



Why the African Union Should be Dismantled and Buried with Gaddafi

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Abstract

One enduring project of pan-Africanists is an all-Africa union as the solution to Africa's socio-economic predicament. They view the lack of such a union as one of the major causes of the predicament. From Nkrumah to the African Union (AU) passing by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), their disagreements have been about the means and ways of achieving this goal. In their view, the development of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is inseparable from that of North Africa. I argue that this is not and should not be the case, because SSA socio-economic outcomes and their causes diverge organically from those of North Africa. As the institutional symbol of this pan-African view, the AU should be dismantled. SSA should be allowed to reconstitute itself, without North Africa, into a self-sustaining, organically integrated Unifederation that can finally address and solve its predicament. Gaddafi's demise allows SSA to do so.

Résumé

L'un des projets les plus durables des panafricanistes est la création d'une union panafricaine comme solution au problème socio-économique de l'Afrique. Ils considèrent que l'absence d'une telle union est l'une des principales causes de la situation. De Nkrumah à l'Union africaine (UA) en passant par l'Organisation de l'unité africaine (OUA), leurs désaccords ont porté sur les voies et les moyens pour atteindre cet objectif. À leur avis, le développement de l'Afrique subsaharienne (ASS) est indissociable de celui de l'Afrique du Nord. L'auteur soutient que ce n'est pas et ne devrait pas être le cas, car les résultats socio-économiques de l'Afrique subsaharienne et leurs causes divergent organiquement de ceux de l'Afrique du Nord. En tant que symbole institutionnel de cette vision panafricaine, l'UA devrait être démantelée.

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L'Afrique subsaharienne devrait pouvoir se reconstituer, sans l'Afrique du Nord, en une uni-fédération autonome, organiquement intégrée, capable d'aborder et de résoudre ses problèmes. La disparition de Kadhafi le permet.

Introduction

The 'Arab Spring' of 2011 displayed a peculiar feature. Although many of the regimes (Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and Egypt) used force against their populations, only Libya provoked NATO's and the international community's wrath and bombardments in support of the internal armed opposition against the Gaddafi regime. Only later, due to a different set of geopolitical reasons, was Syria subjected to international military pressure. Internal opposition and NATO bombardments provoked three noteworthy reactions. First, there was spontaneous and relatively uncoordinated support for the Gaddafi regime by the masses in several SSA countries. Second, the AU extended tepid support to the Gaddafi regime and timidly proposed a cease-fire between the regime and its foes. Third, the AU-proposed cease-fire was rejected out of hand by the Libyan armed opposition, whose members are supposed to be part of AU.

Both the AU's tepid support for and the opposition's rejection of the cease-fire contrasted with Gaddafi's vocal and militant support for the AU and his bigger financial contribution to the organisation. Gaddafi's leadership was instrumental to the birth of the AU. The first major move toward the union was the Sirte Declaration in Libya in 1999. After the Constitutive Act of the African Union was adopted in Lomé (Togo) in 2000, it was in Sirte again that the establishment of the Union was proclaimed in 2001 before the official birth of the Union in South Africa in 2002. Libya's financial contribution to the AU and SSA countries under Gaddafi was quite impressive. In addition to its 15 per cent share of the AU budget (of about US\$257 million in 2011), Gaddafi's Libya paid the membership fees for some very poor countries that could not afford them, which raised Libya's contribution to the AU annual budget to about a third of the total. By some estimates, Gaddafi's Libya provided about US\$97 billion to SSA in investments and aid. The initial spontaneous support of young people in SSA countries for the embattled Gaddafi was consistent with this financial aid (Allison 2012; Larson and Vogl 2011).

