relegated to the periphery. Through the application of primary and secondary source research methods, the research questions, which could lead to the possible solution to the above problem

statement, were pursued. Answers to this problem can be found in the following research questions that apply to the OAU as regional grouping in international public administration.

- What does the theoretical foundations of international and regional governmental organisations in international public administration entail?
- What are the reasons for the formation, development and continued existence of the OAU?
- What was the role of the OAU as the largest regional organisation in international public administration?
- What are the reasons for the survival of the OAU and consequently the formation of the AU?
- What are the successes and failures of the OAU as driver of regional co-operation in Africa and within the international community?
- Was the OAU an effective international governmental organisation to enhance democracy, promote economic growth, and development and ensure stability within the African continent?

1. 7 Hypothetical points of departure

A hypothesis is a suggested, preliminary, yet a specific answer to a problem that has to be tested (Cf. Bless & Higson in Brynard & Hanekom 1997:19).

The hypothesis is derived from the research problem and may be stated negatively or positively (Auriacombe 1998: 4). The author is of the opinion that – through it may be an oversimplification of the role of the OAU or the role of South Africa in the progress Africa since it has become a member of the AU – the following hypothetical points of departure could well be formulated:

- (1) The OAU has succeeded in achieving continental unity free from colonial rule in order for states to rule themselves;
- (2) The OAU has failed as the chosen international governmental organisation to make a substantial contribution to the regional political stability, economic growth, and social reconstruction of Africa; and

(3) The continued progress of the AU as a regional grouping is closely linked to the leadership of South Africa in order to play a defining role and to make a substantial contribution to the economic and social reconstruction of Africa.

1.8 Objectives of the study

From the hypothesis, follows the objectives of the study, which are closely interlinked with the research questions and constitute the chapters of the study. Thus, the primary aim of the study is to examine and evaluate the special role of the OAU in regional co-operation and stability in Africa.

In order to achieve the purpose of the study (see section 1.1), the objectives of the study are as follows:

- to explain the theoretical foundations of IGO's and to define and examine the concepts, theories, approaches and classifications that justify the role and continued existence of the AU to reach its desired goals;
- to determine the origin and nature of regional organisations in order to provide a theoretical basis for regional co-operation in the OAU;
- to provide a historical overview of the origins, and founding of the OAU;
- to examine the nature of the OAU and to provide a structural-functional analysis of its role;
- to examine and evaluate the role of the OAU as an IGO in regional co-operation and stability until the establishment of the AU; and
- to evaluate the efficiency of the OAU in promoting economic co-operation, progress, peace and stability in Africa.

1.8 Demarcation of the period of study

The period identified is viewed as a timetable to contain the study within a scope for both the answering of the research questions and to meet the requirements of completing the study within a reasonable period of time. In addition, the researcher has decided on the period in an attempt to resist the usual dilemma that has confronted

many researchers before “There is always one more loose end to tie up, and one more area to pursue.”

This period covered by the study starts at the earliest stages of Pan-Africanism (1900) to the establishment of the OAU in 1963 including its transformation that culminated into the inclusion of South Africa as a member of the OAU (1994), the final stages of the OAU until its evolution into the AU until 2002.

1.9 Terminology

Comprehensive conceptual clarification of terms particular to the research such as IGO, IGI, regional organisation, etc appears in the appropriate chapters. The definitions and concepts in this thesis are of interest only in relation to their relevance in international public administration. In other words, they interest the author only in so far as they apply to the role and interaction of a regional IGO in international public administration. Especially in the case of International Public Administration, a sub-field of Public Administration where a plethora of possible meanings exist, concept clarification is inescapable. It was not a purpose of this thesis to analyse the concepts used in international public administration or to analyse the acceptability or the correctness of each possible meaning put forward by various authors. However, to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity in the interpretation of concepts, terms utilised throughout the thesis are concisely defined below:

- Alliance – it is a pact or covenant between nations
- Allies – states which commit themselves to helping another, particularly states which promise military assistance should another state be attacked
- Autonomy – the freedom of states to determine their own actions and behaviour; the right or condition of self-government
- Bilateral – involving two parties or states
- Classification – to divide up matters, items, institutions according to common characteristics

- Cold War – the period of rivalry between the USA-dominated West and the USSR-dominated East which lasted from 1945 and came to an end with the fall of communism during the revolutions of 1989 – 1990
- Convention – For the purposes of this thesis it refers to the coming together of delegates of states or higher-level institutions for example to nominate a leader as president of an organisation or to meet and put forward proposals for a new constitution.
- Co-operation – to work together and to realise goals by means of collective action
- Economic- it refers to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services
- Cultural – refers to the people’s intellectual capacities and moral standards
- Globalisation – a complex web of interwovenness in which lives are increasingly shaped by decisions taken from afar and by events in faraway places
- Interdependence – a condition in which two or more separate entities such as states are dependent on one another for the execution of certain functions or tasks
- Jurisdiction – legal power of someone, an institution or a state insofar as it extends to a territory
- Multilateral – involving more than two parties that is, several groups or states
- Ratification – confirmation of an agreement between persons or states
- Security – it means for the purposes of this thesis being free from danger, and human violence in particular
- Self-determination – this is related to independence and nationalism. The primary objective of nationalism is the attainment of a politically independent society; in other words, to protect it against political domination and to transform it into a sovereign state in order to realise the principle of political self-determination.
- Social – involve the community with all the interactions in it
- Sovereignty -- Sovereignty may be defined as the legal power of a government to make and enforce laws within the borders of the particular state (internal sovereignty) with such a state being independent of any other political

authority, except in respect of those limitations which are accepted voluntarily (external sovereignty)

