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CHAPTER 15

Transformation from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals
The Imperative of African Unity in Africa’s Development

Ajinde Oluwashakin and Ariyo Aboyade

After careful observation of the state of development in Africa in the first 15 years of the twenty-first century, in particular the continent’s advancement in the context of the moribund Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the simple but difficult question is: Is African unity necessary to make up for the failures with the MDGs during the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? The SDGs were designed to replace the MDGs in 2015, the latter’s termination year and the start of the former with targeted termination in 2030. The answer to this question is contained in Africa’s history of political and economic development. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was a political platform for the unity of African states to extricate the continent and its peoples from their colonial dominance by and servitude to imperial powers. That collective effort took 38 years to accomplish, with the last bastion of colonialism – apartheid – collapsing in the early 1990s. With that mission accomplished, African leaders refocused the continent’s energy on economic development, even though the goal had been set in the 1960s, the first United Nations (UN) Development Decade. On 9 July 2002, as the OAU met in Johannesburg (South Africa), it finally transformed into a new organisation – the African Union (AU).

In essence, the goal of the AU vis-à-vis the OAU has been to translate the latter into a more meaningful unity of African people, African culture and African politics, and – more significantly – to produce a more harmonised development policy for the continent. Could it be said that Africa’s ‘special needs’ were not adequately addressed in the 2000 MDGs? Under the SDGs, the argument has been made that there are key features of the Common African Position (CAP) in the post-2015 development agenda. This would suggest that the new goals, if properly implemented, would meet Africa’s development aspiration by 2030. To this end: Is the CAP the same
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as African unity of purpose to achieve the SDGs? In what areas is unity required to achieve these goals? The fact that Africa’s historical incorporation into the global capitalist economic system defined its status in the global political equation is undeniable. In the global realities of past centuries, it took protracted bitter struggles, in most parts, for Africa to gain political independence from the colonial imperialist powers. After the attainment of independence, the consuming quest of African states was to accelerate their development, which for centuries had been neglected.

The winds of economic vicissitude militated against the emerging states’ efforts for economic independence. Thus, economic deterioration has been largely responsible for Africa’s development problem. Lack of innovation, weak political will and the lure of accessible external financial supports made borrowing from abroad an attractive shortcut to arrive quickly at the envisioned development goals. However, disappointingly, borrowing resulted in debt accumulation for the emerging states rather than solve development problems. Indeed, the pertinent concern is that debt accumulation is inimical to implementing the SDGs. A number of factors are responsible for the debt problem, including economic mismanagement, decline in the terms of trade, weather, conflict and global market oil prices. The neglect of agricultural production is partly responsible for the decline in the terms of trade, coupled with the global capitalist control of the world commodity market. Between 1980 and 1986, for example, there was a 28 per cent decline in the terms of trade. In addition, political instability and conflict have wreaked havoc, and are still making the economic environment hostile for foreign investors to invest in the economy of the continent.

Due to this economic malaise plaguing the continent (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa), investment, trade and savings weakened and deteriorated, leaving the various governments in Africa with an irresistible urge to indulge in external borrowing to tackle the steady downtrend and stabilise their economies. Ironically, however, their inability to meet the scheduled repayment obligations resulted in building debt-service accumulations over time. Thus, the continent was plunged into indebtedness from which it has not been able to extricate itself, prompting global efforts for debt forgiveness. In addition, what some authors have described as development ‘gigantomania’ is identified as the major cause of debt in countries such as Nigeria. However, there are more causes of indebtedness than these, as will be shown later in this chapter.
15.1 BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Africa’s encounter with the imperialist powers of the Global North has always been marked by inequality, never with any pretence of symmetry. Africa was incorporated into the advanced capitalist economic system, where it has remained with a subordinate status. Here, we chronicle the African economic development crisis in historical perspective, the debt accumulation process that began in the 1970s and 1980s, and then look at the level of indebtedness to underscore the gravity of the repayment impact on the development policy disposition of African states.

The cumulative economic effects of years of slavery and colonialism were not felt until after independence. One of the reasons was because the management of the economy of the continent was in the hands of different colonial powers and overall there was no ‘economic crisis’, as development efforts were minimal in the colonies. For example, during World War II, the United Kingdom (UK) embarked on ‘a reserve policy on behalf of her colonies’. Up to £3 000 million constituted ‘the blocked reserve’ in the UK for the colonies.