The overall reactions to Gaddafi's demise, however, revealed that, despite Gaddafi's impact on the pauperised masses in SSA countries because of his financial largesse, his investments in the AU have not paid off. It is almost a sure bet that after Gaddafi there will be no strong support left for the AU in North Africa, let alone in Libya. The lack of a payoff for Gaddafi's anchoring support for the AU is both a symptom of and a metaphor for the

ill conception of the AU and its inability, as an institution, to meet the goal of solving the SSA predicament. The fall of the Gaddafi regime provides, thus, an opportunity for declaring the death of the AU and proposing on its ashes an intellectual alternative that pointedly addresses SSA's socio-economic lag.

African Predicament and Enduring Continental Grouping Project

With a few exceptions, Africa obtained its independence in the 1960s, later than South America and Asia. Expectedly, South America and Asia founded regional organisations before Africa did. This was the case of the Arab League in 1945 and the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948. Another regional grouping in Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), was created in 1967, four years after Africa's regional organisation, the OAU, was founded in 1963. All these regional organisations rested on functional integration that promoted solidarity, economic cooperation, peace and security, and the protection of sovereignty of the member states. Yet Africa's type of grouping differs from the three others in two major respects: membership and objectives. Africa's grouping was and remains continental, encompassing the whole African continent as opposed to sub-regional groupings in Asia. And unlike the OAS, it is entirely made up of developing countries. It has more member states (fifty-four countries) than any other regional grouping in the world. Although Africa's broad goal of functional integration and cooperation resembles that of South America and Asia, its specific objectives differ from theirs. To grasp this difference, one needs to bear in mind that Africa's flirtation with a continental grouping has had four phases. All four lead back to Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, who passionately called for the total unification of the African continent.

Nkrumah was so painfully aware of the deep political and socio-economic underdevelopment and deprivation of Africa that he looked to the US, Soviet and West European models of political organisation for answers. He shunned the models of grouping offered by Africa's fellow Third World regions of South America and Asia. High premium was put on solving the severe state of underdevelopment of Africa (Nkrumah 1970: 194–222). Nkrumah's project faced stiff opposition from his African peers and their foreign backers. To bridge the gap between Nkrumah and the opposition, the OAU was created. The OAU constituted the second phase in Africa's quest for a continental grouping. It was a 'compromise recognition' of Nkrumah's rationale and prime reason for the unification project: the severe socio-economic and political underdevelopment of Africa and the need to solve it.¹ The third phase in the process was the commitment to the idea of functional economic cooperation among African countries. Sub-regional

economic organisations were its pillars. No fewer than 200 sub-regional economic organisations have been created in Africa since independence.

The OAU and its auxiliary sub-regional economic organisations had some success in the decolonisation of the continent. Overall, however, they failed as an institutional framework for Africa's development. Several well-known reasons account for the inadequate performance of the OAU and the sub-regional economic institutions. They need not be rehearsed here. Worth repeating is the fact that the OAU and its sub-regional offshoots consecrated the principles of national sovereignty, sanctity of colonial borders, and non-interference in other states' internal affairs. Although they were not the core reason for its failure (as I will argue), these principles undermined at its core the political and economic policy goal around which revolved the Pan-African project. Deprived of any effective means of policy implementation, including financial contributions by member states, the OAU could not pursue any consistent and effective policies that would meet its enunciated goals.

Against this backdrop of failure and the deterioration of the African socio-economic situation, the AU was launched in 2002 to replace OAU. The AU constituted, thus, the fourth phase in the African quest for continental grouping. It was in effect Nkrumah's revenge against his peers. Indeed, the socio-economic standing of Africa had so deteriorated in the years after Nkrumah passed away, from the 1970s onwards, that there was now the incontrovertible recognition of the implacable socio-economic and political situation that Nkrumah wrestled with in his days. Most commentaries lauded the advent of the AU because of its potential, as a political union, to finally help Africa emerge as a force that could solve its problem of severe underdevelopment. The AU Constitutive Act itself stressed the need to accelerate the socio-economic development of Africa via a common vision of a united and strong Africa. This required strengthened and empowered common institutions.

