

What are the causes of slow growth africa politics essay



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In 1960s, Africa's futures looked bright, especially that the continent was gradually disengaging from the bondage of the colonial imperialism. On the basis of Madison's (1995) estimates of per capital gross domestic product (GDP) for a sample of countries during the first half of the century, Africa had grown considerably more rapidly than Asia by 1950. But alas! today, Africa is the poorest continent in the world. While there has been a steady growth (economically), in several countries of South East Asia, such as Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, African states have lagged behind. This paper critically examined the factors militating against the growth of Africa. Why the continent has grown slowly? Some internal issues inhibiting the growth and development of Africa as well as external dimensions were discussed. The paper also focused on other issues and conclusion is drawn on the premise of providing plausible suggestions that will serve as a panacea to Africa's problems.

Introduction

Africa as well as the rest of the world is battling with this provocative question: Why does Africa continue to lag behind the rest of the world in terms of social and economic development? Obadare, (2003). Mathew Paris writing in Times August 2002, believes the Answer to the continent's development problem lies in four simple words: " swagger, Indolence, self indulgence and hot air " he points out " failure of leadership, the individual means that what is created or started is not maintained.

The colossal political failure of Africa was indeed due to poor leadership systems.

For anyone who knows the beauty and value of history, Africa in the 1950s started on a good footing. After 1960 particularly when majority of the countries in the continent gained political freedom, the potential of government were not responsive to the people's needs, aspirations and wishes. The dream were shattered due to bad leadership, corruption, wars, poverty and eventually, economic underdevelopment.

AFRICA IN PERSPECTIVE

The place of Africa in the global community is defined by the belief that the continent is an indispensable resources base, which has served all humanity for many centuries, (Olasode, 1994: 13). He argued that, “ these resources can be broken down into the following sub-marginal headings, such as:

The rich complex of minerals oil and gas deposits, it provide the flora and fauna, and it unexploited natural habitat which provide the basis for mining, agriculture, tourism and industrial development.

The ecological hung provided by the continent rain forests, and the minimal presence of emissions and effluents that are armful to the environments. These, which are beneficial to all mankind.

The pole ontological and the archeological sites containing evidences of the evolution of the earth, life and the human species, and

The richness of Africa's culture and its contribution to the variety of the cultures of the global community.”

The first of component is the one with which the world is most familiar. The second component is a new development, as humanity came to understand the critical importance of environmental matters. The third component is also coming into its own, as a matter of concern not only to a narrow field of science or of interest only to museums and their curators. The fourth component shows the creativity of African people, which in many important ways remains underexploited.

Africa has a very important role to play with regard to the critical issue of protecting the environment. African resources include rainforests, the virtually carbon dioxide free atmosphere above the continent and the minimal presence of toxic deposits in the rivers and soils that interact with the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the Mediterranean and Red Seas. The New Partnership for Africa's Development will contain a plan of action for nurturing these resources and using them for the development of the continent while, at the same time preserving them for all humanity.

It is imperative to not that, unless the communities in the vicinity of the tropical forests are given alternative means of earning a living, they will continue to cooperate in the destruction of the forests. As the preservation of these environmental assets is in the interests of humanity, it is obvious that Africa be placed on a development path that does not put them in danger.

The advancement of science and modern technology also recognises Africa as the cradle of humankind. As part of the process of rejuvenating the identity and self-confidence of the peoples of Africa, it is necessary that this contribution to human existence be understood and valued first by Africans

themselves then others will. Africa's position in the world, as the birthplace of humanity should be cherished by the whole world as the origin of all its peoples. Accordingly, the New Partnership for Africa's Development must preserve, protect and promote this common heritage and use it to build a universal understanding to end the underdevelopment and marginalisation of the continent.

It is also a known fact that Africa has a major role to play in maintaining the strong link between human beings in the world. Science and Technological developments tend to explain the role of human beings as a factor of production, competing for their place in the production process with their contemporary. The natural flora and fauna, and the diverse animal species unique to Africa also offer an opportunity for humanity to maintain its link with natural environment.

Africa as a continent has made a significant contribution to world culture through literature, music, visual arts and other cultural forms, but its real potential remains untapped because of its limited integration into the global economy. The New Partnership for Africa's Development will enable the continent to increase its contribution to science, culture and technology. In this new millennium, when humanity is searching for a new way in which to build a better world, it is critical that we bring to bear the combination of these qualities and the forces of human will to place the continent on a pedestal of equal partnership in advancing human civilisation.