After political independence, the economic – and thus political – asymmetry was transformed into the subtler, but no less effective, mechanism of the world markets for labour, primary products (commodities) and capital, as evidenced in the activities of the multinational corporations. The UN declared the 1960s the ‘Development Decade’, in which the developed industrial countries were to set aside one per cent of their gross national product (GNP) for financing development in the underdeveloped countries, but this was not fulfilled. Hence, ‘while the growth of total product and income per head had been quite impressive in the First Development Decade in many developing countries, Africa had lagged behind’. This was because, despite the flow of governmental aid and private funds nearly doubling, ‘increasing from $8.6 billion in 1960–62 to $14.7 billion in 1970…the proportion of GNP transferred fell from 0.95% in 1970, and the governmental aid declined from 0.52 to 0.34 % of GNP’. Hence, there was no appreciable economic growth or real development during this period.

Moreover, political instability in some African countries during this period constrained and limited development efforts on the continent. Some of the newly independent states like Nigeria, Ghana and Egypt were collapsing under military coups and counter-coups. As a result, most development plans were incoherently implemented and wastefully abandoned. Thus, the political instabilities of the independence period, coupled with the failure of the developed industrialised economies to fulfil their obligations to African
countries, significantly affected the economic circumstances of African states.

In the 2000 Millennium Declaration of the UN four decades later, from which the MDGs were drawn up, Africa’s development quest was again addressed, along with other global concerns. As the 2015 deadline for the MDGs expired without the declared goals being accomplished, the SDGs were put in place to be met by 2030. On 25 September 2015, the UN formally adopted the 17 integrated goals of the SDGs. Some analysts believe that ‘based on comparison with a key African Union position paper, Africa is getting what it asked for from the UN General Assembly document’ in the new set of SDGs established as a global objective. The critical questions to ask are: How will a continent deep in debt and heavily dependent on others envision real development? Are African leaders ready to manage the continent’s economy sustainably? How sincere are the developed economies about being Africa’s true development partners in implementing the SDGs? Empirical answers to these questions will determine Africa’s position in in the twenty-first century global political system.

15.2 DEPENDENCY AND FUNCTIONALISM

To any objective observer of Africa in world politics, it is clear how deep the continent is in the debt and development trap, even after almost six decades following political independence. This makes the dependency theory developed in the early 1960s still relevant today, especially given the activities of internal compradors in most countries. The success of the SDGs, which replaced the moribund MDGs, will largely depend on the attitudes of officials in African states and their resolve to implement the programme, as well as the inescapable role of the advanced countries. Moreover, this would depend on the functional role envisioned in the institutional structure of the AU to implement the goals.

The dependency theory explains that

The backward regions assumed a dependency status…in relation to the metropolitan powers chiefly because the former were in debt to the latter. What was significant about the shift from consumer goods to capital goods in world trade was that the colony-to-be needed long-term credits or loans to pay for the capital goods, and that finally the relationship between the backward country and the metropolitan country is one of debtor and creditor. And from this, it was a small step to dependence and domination.
This quotation captures the essence of the debtor–creditor relationship, which has long defined Africa’s position in global affairs, even after political independence. Indeed, indebtedness has not only been ‘a small step’ but also a giant step to dependency. Dependency theorists hold the strong perception that developing countries can ‘never develop’ because they are ‘dependent upon the industrial states for capital and technology’. Moreover, ‘loans and capital come with strings attached’.\(^\text{13}\) It is now an obvious practice that before a country can obtain a loan from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it must meet certain conditions in terms of banking and monetary etiquette and the commercialisation and privatisation of industry and agriculture. It is argued that ‘the developing countries are now so dependent upon the industrialized states that they will never become industrialized’. It is further argued that ‘the only way for developing countries to develop their own economies and to become industrialised is to protect their industries from global competition’.\(^\text{14}\)

It is hard to imagine, in an interdependent global system, how a region can embark on protectionism, in particular Africa. However, the dependency theory still offers a tool to explain Africa’s persistent development crisis. The extent of Africa’s dependency must be managed so that it can develop its own technological base to compete favourably within the new global realities by adapting the SDGs to its own environment. Another question is: If the developing countries cooperate, especially in Africa, can they muster the political and economic power they need to develop, given the stark realities of global competitiveness confronting them?

### 15.3 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

It has been argued that structural functionalism was ‘the single most significant body of theory in the social sciences’ in the twentieth century\(^\text{15}\) and majorly synonymous with sociology. However, in this chapter, we adapt it to analyse a development programme in African international relations. Several scholars – notably Talcott Parsons – have used the structural-functional theory to explain social stratification, which has been heavily criticised and declined. Parsons was credited with a lot of works on structural-functional theorising, and there were some important differences between his early and later works. For the purpose of this chapter, we deal with the four functional imperatives for all ‘action’ systems – his four AGIL scheme,\(^\text{16}\) which was one of his later works.