Through its four phases of continental grouping, Africa distinguishes itself from South America and Asia. Unlike these two continents, it is the only developing region that has consistently and explicitly in the post-1945 period called for a continental political union to deal with its predicament. It has done so not only through an intellectual articulation of the problem, as in Nkrumah's and many other writings, but also through its artists and populace. More is expected of Africa's grouping efforts because there is a recognition, however vague and intuitive in most cases, of the exceptional socio-economic ills of Africa. Unfortunately for Pan-Africanists, the AU is not the answer.

The African Union: A Mismatch Between Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa

Like any big organisation or institution, the AU was bound to experience 'growing pains'. Since its launching in 2002, the AU has not had a smooth sailing. It has faced budget shortfalls, has not been able to put in place some of its agreed-upon institutional organs, and some of the existing ones have not functioned well. In 2004, an audit revealed a case of gross mismanagement and embezzlement of seven million dollars earmarked for a 'Conference of African and Diasporan Intellectuals' that was supposed to provide the intellectual impetus and cover for AU. The relationship between the president of AU Commission and the 54 African heads of state has been fraught with conflicts and misunderstandings. A clear manifestation of this was the row and split between the former President of the Commission, Alpha Oumar Konaré, and the heads of state on the issue of democracy in Togo, Central African Republic and Mauritania. Konaré held steadfastly to the principles of democracy, human rights and the respect of the rule of law and constitutions to the chagrin and annoyance of many heads of state, who either maintained the undemocratic status quo or opposed him on the basis of the 'African reality'. In a sense, the split is indicative of the chasm that exists between the really educated elite committed to change in Africa and the parvenus, who hold dearly to political power and the status quo. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), designed to serve as the connecting bridge between the AU and Western and industrialised democracies and that promised economic and political assistance to the AU, has not lived up to expectations. Personality clashes among the main African protagonists of NEPAD, divergent agendas, and the inability of Western countries to keep their promises have brought NEPAD to a halt.

The 2012 marathon election (four rounds) of the new President of AU Commission once more revealed the split between 'Francophone' and 'Anglophone' countries as each camp supported its own candidate; in the end the Anglophones won by electing the South African Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the former wife of President Zuma. More importantly, perhaps, the two tactical and policy positions held by two major views of the AU have negatively impacted it. Although all heads of state signatories to the Constitutive Act of the AU profess their commitment to an all-Africa political union, they hold two different views about how to implement this policy. On the one hand, the advocates of the fast track approach (e.g. Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal) argue for the immediate institutional implementation of political union since, in their view, the failure of the OAU and the advent of the AU militate in favour of such an approach. On

the other hand, those who prefer a step-by-step approach similar to the one followed by the European Union (EU) (e.g., South Africa) warn against a rush to political union and hold on to national sovereignty.

Yet these 'growing pains' are *not* the reasons why AU is the wrong answer and should be dismantled. Many of these difficulties are to be expected. In any case, they are secondary reasons. So are the aforementioned reasons generally advanced to explain the failure of the OAU and its auxiliary sub-regional organisations. Another set of reasons should also be discounted. It is not because the AU cannot manage administratively the whole continent of Africa that lacks infrastructure and efficient bureaucracy. India and China have larger populations than the whole continent of Africa. Yet both have been able to administer their territories with some efficiency.