- Veto – the formal power to ‘block’ a decision or act by refusing permission for it to be implemented

1.10 Method of investigation

This thesis is primarily intended to be an exploratory study on the role of the OAU. That is why the thesis is essentially descriptive in nature.

As may be expected, the research methods to be adopted for the collection and interpretation of the data required for the study will be determined by the nature of the study. In the absence of a documented system of norms to guide the investigation, the principal means employed to do the research for this thesis was done according to a literature study. Material obtained through various sources like catalogue of dissertations and thesis of South African universities (GKPV), University Information Auditorium and South African Indices: NICS S.A, the Internet. However, it was possible to supplement the existing literature with questions posed during conversational interviews of an academic and popular nature.

Seeing that the activities of IGO's in international public administration today are concerned with many aspects of International Public Administration, the literature consulted covered a wide spectrum of themes – comprehensive literature on aspects such as theories, classifications, approaches, case studies, archival material that represented important literature sources of case studies, and factual information regarding the OAU.

When the final choice had to be made, the author was concerned mainly about offering representative examples, rather than merely including a variety of similar examples in historical-chronological order. This led to the regular inclusion of older sources, as well as sources in other fields of study, such as International Politics and Political Science, which gave greater insight than most recent literature and websites would have into the actions taken within specific situations and the reasons specific situations originated. Further more, regular new publications on this topic do not

exist, since it is a field where often over the longer term there are no changes worth mentioning because the AU replaced the OAU.

The most important literature on the OAU in international public administration as an aid to gaining a better understanding of the role of the OAU includes:

- Relevant published books on the OAU
- Unpublished dissertations and theses
- Research reports,
- Official reports, documentation and speeches of the OAU
- Articles from academic journals
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Periodic reports and documentation of the OAU
- Documented interviews with prominent OAU officials
- Unpublished lectures
- Archival sources such as the Keesing's Contemporary Archives

1.10.2 Interviews

The deductive nature of the study and the definitive role that particular points of departure played in the development of the various themes and research questions called for selective informal interviews as a supplementary and hence, secondary means towards that end. Discussions with senior officials, specialists and experts from State institutions, academics as well as persons and associations of persons from other sectors verified, interpreted and clarified supplementary data or tested certain hypothesis or criteria.

1. 11. Overview of chapters

After the completion of the research, the collected material was integrated and coordinated so that the facts and observations could speak for themselves. The information was divided into the following chapters.

Chapter One provides a general introduction to the entire study. It includes the background and rationale of the study (in order to provide context); the motivation; the statement of the problem; the research problems encountered, and therefore by implication the objectives of the study, and the hypothesis. It also covers the demarcation of the period of study; specific terminology used in the text is listed, and the method of investigation is explained.

Chapter Two provides background for the following chapters and reviews the range of core theoretical foundations, concepts, characteristics, theories, approaches and classifications in which the role of the OAU is situated.

Chapter Three considers different aspects related to the nature, meaning and historical origin of regional organisations. Within the context of the preceding theoretical background, the study of regionalism in this chapter provide greater clarity on the theoretical exploration of inter-state relations in the international community as well as the position and potential of regionalism within international relations. The framework that will be created through this will play a key role in the later study of the OAU. The chapter contains contributions that look at regionalism as a phenomenon in world politics as well as the numerous problems in defining and classifying regional organisations. It covers concepts, characteristics, types and functions of regional organisations and the role of co-operation, sovereignty and supra-nationalism in regional co-operation.

Chapter Four provides a study of the historical origins, nature and character of Pan-Africanism and the evolution of the OAU.

Chapter five explains the nature and essence of the OAU, and provides a structural-functional analysis in order to understand its structures, and tasks of the Secretary-General its various commissions. In addition, the relationship the OAU had with the UN is also highlighted.

Chapter six provides a factual evaluation of the role of the OAU as a regional organisation in the establishment of regional co-operation in Africa in the political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

Chapter seven provides a synthesis of the study and certain observations on the role of the OAU in regional co-operation. Conclusions are also drawn, based on the findings of the study and the hypothesis stated in Chapter One is tested. Possible recommendations are also made, which may encourage possible research projects that could emanate from this research.

Finally, a list of abbreviations of certain organisations and their full titles, a full bibliography and appendices to the text completes the thesis.