The above components shows that the continent is naturally endowed, but the resources are either underdeveloped or underexploited. Ehiogu,(1998:

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66), posited that “ the impoverishment of the African continent was accentuated primarily by the evil designed legacies of the European colonialism, the cold war, the workings of the international economic systems, and the inadequacies of , and shortcoming in the policies pursued by many countries in the post independent era.

In his paper titled “ Africa and Globalization Process”, Gambari, (2001: 2), asserted that, Africa’s inability to harness the processes of globalization and the endemic problems of individual African government to channel dynamic micro and macro economic policies, as well as democratic failure, are more of a causal factors of Africa’s underdevelopment.

Efretuei, (2006: 1), observed that the African continent has witnessed many tragic historical peculiarities starting from the advent of colonialism up to the present day. From the attainment of independence in the early 1960s, most African nations inherited colonial political and socioeconomic institutional legacies through which national development processes were pursued. In the post- colonial period, these institutions have been used by the emergent African elites not only to subvert development efforts, but also had become deeply subservient to the external economic shocks, dependent and vulnerable to foreign interferences. Essentially they served the political needs of both colonial powers and the emergent African elites. As a consequence debate and schisms began to develop on what African development perspective should be and imply, as the problems of capacity both human and financial erupted. The continent increasingly faced debilitating and severe economic depression, perpetual political crises, social fragmentation and patchy policy environment in almost all the facets of life.

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Rather than transforming the continent to greater heights, Africa was characterized by wars, poverty, diseases, corruption and the emergent of dictatorships. In the mid 1980s, the continent was entangled in foreign debts. These incidences have essentially become the scourge of the continent as the pattern continued well into the late 1990s. The nature of these incidences created huge capacity constraints resulting in multiple apathies to development on the continent. It became obvious that development policies of the continent had run into paradigmatic crises and rendered attempts at development problematic. As a result of the continued development dilemma and the adoption of patchy policy models, the continent began to face marginalization and isolation in the emerging global political and economic systems.

In addition to the above, the pain of the continent is aggravated by the structure of African economy of dependency. Onzelor, (1999: 13), explained that Africa produces commodities it does not need and depend on others for the production of its own needs. Kurfi (1998: 34), argued that African economy of dependency has necessitate a “ dwindling resources base for the whole continent.” Added to this, is the huge debts and debt servicing, which all cost negatively on the development of numerous African countries.

What are, then, the impacts of the above underdevelopment levels to the continent? The answer to this question cannot be far fetched. Clearly Africa is a home of 54 countries. The continent has 80% of the world’s HIV/AIDS population and half of the population of the continent earns less than one US Dollar (\$ 1) per day. Africa also constitutes only 10% of the world’s

population yet processes less than 25% of the world population of refugees
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and internally displaced people. Resources meant for socio-economic development had to be expanded on feeding and catering for millions of Africans.

According to the UNDP report, most of the countries in Africa lacked the basic fundamentals to sustain future growth rates required by the United Nation Development Programmes (UNDP 1994: 11). The only solution, as perceived by some scholars, is the integration of the continent. Ekundare, (2003: 63), argued that, integration as perceived, will focus on the approach of development through collective self-reliance and incorporation into the international economic system. However, such integration needs to look at whether it will bring about an increased development or not. This integration, if pursued and achieved, will record a resounding progress in the areas of common needs like health, education, water, roads and telecommunication and a host of others. This will among other things, bring about accelerated development that would allow the continent to have a say in the world stage through her members, even if on matters less important.

Africa's development has always been less than optimal, causing it to lag behind the rest of the world. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was created to deal with the continent's development woes and remedy the situation. Despite its rich natural resources, Africa is steeped in poverty. NEPAD is a broad-based initiative and a united call by African leaders to eradicate poverty and promote Africa's sustainable development while getting it to shrug off its underdeveloped status and exclusion from the rest of the globalised world. The NEPAD initiative seeks to uplift the

continent and restore pride in Africa as it embarks on the process of sustainable growth and development.