AGIL is defined as a function of ‘a complex of activities directed towards meeting a need or needs of a system’.\(^\text{17}\) Parsons spelt out AGIL thus:
adaptation (A), goal attainment (G), integration (I), and latency (L) or pattern of maintenance. In order for a system to survive, it must perform these four functions:

1. Adaptation. A system must cope with external situational exigencies. It must adapt to its environment and adapt the environment to its needs.
2. Goal attainment. A system must define and achieve its primary goals.
3. Integration. A system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. It must equally manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives (AGL).
4. Latency (pattern maintenance). A system must furnish, maintain and renew both the motivation of individuals and the cultural patterns that create and sustain the motivation.18

In the discussion that follows regarding the necessity of African unity in implementing the SDGs, we illustrate Parsons’ AGIL schema.

15.4 DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT CRISIS

Attempts have been made in the past to chart a way for the developing world economies such as the new international economic order (NIEO) in the 1970s.19 By the 1980s, the failure of the NIEO had become apparent due largely to the fact that ‘the much more powerful North was unwilling to cede significant influence to the world’s poorer countries’.20

In the emergent new global realities, the global environment is more complex and in flux than in the 1970s and 1980s. From 2000 to 2015, the MDGs weathered the storms of international terrorism. By 2015, when the SDGs were launched, the cauldron of terrorism had escalated, plunging more regions into its abyss. Earlier, the 2011 Afro-Arab revolutions21 (the so-called Arab Spring) occurred, with monumental consequences for the global system. It is our position in this chapter that these revolutions have impacted Africa’s development drive, along with the economic costs of both domestic and foreign terrorism; and more critical to these developments is the worrisome build-up of Africa’s debt crisis. All this weighs heavily on Africa’s global development profile and possible hindrances in implementing the SDGs.
Goldstein\textsuperscript{22} states that ‘when the well-being of a state depends on the cooperation of a second state, the first is dependent on the second. When two or more states are simultaneously dependent on each other, they are interdependent’. Rweyemamu states that the ‘linkages in the world economy have increased, not only through rapid growth in international trade but also because developing countries have become significant borrowers’\textsuperscript{23} Consequently, given the practice of international development assistance, Africa’s debt crisis cannot be divorced from the structure of global interdependence. In addition, given the asymmetrical relationship that has situated the Global North technologically over the Global South, dependency has remained a dominant concept contrary to the assumption that it should have faded from Africa’s development discourse. As Oshewolo and Bamiduro have argued, whereas global interdependence has its benefits and a preferable option to autarky,\textsuperscript{24} it appears to have lost its significance. The reason why global interdependence ‘appears to have lost its significance’ is because ‘through political instrumentalities, the North tends to strengthen the existing structure for regional gains’. In addition, it is further stated that ‘the gains of global interdependence have been generously distributed to favour the developed world to the detriment of the Third World’.\textsuperscript{25} Hence, dependency syndrome has refused to fade off. Richard Walker, writing in The Economist, states that the African continent ‘has been deep in debt before, and is in danger of a return’. He assumes that ‘the African borrowing binge began in 2007’\textsuperscript{26} In actual fact, the borrowing binge – the excessive, compulsive borrowing spree – began much earlier in the 1970s and 1980s.

Africa’s debt crisis in the 1970s and 1980s was primarily caused by two factors, namely the United States’s (US) unilateralism in monetary obligation and the global oil price hike.\textsuperscript{27} In the 1970s, the economic crisis was triggered by the US’s unilateral abrogation of its obligation to manage the international monetary system under the Bretton Woods system when, in 1971, President Richard Nixon announced his government’s new economic policy. He stated that ‘henceforth, the dollar would no longer be convertible into gold, and the US would impose a 10 percent surcharge on dutiable imports’.\textsuperscript{28} Commenting on this devastating development, Adebayo Adedeji (the former executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa) said, ‘since then, all attempts to introduce a modicum of stability in the volatility of exchange rates have proved futile’.\textsuperscript{29} This was considered the real beginning of the worldwide economic crisis, which was aggravated rather than caused by the 1973 price hike of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.
The US policy change had a serious impact on African states, being largely agricultural raw material exporters. There was a gradual but detrimental decline in African exports in world trade, from 2.5 per cent in the 1970s and 1980s to 1 per cent in 1990. Thus, sub-Saharan Africa’s exports declined by 1.5 per cent between 1970 and 1990/91. While exports were dwindling, the ability to feed the populace was also declining, resulting in the importation of food, which required foreign exchange. This in turn required foreign assistance to finance, thereby straining these developing economies. In addition, since independence, sub-Saharan African countries in particular have undertaken huge public projects in attempting to develop their various societies, largely with donor support, and generally with heavy use of foreign financing in the form of loans.