Nor is the AU deficient because North Africa is made of 'Arabs' and SSA of blacks' and the masses of North Africa feel more attached to the Arab world than to 'Africa'. The expected diminishing support for the AU in North Africa after Gaddafi is not the reason either. To be sure, there is a 'racial' and 'cultural' split between North Africa and SSA. Denying it is disingenuous. President Nasser of Egypt, a strong Pan-Africanist, held misguided views about SSA that he regarded as the 'Dark Continent' to be civilised and dominated by Egypt. His Pan-Arabism trumped his Pan-Africanism (Thompson 1969: 68; Nasser 1955). Gaddafi, a visceral proponent of African unification via the AU at the time of his death, espoused in the early days of his rule an aggressive policy of land grabbing and regime destabilisation toward SSA countries in the name of Arab nationalism. In reaction to this, Mobutu, the former dictator of Congo-Kinshasa, attempted to take the leadership of 'Negro Africa' against Arabs in an attempt to counter the Arab penetration of SSA. In fact, Gaddafi's wholesale embrace of a union with SSA came as a reaction to his many failures to create political unions with his fellow Arab leaders in North Africa and the Middle East, including with Syria. At an Egyptian exhibit in the American city of Houston, the Egyptian representative once proclaimed to the chagrin and consternation of African Americans that the mummies represented Egyptian culture and history and not 'African culture'. He sought to distance ancient Egyptian civilization from SSA. In an attempt to differentiate itself from SSA, Morocco once sought membership in the EU only to be told that it was not a European country. And, by the way, Morocco ended its membership in the OAU/AU long ago over Western Sahara. Among the North African populace, the split from SSA is perhaps best illustrated by the Libyans who chanted 'We are native Arabs, not Africans' when Gaddafi announced to them in 2000 the creation of AU (Spencer 2003: 116). As a Libyan respondent to a survey by

BBC News (23 January 2004), who does not think of himself as 'African', put it, '98 per cent of Libyans are against any African Union'. Africans, he opined, have brought suffering to Libyans by spreading HIV/AIDS. These sentiments are shared by many Egyptians and other North Africans, who do not want to be associated with SSA, preferring to proclaim their 'Arabness' or 'whiteness'. As one observer writes, 'Perversely the Arab nations of North Africa tend to consider themselves streets ahead of sub-Saharan Africa in terms of culture and mentality' (Harter 2005: 22). Of course, they have a permanent fixture that boosts this superiority complex: the presence of SSA slave descendants in North African countries.

Nevertheless, this 'racial' and 'cultural' split is not the reason why the AU does not meet the requirement as an institutional response to North Africa and SSA. After all, one finds just as many instances of and anecdotes about North Africans proclaiming their African proclivities and connections to SSA. One is reminded of Algeria's former president Ouari Boumedienne's retort to the Arabs: 'If you force me to choose between the Arab world and Africa, I choose Africa' (Kodjo 1985: 261). And despite his misgivings, Nasser was closer to Nkrumah's views than were many of Nkrumah's own SSA peers. Personally, I have had conversations with Algerian students who eschew their identity with Arabs in the Middle East in favor of their 'Africanness'. In the aforementioned BBC survey, many respondents believed in a linkage between North Africa and SSA. *Jeune Afrique*, easily the most important weekly and media linkage between North Africa and SSA, was founded by the Tunisian Bechir Ben Yahmed in Tunis. Samir Amin, the late famed scholar of the Third World, lived and worked more in SSA than in his native Egypt.

None of these reasons explain why AU should be dismantled because they are all secondary reasons. They are symptoms of and subordinated to more systemic and organic causes on which SSA and North Africa diverge. Organic causes are exceptional factors shared by SSA countries but not by North Africa. They dictate that the institutional format proposed to tackle these organic causes and their effects should not involve North Africa; it cannot be the AU. Indeed, the AU is an institution. Institutions involve some well-defined organisational patterns, regular rules and procedures governing the behaviour of groups or collectivities. Although they suppose some routinisation and stability, institutions are made; they do not just occur out of the blue. They are an outcome of a 'situation' that requires or necessitates their existence and emergence. There are many 'situations' that can necessitate the existence of an institution. In most cases, however, politics and its consequences are the main triggers.

