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**The Paradoxes of Africa's Development: African Union's
Contributions to Africa's Recent Achievements, 2005-2014**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Africa's paradoxes pertaining to meeting its development goals. The paper claims that while one can present a number of examples showing serious challenges confronting countries on the continent in meeting their development goals, one can also present many examples of these same countries making important development achievements, especially in the past decade. For example, the paper shows that the average life expectancy in Africa in 2006 was 53.3 years; in 2014, it increased to 61 years. The average infant mortality rate in Africa in 2006 was 73.5 deaths per 1000; in 2014, it declined to 53 deaths per 1000. The average death rate in Africa in 2006 was 14.2 deaths per 1000; it declined to 9.6 deaths per 1000 in 2014. Africa's per capita Gross Domestic Product in 2008 was \$2,660; it increased to \$3,167 in 2013. The paper claims and presents examples illustrating that the African Union (AU) has contributed substantially to Africa's development achievements in the past decade and argues that if African nations were to give more of their sovereignty to the AU and make it a stronger federal union, it

could do more to improve the lives of the vast majority of people on the continent.

Key words: African Union, Gross Domestic Product, Brain drain, HIV/AIDS

Introduction

The primary focus of this paper is to highlight some of the important achievements that have taken place in Africa in the decade from 2005-2014. These achievements are due in part to the positive contributions of the African Union (AU). The paper claims that the continent could experience a lot more positive achievements if the member states of the African Union give up more of their sovereignty to make it a full-fledged federal union, with strong central powers.

This paper begins by discussing the development challenges in Africa, which have caused Africans and people of African descent to call for a stronger or a more robust African Union to help ease the problems of the people on the continent. The paper presents explanations as to how a full-fledged African Union could benefit the masses on the continent. The paper presents the paradoxes of Africa's challenges, whereby the continent is endowed with all sorts of natural and human resources, yet the masses on the continent lack basic necessities. Next, the paper presents various important data illustrating that, while Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, may rank behind other regions of the world on many important variables, such as death rates, life expectancy, infant mortality, HIV/AIDS, economic growth and trade, the continent has experienced substantial progress in the past decade (2005 to 2014). Finally, the paper recommends that member states seriously consider giving more of their sovereignty to the African Union for it to be successful in solving the many challenges confronting the continent.

Africa's Development Challenges: Benefits of a Federal African Union

Africa's development in the past century and before has been impacted by a number of interrelated factors. Among the factors that have been cited are: slavery and colonialism, lack of adequate food production, lack of technology, over population, ethnic and religious conflicts or wars, lack of education, type of economic or political system, 'Brain Drain', etc. (Ighobor, 2014; Kaba, 2006, 2007, 2009a, Tafirenyika, 2014). Each of these factors has contributed to explaining the African condition from the perspective of a paradox. Africa has too many paradoxes. It is due to these paradoxes that many have called for not only a federal African Union, but one with strong central powers (Dembinski and Schott, 2014; Edozie, 2012; Kaba, 2006, 2009a; Okhonmina, 2009; van Walraven, 2004; Yorke, 2012). A stronger African Union can produce a lot of benefits to the masses of the continent. Kaba (2009a) argues that a full-fledged federal African Union can result in one national military that represents the entire continent. It can result also in one federal justice system, with a federal investigative bureau. This can help solve the inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and cross-border conflicts on the continent. This is because the geographic territories of all member states become under one government and a federal constitution. A Defense Department headed by a civilian will then be established. A Foreign Minister position will also be established with that individual representing the entire continent on its foreign policy (p.103). Former South African president Thabo Mbeki is quoted as saying on the Darfur, Sudan conflict that: "It's critically important that the African continent should deal with these conflicts situations.... It's an African responsibility, and we can do it" (Williams, 2008: 311). Apuuli (2013) also notes that the African leaders who established the African Union were aware of the fact that the many civil and international wars all across Africa were posing serious challenges to the continent's economic and social development. The African leaders believed that promoting peace and security and a stable Africa were necessary for

the continent to have a chance to meet its development and integration goals (p.117). A full-fledged African Union also has the clout to demand a permanent seat with veto powers on the United Nations Security Council (Kaba, 2005; Welz, 2013: 427-431).

Kaba (2006: 55-63) and Kaba (2009a: 103-109) also suggest over a dozen strategic goals that a full-fledged African Union could implement to speed up the continent's development. Among these strategic goals are: A continent-wide transportation system; immediately focus on countries and regions in Africa with serious HIV/AIDS cases; investing in African nations with very high proportion of children under 15 years old; investing in African nations with female gross enrollment ratios of two percent or less; assisting individual member-nations to negotiate international trade of their minerals and other resources; creating a single currency; recruiting competent talents from the Diaspora and increasing budget allocation to education to member states that need it the most.