The NEPAD framework emphasizes pooling resources to enhance regional development and economic integration in Africa, as well as building capacity. Infrastructural development programmes and poverty alleviation projects feature prominently in the process. It seeks a relationship between Africa and members of the international community. It appeals to African states to adhere to 'good governance, democracy and human rights', and impels them to prevent and resolve situations of conflict and instability and to create conditions conducive to 'investment, growth and development in critical sectors' (Abraham, 2004).

At the end of the cold war, development initiatives increasingly received international attention. In order to not remain passive, homegrown initiatives to foster development began to evolve, given the persistent development difficulties that have immersed the continent, (Efretuei, 2006: 2). The result of this homegrown initiative led to the emergence of NEPAD.

THE CAUSES OF SLOW AFRICAN GROWTH

The debate on the causes of slow African growth has offered many different explanations. Perhaps, the greatest weakness in these explanations is the striking lack of precision with which the reasons for the slow growth of African development were expressed. To anyone who knows the history of Africa, why the continent has grow slowly, can be best understood from multidimensional explanation.

PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC POLICIES IN AFRICA

Until recently it has been largely accepted that the main causes of Africa's slow growth were paternal. During the 1980's the world bank, the international monetary fund and the bilateral donors came to identify exchange rate and trade policies as the primary causes of slow growth in Africa. On the bases of Hykin (1997). Economic strategies and suffering in sub-Saharan Africa is overwhelmingly due to economic policies. These policies have led to pervasive government ownership or control of economic institution, private initiative to produce and create wealth in too many cause have been denied by government intervention programmes.

The US Agency for international Development (AID) pronounces four propound effects slowed economic policies in Africa as;

First, they discovered production, reduced new private savings and investment and channeled whatever investment that did take place into areas which were relatively unproductive. Second, they shifted income from low income group (mostly farmers) to upper income group (politicians, government employees and other workers in the formal industry and service centers). Thirdly, they led to stagnation in employment. Fourthly, these policies led to endangered corruption and moral decay.

Tariffs and trade restrictions has also been higher in Africa elsewhere, attention its economic development in a way. The crisis was due to deteriorating and volatile terms of trade, and as table 2 shows, term of trade has indeed been more volatile for Africans than other less developed countries.

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Sachs and his co-authors (2005) have attributed slow growth of Africa to “the curse of the tropics”. Africa’s adverse climate cause poor health and so reduced life expectancy below that in other regions which put Africa at disadvantage in development. The adverse climate also leads to leached soil and unreliable rainfall, which constrains Africa’s agriculture.

Weak economic growth helps to explain a lower saving rate and higher proportion of flight capital to Asia compared to the less developed nation of Asia and Africa. Richer countries tend to their population growth rate drop off, so the poverty of Africa has helped to keep its birth rates high, even as compared to the world’s other less developed countries.

LESS DEMOCRACY AND MORE BUREAUCRATIC

African governments have typically been less democratic than their Asian and Latin American counterparts. The Lincolnian concept of democracy built on the principles of representation and active participation has been underscored in process of democratic governance in Africa. Indeed, democracy is all about people, their collective will, interests and aspiration. Modern democracy thrives on the principle of popular participation through representation (Agbaje, 1999).

Democracy presupposes popular sovereignty of the people. It is a pattern of governance whereby the collective interest of the people is of ultimate essence

J. J. Rousseau (1712-1778) in his social contract theory refers to the Civic covenant whereby the people as a collectivity surrendered their rights to “

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General will". To him, the actions of government must of necessity, be in accordance with " General Will" or what is the same thing, the ' public interest' (Enemilo, 1999: 73-74) in effect, the underlying purpose and justification of governance is service delivery, guarantee of rule of law, protection of the right of the citizens are provision of greater happiness among the greater number of the public. This is not the case in most African countries.

On the contrary, political leaders in Africa have use their positions to enrich themselves, leaving ineffective institutions and infrastructure that are the catalysts of change and development (Power supply, Health, Education, Transportation, Housing and Telecommunication). As a result, Africa is faced with problems of massive poverty and untold misery in the continent. The commonest trend has been, as Dike (2009) put it, in the case of Nigeria;...' case of voting by proxy, de-listing of authentic delegate, abuse of party regulations and outright rigging, rampant decamping and political assassinations and many other anomalies that threatens the integrity of the system. Despite poor performances of the political leaders in most African countries, they filled the public with impressive figures of their achievements that contradicts the reality on the ground. For example, Governor Ameachi (2009) of Rivers state in Nigeria admitted that the state received #569, 994, 113, 359. 47 from the Federal Government in two years. The breakdown indicated that the state received #502, 063, 163, 390. 2 from the federal account, internal generated revenue #61, 393, 400, 731, 78, Paris club refund amount to\$63, 793, 867. 68. All the monies received do not tally with the reality on the ground.