Politics is a society-rooted competition over property, resources, goods, services, values, and – as a crucial corollary – political power. Because of the competition involved, politics generates differential socio-economic outcomes; moreover, it triggers the building of institutions designed to structure the competition, to deal with its effects, and, more importantly, to solve or respond to the problems that the collectivities involved in the competition face (Sangmpam 2007a: 30ff; 2007b: 201–24). In this sense, institutions that work best are those that are tailored to reflect and respond to the socio-economic consequences of politics of which they are themselves an outcome. As an all-Africa institution, the AU does not meet this requirement with regard to North Africa and SSA. The reason lies in the vast differences in socioeconomic outcomes between North Africa and SSA that politics imposes and the causes of this differential impact.

Recently there has been much euphoria about ‘Africa, the next Asia’, ‘Africa’s robust growth’, and the ‘decrease of Africa’s poverty level’. The claim is that these differences are being erased. The euphoria emanates from ‘Afro-optimists’ and Sinophiles who extol the merits of China’s investments in Africa as the path to African development. Their optimism flows from Africa’s share of foreign direct investment and the sectoral growth achieved in some African countries in recent years (the IMF projected about 5.5 per cent growth rate in 2012). In 2011, for example, foreign direct investment to Africa grew by 27 per cent. Most of the growth has been spurred by the export of raw materials and minerals, such as oil, copper, cobalt and agricultural cash crops. From 2002 to 2007, the share of raw materials in Africa’s GDP was 24 per cent, by far the leading sector. Exports of raw materials have stimulated growth in other sectors, including government spending. No surprise that China, the most important beneficiary and consumer of raw materials, has invested more than US\$12 billion since 2003 in Africa (US\$10 billion in 2018 alone). A side effect of this has been China’s involvement in infrastructure building in African countries.

True as all this may be, the Afro-optimists would be well advised to temper their euphoria. Africa has experienced this type of commodity boom in the past (notably in the late 1960s to the early 1970s) only to go bust when conditions changed. Moreover, the reliance on commodities and their attendant infrastructure is not historically a novelty for Africa either. One needs not be an apologist of colonialism to recognise that European colonial rule did generate tremendous growth in many of the colonies. Belgian Congo, South Africa, Rhodesia, Kenya and Egypt are examples. In these countries, much of the growth was spurred by commodity exports, minerals and cash crops. And expectedly, the level of infrastructure in these countries, especially around the areas that produced the raw materials, was higher than elsewhere.

Yet colonial economic growth and its attendant infrastructure did not prevent SSA from becoming the ‘poorest region’. The issue here is not colonial exploitation or Chinese exploitation. Rather, Afro-optimists fail to properly account for the reasons why SSA is ‘the poorest region’ and lags behind its fellow ‘Third World’ peers. They crave ‘some good news from Africa’. Afro-optimism and Afro-pessimism should give way to ‘Afro-realism’.

Table 1: SSA Lagging Socioeconomic Outcomes

YEAR		SSA*	MNA*	SA/EA*	SAM*
1960-2003	GDP(in 2000 US \$)	511	2140	283	3168
	Life Exp	47	64	56	66
	Inf Mort	105	78	74	35*
	Poverty % Change**	+20	---	-21/-43	-1
1988-2003	GDP Change**	-20	+197	+103	+206
	Life Exp Change**	-2 Yrs	+3 Yrs	+4 Yrs/+1 Yrs	+2 Yrs
2003-2009	GDP Index (1980=100)	98	125	201/259	112
	Life Exp	50	69.5	64/71	73
	Inf Mort	94.5	34	62/24	22.5
	Pol Strife Index (AV)	42.5	35	39/40	33
	Peace Index	96	78	75	83
2010	GDP in \$ (AV)	2270	3565***	7530****	7556
2011	GDP in \$ (AV)	2442	4279***	13611****	8084
2010	HDI Rank (AV)	141	87***	86****	79
2011	HDI Rank (AV)	155	99***	98****	84

*SSA=Sub-Saharan Africa; MNA=Middle East & North Africa; SA=South Asia; EA=East Asia; SAM=South America. / ** Change from previous year.