Examples of Achievements of the African Union, 2005 to 2014

By the end of its first decade in existence, one can argue that the African Union has started making some gains that benefit the masses. This has been observed in a number of important areas (Dembinski and Schott, 2014; Kabau, 2012; Muchie et al., 2013; Ssenyonjo, 2013; Tafirenyika, 2014; Welz, 2013). For example, a February 7, 2014, and June 19, 2014 news headlines respectively showed the contributions of the African Union in its efforts to help ease the suffering of the masses on the entire continent: "UN, African Union Sign Landmark Agreement to Curb Sexual Violence in African Countries" and "European Union, African Union Team Up to Support Livestock Production in Somalia." Writing about Africa's food policy and the importance of a productive agricultural sector to get rid of hunger and move Africans out of poverty, Tafirenyika (2014) notes that it has been a challenge to convince leaders of this fact. As a result, very little investments are made in this sector. To use the agricultural sector to get rid of hunger in Africa and also use it for economic development,

leaders must be seriously committed and show prudence. However, the African Union has taken this issue seriously and it is making some progress through one of its development agencies named the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) (p.3).

In their fight against the negative implications of climate change on African nations, the African Union was successful in negotiating a financial compensation on their behalf at the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference that took place in Copenhagen, Denmark (Welz, 2013:425). Finally, Kabau (2012) notes of the important contributions of the African Union in sending peace keeping troops to Burundi in 2003 and also its mediation of the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008. The 2003 peace operation in Burundi by the African Union was a historic event because it was the first time that the members of that organization initiated and implemented such an important task. On the mediation of the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008 and the positive role that the African Union played, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was reported to have claimed that the peaceful mediation shows that intervening early in a country helps to prevent a potential bloody ethnic or civil war, which resulted in no military peace keeping troops being sent to Kenya (pp.63-65).

The Paradoxes of Africa's Development Challenges

This brings us to Africa's development in the twenty-first century. The continent can be argued to be the richest in the world in terms of its stocks of natural resources, yet the evidence shows that those resources have not benefited the overwhelming majority of the people living on the continent. The continent of Africa has abundant fertile lands for agriculture, yet the fertile lands on the continent are not utilized properly to feed the masses, but foreign countries and entities are utilizing these fertile lands to grow food which they then ship to their home continents or outside of Africa (Ighobor, 2014; Laishley, 2014; Parulkar, 2011; "Part I. The Natural Resource Paradox," 2013; Woodhouse, 2012).

Ighobor (2014) points out that Africa is experiencing a difficult paradox with so many people suffering from hunger and starvation while the continent is endowed with massive amounts of fertile lands suitable for agriculture. At the same time, the continent has the expertise and technology to stop this paradox (p.5). It is noted that sub-Saharan Africa in particular (including countries such as Angola, the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria) tends to have many examples of having in abundance all types of vital resources that could be used for development, yet the people of that region receive very little or nothing from those resources that are exported abroad. This is due to poor leadership and civil wars or conflicts. Botswana is one of the few exceptions. As a result, many have continued to wonder why sub-Saharan Africa continues to be rich in its stocks of minerals, for example, but the people of the region continue to be among the poorest in the world ("Part I. The Natural Resource Paradox," 2013: 14).

Laishley (2014) notes that "...nearly 2.5 mn hectares of African farmland had been allocated to foreign-owned entities between 2004 and 2009 in just five countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali and Sudan)..." (p.29). Parulkar (2011) points to a 2010 World Bank report that claims that sub-Saharan Africa farmland accounted for 48% of worldwide land contracts from October 2008 to August 2009, and that another 2010 World Bank report claims that sub-Saharan Africa farmland accounted for almost 75% of the 111 million acres of farmland acquired worldwide (p.104). The same is also the case with the waters of Africa, which have abundant fish and other seafood, yet the masses starve while foreign ships fish in those waters and take away all of their catches (Gagern and van den Bergh, 2013; Kalaidjian, 2010).

The continent of Africa is endowed with substantial amounts of energy resources, such as oil (127 billion barrels estimates for the whole continent as of January 2013), solar power, hydro power, yet Eastern Africa, (with 367.14 million people in 20 countries in 2014) consumed 54.08 billion kWh of electricity in 2010; Western Africa (338.2 million people in 17 nations in 2014) consumed 37.97 billion

kWh of electricity; and Middle Africa (with 143.6 million people in 9 nations in 2014) consumed 18.36 billion kWh of electricity. For comparative purposes, Canada, a nation of 34.84 million people in July 2014, consumed 499.9 billion kWh of electricity in 2010; and Australia, a nation of 22.5 million people, consumed 213.5 billion kWh of electricity in 2010 (Compiled and computed from the 2014 CIA World Factbook).