Consequently, African governments embarked on reckless external borrowing based on the wrong ‘assumption that national economies would grow over time, and that commensurate increases in export prices would allow the debt-service obligations arising from these projects to be met’. This assumption was faulted in the light of two oil price shocks in 1973/74 and 1979/80, and the subsequent depression in the non-oil commodity markets in the 1980s. The oil price shocks largely exacerbated the world economic crisis that began in 1971, but at very disastrous proportions for sub-Saharan Africa with mostly primary commodities. Among the countries that the price increases adversely affected were Tanzania (coffee producer), Cote d’Ivoire (cocoa and coffee producer), Ghana (cocoa producer), Togo (phosphate producer) and Zaire (now the DRC) – one of several countries dependent on minerals whose prices declined in the 1970s. These countries, among others, borrowed externally on the assumption that prices would recover, but they never did and thus external debts accumulated. In addition, during the second half of the 1970s, the leading sub-Saharan African oil producer Nigeria began to borrow heavily from commercial markets, with its total foreign currency commitments approaching US$3 billion in 1978 and 1979.

In the 1980s, a number of factors also contributed to sub-Saharan Africa’s debt burden, notably the second oil price shock, high interest rate, decline in real net capital flow and domestic economic policies. During this period, Africa’s debt burden was accentuated by the second oil price shock of 1978/80. Part of the resultant effects of this was that by 1986, the terms of trade for the region was 28 per cent below the level of 1980. Invariably they could not honour their debt-service obligations as the interest arrears soared. Thus, from 1987 to 1992, the outstanding debt arrears rose steadily from US$4.5 billion to over US$14 billion. Another factor responsible for Africa’s debt burden in the 1980s was the rise in interest rates. The
escalating interest rates affected mostly countries that made significant use of commercial borrowing, even though sub-Saharan Africa’s debt was predominantly official. The countries included Nigeria, the DRC and Cote d’Ivoire. Although some of the loans carried fixed rates, an increasing proportion was either dominantly in floating rates or renegotiated at new and higher fixed rates.

Still another factor that affected the debt-service obligation of sub-Saharan countries was the decline in real net capital flows, including external assistance, in the 1980s. For example, between 1980 and 1986, the decline in net flow was US$1.4 billion; and this declined further in 1990. These countries’ inability to cope with rising debt-service obligations suggests that inevitably they would seek external assistance, bowing to terms or conditionalities presented by their creditors. The IMF, as the major international institution for balance of payments support, stood ready to assist sub-Saharan African states in adjusting to adverse external developments. The IMF arrangement made it possible for a number of these countries to obtain debt relief from bilateral creditors and commercial banks when the Special Programme Assistance was launched for low-income debt-distressed countries. In the early 1990s, under this programme, some 26 countries (including Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Cote d’Ivoire and Zaire/DRC) enjoyed debt relief.

Paradoxically, the debt relief could be described as suppressed relief because the debt stock continued to rise. This was not necessarily due to new borrowing but rather to accumulated arrears of debt service or interest capitalisation. As a result, most African countries have defaulted in serving their debt. According to the World Bank’s chief economist for the African region, the scheduled amount of debt service due in 1991 was US$20 billion but regrettably only US$10 billion was repaid. It was obvious at that point that the situation did not paint a bright future for the region.

Due to this concern, the 1996 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative was launched and supplemented by the 2005 Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative to grant debt relief to poor countries. These initiatives helped 35 heavily indebted sub-Saharan African countries to have US$100 billion of their external debts cancelled. These were internationally coordinated initiatives, orchestrated by concerned groups (including rock stars) and managed by the World Bank, IMF and African Development Bank, all aimed at finding a sustainable solution to Africa’s debt burden. However, how sustainable has it been or will it be, burdened as it is with capital flights from the region? Indeed, Ndikumana and Boyce describe African debts as ‘odious debts’. They reveal that due to foreign loans and capital flight from sub-Saharan Africa, debts accrued to more than US$700 billion in four
decades. For most parts of this period, the foreign policies of the countries concerned were subservient to the creditor countries. Given this scenario, how would development goals succeed under debt burden?