*** North Africa by itself. / **** Asia as a whole

Sources: Calculated by compiling data from World Bank, World Tables 1988-89 Edition, pp.14-15 and World Tables 1989-90 Edition, pp.2-3; World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2004; World Bank, GDP Per Capita, 2012 WWW.ata.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAPCD; IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2012 WWW.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/01; UNDP, Human Development Report 2005; UNDP, Human Development Report 2010 & 2011; The Fund for Peace/ Foreign Policy Magazine, “The Twelve Indicators,” 2008; Institute for Economics and Peace, “Global Peace Index 2009”; Jeffrey Sachs, The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for our Time. London: Penguin Books, 2005, pp. 21, 22-23, 28-29, 70, 305.

The reality is that, although SSA still shares many socio-economic traits with North Africa, Asia and South America, it stands alone at the bottom of the comparative scale. Its socio-economic indicators lag behind those of North Africa and all other developing regions. SSA oft-repeated cases of 'success' are very small countries (e.g., Botswana or Mauritius) with no major impact on the overall development of SSA. South Africa is so beset by apartheid-era-induced internal poverty that its economic attraction to the struggling populations of other SSA countries is fraught with dangers of xenophobia and violence against these migrant populations. The data in Table 1 tell the story of Afro-realism.

The data clearly show that SSA has lagged behind North Africa and all other developing regions on all the indicators since 1960, except Asia's early GDP. Pan-Africanists either are unaware of the reality conveyed by this data or simply ignore it. As a result, they rely on three erroneous premises. First, they invoke the geographical contiguity between North Africa and SSA to advocate a common union for the two sub-regions. Certainly the importance of territorial contiguity is not to be discounted in regional groupings. However, North Africa's contiguity with SSA is not enough of a reason for a continental union with SSA. Mali, Senegal or Niger may be geographically closer to Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia than they are to Kenya, Malawi or Congo-Kinshasa; but their GDP per capita (average US\$714) are closer to those of the latter three SSA countries than they are to the three North African countries (average US\$4,246). Contiguity does not seem to close the gap.

Second, Pan Africanists' call for an all-Africa union is based on the negative memory and experience of colonial and Western domination shared by North Africa and SSA. From this flows the 'Africa as a great power' assumption, according to which to be heard in the world and to fend off Western or other forms of domination the whole continent of Africa must be united to create continental strength (Nkrumah 1970; Kodjo 1985; Kamgang 1993; Maathai 2009: 105–6). In truth, fending off imperialist encroachment is not exclusively African. It is the goal of all developing regions, and should not determine why an all-Africa political union is needed. Assuming that all developing regions are equally successful in fending off imperialism via their regional groupings, there still remains the gap between SSA and the three other developing regions. The issue for Africa is not how continental strength will deter and fend off Western powers, but rather why SSA lags behind North Africa and its peer developing regions and how to solve this lag. Creating a union between SSA and North Africa on the basis of shared colonial experience does not answer this question, and is not the solution.

Third, because political and economic unions have been successful in other regions of the world, Pan Africanists assume that a similar union will solve the African predicament. As the US, USSR and EU are evidence that 'l'union fait la force' that solves their problems, so, too, an all-Africa union that includes North Africa and SSA is supposed to provide the strength that solves African problems. A glaring aspect of this imitation today is the pairing of the EU and AU. Not only is the 'African Union' an imitation of the 'European Union' in naming, the Constitutive Act and Charter of AU are modelled after the EU. So are the AU institutional organs. Lost in this imitation is the question of whether the problem to be addressed and solved by the continental institution in Africa is the same as that addressed by EU? And more importantly, is the problem to be solved the same in North Africa and SSA?

SSA Organic Politics versus North Africa

I have argued that in order to propose an institutional format that solves the SSA predicament, we need to pay attention to politics and its differential socio-economic effects in North Africa and SSA. What, then, caused SSA politics and its consequences to diverge from North Africa's? The definition of politics provided above suggests that politics is inseparable from the type of society in which political competition takes place. Resources, goods and values, which are the objects of the competition, are society-based. Politics is ultimately tributary to and structured by the physical, ecological, anthropological and historical backgrounds of society.