President Obama in Ghana parliament challenged the African leaders that “ in the 21st century, capable, reliable and transparent institutions are the keys to success. Strong parliament, hardworking police force, independent judiciary and civil society. These are the things that give life to democracy. Africans strong men and strong institutions to actualized the dream continent. Africans future is in the hands of Africans. He further challenged African leaders, that, from south-Korea to Singapore, history that countries strives only when they invest in people and infrastructures. These infrastructures promote multiple experts, develop skills workforce, and enhance small and medium businesses that create job opportunities to people. In summary, the US president observed that. That 21st century would be shaped by not what happened in Moscow or Washington but by what happen in Africa as well. Disease conflict and corruption have ravaged parts of African economy and its development. Development depends on governance. That is, the basic ingredients that is missing for much too long in Africa. Finally, mutual relationship is the foundation of democracy. African leaders should therefore, focus on four (4) things that are critical to development of the continent; democracy opportunity, health and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

THE COLONIAL HERITAGE

Another factor that may hinder the growth prospects is its colonial heritage. Africa has much smaller countries in terms of population than other regions in the world. To Gerald and James (2005) sub Sahara Africa has a population of about half of that of India, divided into 48 states. These many states combined with low level of income, makes Africa’s national economy

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radically smaller than those of other regions. Very small state might be economically disadvantaged for several reasons. If government has some fixed cost, either in its administration or as service provider, then it might be hard for a small state to at minimum cost, moreover, the society may forfeit much more expensive scale economies if it combine small scale with isolation. Some domestic market may be too small even for the minimum efficient scale of production of single producer, all domestic market taken alone will less competitive than in larger economies. Colher and Dollar (1999) are of the view that, small economies are also perceived by investors as significantly more risky. Finally, they may have a slower rate of technological innovation.

In addition, Kremer (1999) argues, the incidence of discoveries may be broadly proportional to the population, so that if discoveries con not readily spread in the society, low population societies will have less innovation. Must African government in the post colonial period, were not democratic. The median African government during the 1970's to 1980's close to autocracy. African states witnessed several military coups de tats. As the struggle for political leadership become more contentions and in several cases, more violent. African states were far less democratic than the median non-African developing country (as measured by the Gastil scale of political right shown in table 2). A typical pattern was that governments were captured by the educational elites, urban resident population, with few or no agricultural interest.

POOR SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROGRAMME FAILURES

Today, particularly every discussion on Africa's slow level of development mentioned poor service delivery and project failures. Africa experienced a paradox of poor public services despite relatively high public expenditure (Pradhan, 1996). Poor service delivery handicapped firms through unreliable transport and power, inadequate telecommunication networks and unreliable waters for example, Zimbabwe manufacturing company need to hold high level of inventories, despite high interest rates, due to unreliable delivery of input tied to poor transportation infrastructure (Fafchamps et. al., 1998). A survey of Ugandan firms found that shortage of electricity was identified as one of the most important constraint on the growth of companies. Electricity in Nigeria, despite the country's four generating stations is nothing to write home about. Most firms are either not performing or not functioning due to unreliable power supply. A study in Nigeria found that, own generators account for the three-quarters of the capital equipment of small manufacturers (Lee and Anas, 1991).

Programme failures also contributed to slow Africa's growth. A major World Bank report (1984) on Africa's woes began. "...the root of Africa's problem continues to be the combination of those policies government as well as debtors' that influence the efficiency of resource use. Those policies should remain the focus of action. Unless they are corrected, extra foreign exchange from whatever source- trade or capital inflow may bring temporary relief but will have no lasting benefits. If governments are to address, their domestic policies, more external finance could even exacerbate the problems".

In May 1986 address to the UN on the crisis in Africa, the then Secretary of States, George Shultz observed