15.6 AFRICAN UNITY AND THE SDGS

Kwame Nkrumah provided the most profound statement on the necessity for African unity when he said:

> Never before have a people had within their grasp great opportunity for developing a continent endowed with so much wealth. Individually, the independent states of Africa, some of them potentially rich, others poor, can do little for their people. Together, through mutual help, they can achieve much. But the economic development of the continent must be planned and pursued as a whole. A loose confederation designed only for economic cooperation would not provide the necessary unity of purpose. Only a strong political union can bring about full and effective development of our material resources for the benefit of our people.⁴³

Nkrumah, as the pan-Africanist personified, envisioned the formation of the OAU – a ‘United States of Africa’ and possibly the AU – areas that are not the major focus of this chapter. However, the relevance of Nkrumah’s statement lies in the necessity of unity of purpose to achieve a common set goals for the benefit of the African people. Concerning the implementation of the SDGs, in what areas and to what extent can African states unite for the attainment of the goals on the platform of the AU?

The AU, in its Strategic Plan 2009–12, has tried to assess the continent’s performance under the MDGs, stating that

> African Union Member States have made progress towards achieving the development targets set forth in the...MDGs, including progress in the realms of health, literacy, gender equality and nutrition. Although Africa made significant advances in social and economic development, its human potential is being wasted by preventable high mortality rates, including infant and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and violence.⁴⁴

However, in the same document, the AU concedes that

> the current global economic crisis, coupled with the sharp rise in oil, energy and food prices, unemployment and fragile peace and security, have led to a
low level of progress towards attaining the MDG targets. Despite economic growth, Africa’s performance in terms of the MDG targets remains low. According to the 2007 AfDB/OECD report, some progress was made in achieving the MDG targets as these data demonstrate: Gender equality: 40%, Hunger: 40%, Access to water: 40%, Primary education: 25%, Maternal mortality: 20%, Tuberculosis: 17%, and Child mortality: 15%. Indeed, more needs to be done if Africa is to attain the MDG targets.\textsuperscript{45}

From the foregoing, it is clear that Africa did not attain the MDG targets by September 2015, when the programme closed and the SDGs replaced it. Several reasons could be adduced for this, among which were identified: the sharp rise in oil, energy and food prices; unemployment; and fragile peace and security; and of course the global economic crisis. Moreover, more confounding and worrisome for Africa is the continent’s rising debt.

Africa’s rising debt is becoming more critical when weighed against the 17 integrated SDGs plus 169 associated targets that replaced the MDGs. The SDG programme was formally adopted by heads of state and government at the UN on 25 September 2015, with the following goals:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to address climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.

16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; provide access to justice for all; and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

These 17 integrated SDGs are aimed at shaping the global agenda on economic, social and environmental development for 15 years (2015–30). Some believe that ‘the SDGs are more focused on building productive capacity and give more weight to economic and environmental factors, which are also key features of the CAP on the post-2015 development agenda’. The CAP has six pillars, stated as follows:

1. structural economic transformation and inclusive growth
2. science, technology and innovation
3. people-centred development
4. environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management
5. peace and security
6. finance and partnership.

It is argued that ‘the congruence’ between the CAP and ‘the SDGs may be an indication that the rest of the world, especially other developing countries, share the same concern as Africa’. Invariably, thus, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo said ‘the balanced SDGs package is effective in that it addresses poverty in terms of the vulnerability of the poor to environmental degradation and through inclusiveness and social justice, as well as through economic advance’. He affirmed, ‘I would say the African countries especially will benefit’.

However, at a glance both the CAP and SDGs, when Africa’s debt is weighed side by side with each of these goals, the resultant effect is unsustainability of development. In direct terms, debt and sustainable development are two strange bedfellows. Debt stagnates development. First, as alluded to earlier, under the HIPC some 35 African states had US$100 billion of their debt written off. One of the aims, a major one for that matter, was to free additional resources for development. Towards this end, the World Bank and IMF claimed that ‘the poorest and most indebted countries on the continent were able to lower their public debt and increase social
spending by almost 3.5% of their...GDP between 2001 and 2012’. For example, Benin invested its debt savings in rural primary health care and an HIV/AIDS programme, while Tanzania invested in free primary education, and Mozambique started providing free immunisation for children.\textsuperscript{50}

However, and sadly, Matina Stevis wrote in \textit{The Wall Street Journal} that ‘African countries that won debt forgiveness a decade ago have been accumulating fresh debt burdens, raising sustainability concerns’.\textsuperscript{51} This development impelled Walker again, writing in \textit{The Economist}, to assert that ‘Africa has the fastest-growing continental economy on the planet. And the thing that has been growing fastest of all is debt – personal, corporate and government’.\textsuperscript{52} Alluding to some IMF sources, these writers cited the countries in the growing borrowing spree to include Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Benin, Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire and Nigeria.