Among the most prominent individuals in the world such as politicians, medical doctors, professors, teachers, engineers, scientists of all types, nurses, business men and women, lawyers, etc. are millions of people of African descent, who are not in Africa (Kaba, 2007, 2008, 2010).

The continent is actually at peace in the fact that its people are not fighting any major wars with people from other racial groups (Kaba, 2009b), yet inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts and wars (from Southern Africa, to Middle Africa, to Eastern Africa, to Western Africa and Northern Africa) are slowing down the development of the continent.

At the Bottom of World Rankings, Yet Progressing Rapidly from 2005 to 2014

The paradoxes of Africa can also be examined from the opposite direction, meaning that as bad as things might appear to be on the continent, they are actually improving. While if one were to compare Africa to many other regions of the world, one would see that it is a lot less developed, the continent has made substantial progress in just the past decade. This substantial progress that the continent has experienced in the past decade is partly due to the efforts of the African Union, some of which are mentioned above. Let us examine some of these important achievements made in Africa in the past decade.

The average life expectancy at birth in Africa in July 2006 was 53.3 years; the average infant mortality rate in Africa in 2006 was 73.5 deaths per 1000; and the average death rate in Africa in 2006 was 14.2

deaths per 1000 of the population (Compiled and computed from the 2006 CIA World Factbook). However, the average life expectancy at birth in Africa in 2014 is 61 years, an increase of 7.7 years; the average infant mortality rate in Africa in 2014 was 53 deaths per 1000, a decline of 20.5 deaths per 1000; and the average death rate in Africa in 2014 is 9.6 deaths per 1000 of the population, a decline of 4.6 deaths per 1000 (Compiled and computed from the 2014 CIA World Factbook).

The life expectancy at birth in Botswana, Lesotho, and Namibia in 2006 were 33.74 years, 34.4 years, and 43.4 years respectively. However, the life expectancy at birth in Botswana, Lesotho, and Namibia in 2014 were 54.1 years, 52.7 years, and 51.9 years respectively. The following nine African nations had infant mortality rates of over 100 deaths per 1000 in 2006: Angola (185.4 deaths); Sierra Leone (160.4 deaths); Liberia (155.8 deaths); Mozambique (129.24 deaths); Niger (118.3 deaths); Somalia (114.9 deaths); Mali (107.6 deaths); Guinea-Bissau (105.21 deaths); and Djibouti (102.44 deaths). However, in 2014 these same countries (with the exception of Mali and Somalia) have infant mortality rates less than 100 deaths per 1000: Angola (80 deaths); Sierra Leone (73.3 deaths); Liberia (69.2 deaths); Mozambique (72.4 deaths); Niger (83.3 deaths); Somalia (110.14 deaths); Mali (107.6 deaths); Guinea-Bissau (91 deaths); and Djibouti (50.2 deaths) (Compiled and computed from the 2014 CIA World Factbook).

Demographers have noted that for a society to progress it needs to reduce its total fertility rate (Dyson, 2010: 198; Maruyama and Yamamoto, 2010.). In 2006, the total fertility rate in Africa was 4.7 children born per woman. It was six children born per woman in 18 countries, with seven of them rounded up to six: Niger (7.46); Mali (7.42) Somalia (6.76); Uganda (6.71); Burundi (6.55); Burkina Faso (6.47) Democratic Republic of Congo (6.45); Angola (6.35); Republic of Congo (6.07); Sierra Leone (6.08); Liberia (6.02); Malawi (5.92); Mauritania (5.86); Guinea and Mayotte (each 5.79); Madagascar and Sao Tome & Principe (each 5.62); and Nigeria (5.5) (Compiled and computed from the 2006 CIA World Factbook). However, in 2014, the

total fertility rate in Africa was 4.1 children born per woman. It was six children born per woman in eight countries, with four of them rounded up to six: Niger (6.89); Mali (6.16); Burundi (6.14); Somalia (6.08); Burkina Faso (5.93); Uganda (5.97); Zambia (5.76); and Malawi (5.66) (Compiled and computed from the 2014 CIA World Factbook).