This specification helps explain why politics in non-Western or developing countries differs from politics in Western countries. And given that politics shapes institutions and the state itself, the difference in politics also explains why political institutions and the state in Western countries differ from those in non-Western/developing countries. This is so even when these institutions are formally and in appearance similar to those of Western countries. Even routine and regular elections do not eliminate these differences as most recent events reveal: coups in Paraguay, Mali, the Maldives and Guinea Bissau – all in 2012 – and in Niger (2010), Honduras (2009) and Fiji; the rejection of election results by the opposition in Mexico (2012) and in other countries; the military's suspension of the elected parliament in Egypt in 2012; and a bloody fight in the parliament in Bolivia (2012).

Regardless of their level of economic development or regime type (democratic or authoritarian), developing countries share a common property: over-politicisation. The latter defies liberal compromise in the political competition of non-Western countries and, for this reason, distinguishes their political outcomes from those of Western countries.

Their state, in contradistinction to the liberal democratic state in Western countries, is an overpoliticised state. Liberal compromise (not just any type of compromise) means that a basic compromise about the values, beliefs and goals of the political community has been reached, taking off the table irresolvable issues. As a result, political competition leads to institutional/procedural and policy compromise and relative stability. Over-politicisation is the opposite of liberal compromise. It is a pattern of political behaviours that reflects the absence or tenuity of a compromise in politics. Because irresolvable issues are not off the table, basic compromise is hard to reach, and politics does not lead to institutional/procedural and policy compromise. Hence, the general tendency toward institutional 'instability' and 'deviations' from the Western norm (Sangmpam 2007a: 30ff).

SSA shares over-politicisation with North Africa, Asia and South America, but to different degrees and with variations. Variations in their politics and its effects are due to variations in physical, historical and anthropological backgrounds of their respective societies. What are the backgrounds (or factors) that have shaped SSA? Methodologically, SSA's lagging socio-economic indicators suggest that they are *not* caused by a factor SSA shares with the other developing regions, such as the Cold War, imperialism, colonialism, the world capitalist system, neocolonialism, deterioration of the terms of trade, dependency on foreign aid, inadequacy of aid, price control/protectionism, or the generic 'bad governance'. These shared factors cannot explain why (only) SSA has diverged from other developing regions. It stands to reason that *exceptional* factors or backgrounds explain why SSA has diverged in socio-economic terms from its peers. 'Exceptional' means that these factors either exist in all developing regions, including North Africa, but display a very unique feature in SSA, or exist only in SSA and not at all in the other regions. Compared to North Africa (and the two other developing regions), SSA has exceptional physical, historical and anthropological backgrounds that shaped its society in a peculiar way, with severe political implications. There are four such exceptional factors: geo-ecology, tribal horizontality, slavery, and extremely fragile traditional economic organisations. Only a skeletal outline is provided here.

Geo-ecology

The geo-ecology of SSA demarcates itself exceptionally from that of other regions in a negative way. Partly because of its northern boundary imposed by the Sahara desert and its consequent almost total confinement within the tropics, SSA maintains a physical/geographical unity among its sub-regions. As a result, the overall tropical climate, soil, vegetation and ecosystems of SSA

are more closely shared by its sub-regions and countries (except the Cape in South Africa) than is the case in Asia and South America (Gallup *et al.* 2003: 11–12). Compared to the two regions, SSA is the most tropical. It has the fewest benefits associated with temperate climate, monsoon and with high lands. It has the most rainforest negatives, the most savanna negatives, the most desert impact, the fewest fertile river banks/valleys, the highest soil limitations for production, the fewest navigable rivers and the most landlocked countries (except for Central Asia). SSA holds the first rank in all tropical infectious diseases (river blindness, bilharzia, sleeping sickness, Guinea worm, yellow fever, yaw disease, malaria, HIV, ebola). In short, Asia and South America hold a geo-ecological advantage over SSA (Gourou 1966: 11–12; Crosby 1986: 139; Curtin 1988: 1; Nicholson 1996: 60–84; Ofoosu-Amaah 1997: 119–21; Chapman *et al.* 2001: 133–44; Maddox 2006: 1).