In 2005, Mozambique’s foreign debt was reduced from 86 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to 9 per cent the following year. From this marginal level, it has since built back to 61 per cent of its GDP. According to the IMF, also in 2005, Ghana’s debt was 82 per cent of the GDP when about half of it was written off. By 2016, barely a decade after, it built up to 73 per cent of the GDP, with indicators showing continued growth in subsequent years. In hard dollar terms, Ghana’s debt was about US$25 billion.\textsuperscript{53} In August 2006, the Paris Club agreed to write off 60 per cent of Nigeria’s US$30.85 billion debt, and the rest was subject to a ‘buy back’ arrangement. In July 2015, Nigeria’s foreign debt had again risen to US$10.3 billion; and in October 2015, it had risen to US$11 billion.\textsuperscript{54}

In virtually all these countries, the concern and protest over debt management are over the ‘non-sustainability of public debt that has been rising’ since the indebted countries were forgiven – especially Nigeria since 2008, following the country’s debt write-off two years earlier. Now the borrowing binge and accumulation of debts are here again, and ‘it’s getting tougher for countries to pay them off’. If public debts are non-sustainable, it becomes more worrisome when ‘the private lenders’ that most African governments are turning to are known to be ‘less forgiving’.\textsuperscript{56}

Other global realities with which Africa must contend in the context of the SDGs are the aftermath of the Arab Spring and global environmental concerns.

15.7 IMPERATIVE OF UNITY

The rapidity of social, political and economic occurrences in Africa and the rest of the world call for cooperation, even as it concerns the implementation
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of the SDGs, which no single country can achieve alone. For example, the 2011 Afro-Arab revolutions (referred to by the Western media as the ‘Arab Spring’) was a socioeconomic and political eruption with its epicentre in the North African state of Tunisia. The revolts grew out of socioeconomic and political grievances, as were the trend of virtually all the other populist revolutions in the last four decades of Africa’s debt crisis.

The fundamental problems that the North African revolutions highlighted included youth unemployment, increasing food and fuel costs, endemic corruption, marginalisation and alienation from mainstream political governance. In May 2011, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon told African leaders that what happened in North Africa was a lack of freedom ‘that led young people to take to the streets, demanding change and fulfilment of their legitimate aspirations for better lives’. He reminded the leaders to ensure ‘sustainable political progress’. In June 2011, the AU Commission’s Chairperson Jean Ping spoke to African governments in a similar vein and said that the changes in Tunisia and Egypt were a ‘new advance’ in Africa’s democracy.

However, Ping and other AU politicians and technocrats knew very well that no ‘sustainable political progress’ or democratic consolidation could thrive under the weight of the debt burden. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo linked Nigeria’s debt forgiveness to what he described as the conditions and challenges to the process of democratic consolidation, particularly in Nigeria and Africa in general. According to him, ‘given that no African nation can fully service, much less repay its debt, development, stability, peace, growth, and democracy would not make progress or become consolidated in Africa, Nigeria inclusive’. Hence the imperative of unity to forge a common front to confront the daunting development challenges on the continent.

Experts recognise the incompatibility between debt and democracy, which was the reason for the 2011 revolutions that galvanised international initiatives for debt cancellation for the countries involved. One of the notable voices that called for debt cancellation for the ‘new democracies’ was Nobel Prize laureate in economics Joseph Stiglitz. He stated:

We do not want a democratic Egypt to be saddled by debts of its past. So, we will relieve a democratic Egypt of...$1 billion in debt, and work with our Egyptian partners to invest these resources to foster growth and entrepreneurship. We will help Egypt regain access to markets by guaranteeing $1 billion in borrowing that is needed to finance infrastructure and job creation. And we will help newly democratic governments recover assets that were stolen.
From the international debt cancellation movement, the Jubilee Debt Campaign affirmed that Egypt had paid over US$80 billion in foreign debt and interests since 1981 when Hosni Mubarak came to power. Tunisia had serviced debt and interest for over US$40 billion during Zine el Abidine Ben Ali’s reign. It was the candid view of the international debt cancellation campaign that Egypt and Tunisia’s debts were considered ‘illegitimate debt’.

Nevertheless, the debate on Egypt and Tunisia’s debt cancellation was reinforced by humane considerations. However, this was not the case for many of sub-Saharan Africa’s debt burdens, especially since the revolution spiralled into civil wars in a couple of Arab countries and fuelled an increase in international terrorism, drawing global attention. In Syria in particular, and in Iraq, a monstrous terrorist jihadi group emerged, called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or the Islamic State. ISIS declared a world caliphate under Islamic Sharia law, and had gained notoriety for beheadings, crucifixions and enslavement of minority groups within the sphere under its control in the Middle East region. Moreover, ISIS’s spates of terrorist bombing attacks were felt far afield in the US, Europe, Asia and Africa. Its destructive terrorist attacks in the Middle East and the rest of the world drew the military strength of major global powers.