Although the number of people living with AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 23.5 million in 2011 to 24.7 million in 2013, the number of AIDS related deaths in the region declined from 1.2 million in 2011 to 1.11 million in 2013 (“Global Repot UNAIDS Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic 2012,” 2012; “The Gap Report,” 2014: 26). According to Hanefeld (2002), estimates of “... only 4 percent of those requiring retroviral drugs [to treat HIV/AIDS] in Africa currently have access to them” (p. 84). However, in 2013, of the 24.7 million people living with AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, 9.14 million (37%) had access to HIV/AIDS treatment (“The Gap Report,” 2014: 26-27).

Examining Africa’s economic growth, one of the challenges that most countries have had is that while their Gross Domestic Products (GDP) increased, their rapid population growth resulted in either stagnant or declining per capita GDP. In 2006, Africa’s total population was 906 million. In 2014, it increased by 211 million to 1.117 billion (2006 and 2014 CIA World Factbook). This means that the lives of hundreds of millions of people on the continent are improving, while the lives of hundreds of millions of people are increasingly stagnant or not improving at all. However, this is now changing. In a New York Times article published on July 20, 2014, Nicholas Kulish highlights this paradox about Africa’s economic growth by pointing out that while the middle class on the continent has expanded substantially, the rapid annual population growth has also resulted in the overall number of poor people to increase. In 1980, the middle class in Africa was reported to be 126 million people. By 2010, that figure increased to 350 million people (p.A1).

Examining Africa’s economic growth, in 2008, the total GDP of Africa was \$2.652 trillion, with per capita GDP of \$2,660 (Compiled and computed based on data in the 2008 and 2009 CIA World Factbook). In 2013, Africa’s total GDP was estimated at \$3.5374

trillion, (4.1%) of the Gross World Products (GWP) of \$87.25 trillion, with per capita GDP of \$3,167 (\$3.5374 trillion divided by 1.0998 billion people in Africa in 2013) (Compiled and computed from 2014 CIA World Factbook and U.S. Census Bureau for the 2013 population figures of African nations). In 2005, there were 12 countries in Africa with per capita GDP of \$6,000 or more: Equatorial Guinea (\$50,000); Mauritius (\$13,100); South Africa (\$12,000); Libya (\$11,400); Botswana (\$10,500); Tunisia (\$8,300); Seychelles (\$7,800. Only 2002 data available in the 2006 World Factbook); Algeria (\$7,200); Namibia (\$7,000); Gabon (\$6,800); and Cape Verde and Reunion (each \$6,200) (Compiled from 2006 CIA World Factbook). In 2013, there were 15 African nations with per capita GDP of \$6,000: Seychelles, (\$25,900); Equatorial Guinea, (\$25,700); Gabon, (\$19,200); Botswana, (\$16,400); Mauritius, (\$16,100); South Africa, (\$11,500); Libya, (\$11,300); Tunisia, (\$9,900); Namibia (\$8,200); Saint Helena (\$7,800. Data for 2009-2010); Algeria (\$7,500); Egypt (\$6,600); Angola (\$6,300); Reunion (\$6,200. Data for 2005); and Swaziland (\$5,700 rounded up). Also note that the number of countries in Africa listed above with per capita GDP of \$10,000 or more increased from five in 2005 to eight in 2013 (rounding up the \$9,900 in Tunisia). The GDP Real Growth Rates in 2013 were 5% or higher in 29 African nations, with Mali's 4.8% rounded up to 5 percent (Compiled from 2014 CIA World Factbook; also see "Part I. The Natural Resource Paradox," 2013: 14-19).

African nations are also not only trading more with the outside world, but also among themselves. For example, in 2007, Africa's total trade was \$421.1 billion. The intra-Africa trade in 2007 was \$40.5 billion ("Table 1.4 Intra-and inter-regional merchandise trade, 2007," 2008). In 2012, Africa's total trade was \$630 billion. The intra-Africa trade in 2012 was \$81 billion ("Table 1.4 Intra-and inter-regional merchandise trade, 2012," 2013). Kulish (2014) points out that the total exports of sub-Saharan African countries increased from \$68 billion in 1995 to over \$400 billion in 2012. Of the \$400 billion, \$300 billion were from the natural resources of the continent, including crude oil, natural gas, diamonds and other precious metals (p. A1).

More Sovereignty to the African Union

The issue of sovereignty is primarily responsible for the African Union to continue to seem weak on the world stage. If African Union member states were to give more of their sovereignty to the African Union, the continent could make more progress than those presented above. This issue has been discussed by scholars and others (Apuuli, 2012, 2013; Dersso, 2012; Farmer, 2012; Kaba, 2006, 2009a; Kabau, 2012; Okhonmina, 2009; Welz, 2014). Kaba (2009a) points out that at the current pace the African Union is going to become a full-fledged union, it might take over a century to be at the point where the European Union is now. The primary reason for this hesitation is that member states of the African Union do not want to give up any significant amount of their state sovereignty (pp.101-102).