In Africa, a number of jihadi terrorist groups pledged their allegiance to ISIS, such as Boko Haram (Nigeria) and Al-Shabaab (Somalia), and other terrorist groups operating in Libya, Mali, Senegal, Kenya, Niger, Tunisia and Egypt. ISIS’s terrorism disrupted and degraded many economies of the Arab world and some in African countries. Part of the implication is that Saudi Arabia, as a major economic power in the Arab world, is a major financier of Sunni opponents of Bashar al-Assad’s government in Syria, and is supportive of the US policy on Iran’s nuclear deal. To navigate its way through the stormy tides of Syria’s conflict, and ISIS and Iran’s quagmire, Saudi Arabia threatened to use oil prices to defend its market share and send a political message by raising production, even as oil prices fell globally. This meant, most probably, that lower oil prices would hurt African economies, as had happened in the 1970s and 1980s.

This was certainly a worrisome scenario, for example, for Angola that faced pressure related to its debt. Brookings’ Christina Golubski reported that Angola’s trouble was exacerbated by the use of ‘oil for loan repayment’, notably to China. Angola uses oil (its major natural resource) as ‘collateral for loans’. In the first quarter of 2016, the country owed US$25 billion in oil-backed debt to China. Consequently, due to falling oil prices, the quantity of oil transfer to China for debt repayment doubled since February 2016.
Moreover, with the fall in oil prices and the rise in oil for debt repayment, Angola is left with fewer resources for the development of its other productive sectors.65

15.8 WAYS OUT OF DEBT TO DEVELOPMENT: THE RELEVANCE OF AGIL FOR UNITY

It is imperative, therefore, to critically appraise each of the sustainable development goals and their 169 associated target areas to clearly delineate areas of adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency to make room for united efforts. How do we achieve this? The European Union (EU), on which the AU was patterned, was conceived and founded on functionalism. The functional theory – on stratification – is premised on the belief that all aspects of a society, be it institutions, positions, roles, culture, the environment and so on, serve a purpose or a function. Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann (the founding fathers of the EU) used the idea of functionalism, which later ‘inspired’ many proponents of European integration. Functionalism, for them, was that a ‘shared transnational technical problem – such as rebuilding the war-torn industries of Europe – could lead to the formation of common institutions performing important economic, social and technical functions to solve the problem’.66 How does this functional approach apply to the AU?

Adaptation: The AU, as a continental organisation, must adapt the SDGs to the African environment by institutionalising its component parts. The European environment of the late 1940s was war-devastated and required reconstruction efforts. While the US Marshall Plan was quite helpful in this regard, European states still felt the need for cooperation among themselves to rebuild their countries. Duncan, Jancar-Webster and Switky write that ‘one of the most important first steps in the creation of the EU was the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community’,67 which underscored the importance of coal and steel industries in development. In the 1960s, some African countries established iron and steel industries as part of their development process. In implementing the SDGs, the AU should have unity of purpose to ensure that these industries, in individual countries, are functional and productive by building institutions and instituting a monitoring mechanism for this purpose. This is with a view to giving concrete expression to Science, Technology and Innovation, the second pillar of the CAP, reinforced by SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
Goal attainment: A system must define and achieve its set (primary) goals. The AU should clearly define and set achievable goals for the industries in carrying out scientific, technological, innovative and inventive research endeavours. For example, after painstaking brainstorming with African scientists in various countries, what piece of technological advice to be expected from scientists and research institutes/industry across the continent should be identified based on comparative advantage. In this way, the industrial establishment will have focus and be goal oriented.

Integration: A system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts and manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives (A, G, L). Three imperatives were clear to the six founding member states of the EU. First, the necessity of unity (cooperation) to rebuild their war-ravaged economies. Second, they recognised that, when states create barriers to trade, economic situations deteriorate and international relations become intense. Thus, European states ‘sought to lower internal trade barriers and enhance economic competition’ among their members. Third, EU member states also recognised the benefits of economies of scale. In other words, they saw the gains of ‘combining their resources in order to become more competitive’ globally. The AU must adapt these imperatives for the SDGs to work for Africa, combined with the necessary latency. In this regard, intra-African trade needs to be intensified among the different subregional economic blocs.