What is sovereignty? What are the factors that have caused the African Union not to seriously seek full integration? Kurylo and Maffei (2007) claim that: "Sovereignty' has been defined as the supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable power by which any independent state is governed..." (p.60). Territorial sovereignty is defined: "as the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area" (quoted in Kofman, 2007: 66). Farmar (2012) presents three kinds of sovereignty: juridical, empirical, and popular. Juridical sovereignty is gained through recognition by other states, entities or the international community. The international community can also withdraw recognition of a state. Empirical sovereignty is based on the recognition that states have the legal right and ability to have control over the people and resources within their geographic entities. Popular sovereignty focuses on the rights of an individual regardless of the geographic entity and that the governments that control those entities will earn their authority by showing respect for those rights, and also protect those rights (pp.94-95).

According to Kabau (2012), states or countries have evolved from the Westphalian concept of sovereignty to state sovereignty. The

Westphalian concept of sovereignty was that the state was sacred in its autonomy domestically and internationally. State sovereignty is also sacred and it has kept its idea of having supreme authority especially when it comes to control over everyone within its geographic territory. The African Union has continued to respect this right of the state by not attempting any military intervention into a member country without the consent of the government in charge (pp.74-75). Apuuli (2013) also notes of the non-intervention policy in the affairs of member states of the predecessor of the African Union, the Organization of African Unity (OAU). As a result, the OAU was weak and unable to stop human rights abuses in member states. It also could not influence the national politics in member countries (p.117).

Welz (2014) points out that a culture of conservatism is a contributing factor as to why African leaders are 'obstructing' deeper integration of the African Union. Leaders in member states of the African Union do not want to give any significant amount of sovereignty to that body. The African Union lack resources and the capacities to undertake huge projects (p.5). Guy (2013) also makes similar claims: that the newly independent African nations did not want to give their newly won sovereignty to the OAU, just as they are reluctant now to give it to the African Union. Some of the African leaders were concerned that the president of Ghana, Kwame Nkmmah would become the president of the new united country of Africa. Foreign powers such as France and the United States were also not in favor of such a development, and did their best to sabotage its formation (p.169).

These examples presented above show that African nations, from the most populous to the least populous are skeptical about turning over their recently earned freedom to one central authority – the African Union. History is responsible for this apprehension. African nations suffered for centuries to gain their independence, and the possibility of turning over such freedom after just a few decades or even just a few years of independence is still difficult to accept. However, it is a fact that no one African nation can have a major

influence in the international community as the system is now set up. As a group of nations with so many similarities and shared history, however, they stand a chance to compete and improve the lives of their citizens if they give more of their sovereignty to the African Union.

Conclusion

This paper claims that Africa has experienced significant achievements in the past decade (2005 to 2014). The paper starts by discussing the development challenges that the continent is facing and presents arguments that a stronger federal African Union could benefit the people of the continent in many important ways. Among the potential benefits of a federal African Union are securities for all of the people on the continent and a seat with veto powers on the United Nations Security Council. The paper presents some suggestions of strategic goals of a stronger African Union, including a continent-wide transportation system, invest in member states with very high proportion of people under 15 years old, and to invest in member states with female gross enrollment ratios of two percent or less. The paper presents examples of how the African Union has contributed to the well-being of the continent, including investing in agriculture, sending an African Union peace-keeping mission to Burundi in 2003, and successfully mediating the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008. The paper continues by presenting a number of paradoxes in Africa, whereby the continent is endowed with many different natural and human resources, yet its people continue to suffer. Among the examples presented are that the continent has abundant fertile lands for agriculture, yet millions of people are starving; the continent has abundant energy for electricity, yet the masses consume very little to no electricity; and that among the most highly educated people in the world with scientific degrees of all kinds are millions of people of African descent who are not in Africa, where their services are needed the most.

The paper continues by presenting data illustrating that although Africa might rank behind many regions of the world when measured against them utilizing various development indexes, such as life expectancy, infant mortality rates, death rates, GDP and per capita GDP, the continent has made substantial progress in the decade from 2005 to 2014. For example, average life expectancy in Africa increased from 53 years in 2005 to 61 years in 2014; infant mortality rates declined from 73.5 deaths per 1000 in 2005 to 53 deaths per 1000 in 2014; and death rates declined from 14.2 deaths per 1000 in 2005 to 9.6 deaths per 1000 in 2014. Finally, the paper concludes by suggesting that member states of the African Union give more of their sovereignty to the African Union so that it could be in a stronger position to solve the many problems confronting the people of the continent.

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