Latency (pattern of maintenance): A system must furnish, maintain and renew both the motivation of individuals and the cultural patterns that create and sustain the motivation. SDG 17 is: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development. What is ‘the means of implementation’ or the main instrument/tool of implementing all the other 16 SDGs? This could certainly be interpreted to mean human and material resources. That is, the human intellect, the productive scientific mind, entrepreneurship, the skilled and creative mind, and the inventive and innovative thinker. How does society treat such a personality once identified? Once identified, the society must attach and extend sufficient rewards to the gifted so that enough people will be motivated to work diligently. The abilities and talents to invent and innovate must be recognised and adequately rewarded. There is a need for African governments to discourage the ‘brain drain syndrome’ and encourage the return of the African diaspora to contribute to the development of Africa.

The pattern of a maintenance culture is crucial to sustainable development. Building resilient infrastructure and industrial capacities requires inbuilt maintenance mechanisms to remain resilient and beneficial for succeeding generations. The pattern of a maintenance culture has to be
made a priority both at national and continental levels, to ensure that the infrastructure and industries being built are not subject to fast decay due to lack of maintenance.

Factors that hindered the total achievement of the MDGs are still very much with us and ready to cripple the implementation of the SDGs. Durre Nayyab, who has studied the SDGs, says, ‘though we are off track on MDGs and achieving the SDGs looks impossible…we can prioritize the SDGs as per the UN report and focus on six SDGs to start with, particularly reducing hunger, poverty amongst others’. For Africa, this proposition may fit into the CAP, and if this is agreed upon, steps should be taken to institutionalise the priority goals.

Another issue to deal with is corruption. The persistent corruption and the notion of corruption as part of governance have been identified as preventing successful growth and economic reform, including the attainment of the MDGs. After the formation of the AU and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was put in place to ensure compliance on agreed standards of ‘good governance’ or good democratic practice in Africa. However, the APRM has to be strengthened to deal with corruption in governance as far as it affects the implementation of the SDGs.

African unity is also necessary against the borrowing culture of African governments, which often leads to the debt crisis. As has been clearly shown in this chapter, Africa’s debt is the fastest growing in the world. The way out of debt is to stay out of it. Borrowing worsens the situation of a person wallowing in poverty. Debt does not go with sustainable development; rather, it mortgages the future of a people.

For the future of Africa’s development, African intelligentsia, political leaders and the entrepreneurial community should ensure quality leadership, strengthen democracy, sustain research and development, and curtail war and conflict and corruption – all geared towards accelerating development. In August 2015, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi initiated a call for a new African order so that development and the fight against terrorism could be given some thought at AU summit level. Al-Sisi explained that the new African order would not be led by Egypt but by Africa as a whole. According to him, ‘we want to work together but not to dominate Africa. We can work together in the areas of our (common) challenges and meet the needs of our people who want prosperity’. Al-Sisi’s proposition in a way restated the words of the UN Development Programme’s Administrator Helen Clark (also the former Prime Minister of New Zealand), who said about the SDGs that ‘this agreement marks the milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a
chance of meeting citizens’ aspirations for peace, prosperity and wellbeing, and to preserve our planet’. Indeed, if Africa works with unity of purpose, in partnership with other industrialised countries, with the AGIL schema to implement the SDGs, there may be hope of significant development in the next 15 years and beyond.

15.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

African unity has been paramount in freeing the continent from the ravages of colonialism. This unity could be replicated in the SDGs. African leaders must intensify the drive towards scientific and technological research and development, intensify continental policy on intra-African trade, and aggressively transform its raw materials into manufactured products. Talk is cheap, someone might say, but it is apparent that, in almost six decades of independence in most African countries, it is not the major concern of the industrialised countries to develop Africa. Nevertheless, we need to lobby and partner with them; each region of the world is responsible for its own development, as the Asian examples have demonstrated. In an interdependent global society, a perpetually less-developed part will for long remain dependent unless there is a drastic change of attitude. African states must delink themselves from the borrowing culture and corruption, because a borrower will always remain a slave to the lender. It is imperative that the AU galvanises its member states to put in place structural-functional institutions for effective implementation of the SDGs.

ENDNOTES


The authors opted to differ in characterising the 2011 revolts as Afro-Arab revolutions, instead of the Arab Spring, because it had its epicentre in Tunisia (a North African country) coupled with the fact that Tunisia does have Arab extraction.


The principle of internationalism has relegated the concept of autarky to the background. Autarky refers to economic independence as a national policy.


32 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.


The concept of illegitimate debt was advance by Dr Joseph Hanlon in his report ‘Defining illegitimate debt for the Norwegian Church aid’, 2002.