The overall climatic impact on North Africa differs sharply from the impact on SSA for two reasons. First, the effects of the desert are mitigated in North Africa by massive mountain ranges: the Rift Range (about 7,000 feet in elevation), the Atlas Mountains, the Anti-Atlas range, the Kabyle Range, and the Aures Range. As a result, mountain ranges in North Africa soften the noxious effects of the desert and shield North Africa's populations from its taxing impact. SSA lacks comparable mountain ranges and their benefits; its eastern highlands are no match for North Africa's. Due to its high elevations, North Africa, unlike SSA, is not home to the disease-causing tsetse fly that attacks cattle and livestock and is the main vector of sleeping sickness in humans. Although malaria has occurred in North Africa, this has been of the least fatal variety. North Africa does not have the SSA specific type of malaria-causing mosquitoes that carry and transmit the very lethal pathogen *Plasmodium falciparum*.

The second reason has to do with the real impact of the desert on populations and their livelihoods. It turns out that such an impact is far more negligible in North Africa than in SSA. Vast areas of the North African countries affected by the desert are empty. As a result, the majority of North African populations live in the cities in the northern end of the countries, along the Mediterranean coast. Or they are concentrated in the most fertile areas of the countries, such as the Nile Valley in Egypt and the Tell region, a hilly region in Algeria. This means that, despite the desert, the majority of the North African population lives in the Mediterranean climate, a transitional climate between dry tropical and temperate climate. It differs from the SSA predominant climate cluster, and makes North Africa's climate resemble that of Chile in South America and California in the US (Carpenter 1979: 79–108; Allen 1996: 307–23; Taylor 1996: 287–304; Krabacher *et al.*

2009: 104–54). Due to the Mediterranean climate, North Africa is much more productive than the Sahel and other SSA desert-affected countries (Meadows 1996: 169; Areola 1996: 145; Mones 1988: 224–45; Diamond 1999: 386). Unlike SSA, with its record-breaking landlocked territories, all North African countries have direct access to the sea, which has economic and commercial implications.

SSA's exceptional geo-ecology is, thus, overwhelmingly negative and more taxing on people than in North Africa and other regions. Although there is some direct cause-to-effect relation between SSA geo-ecology and its socio-economic outcomes, I do *not* draw such a direct causal relation. Instead, SSA's exceptional geo-ecology helps us *define intermediate exceptional factors* (variables) that it has generated and that more directly cause variations in SSA politics. Tribal horizontality, slavery, and fragile traditional economic organisations are three such intermediate exceptional factors.

Tribal Dispersal and Horizontality

SSA does not have the monopoly on 'tribes'. North Africa and other developing areas have 'tribes' as well. Yet 'tribes' in SSA and North Africa do not shape politics the same way because of their differential historical fates. What explains this difference is not colonialism, as often claimed, but the exceptional nature of SSA geo-ecology. Historians agree that the tribal distribution of Africa was more or less set between the seventh and eleventh centuries, although it continued up to the nineteenth century. The tribal distribution involved higher levels of dispersals and migrations of peoples than in most other regions because of the geo-ecological constraints they faced. In most cases, poor soil conditions, diseases, drought and famine set the limits to the population density. Quarrels ensued, and the result was new migrations and tribal splits. The most famous migration in SSA is the Bantu migration. In West Africa, in addition to Bantu migration, 'changes resulted from many small, essentially kin-based groups searching for more advantageous places to live... Soil, fertility, water supply, and distribution of disease, particularly sleeping sickness and river blindness, undoubtedly influenced settlement patterns as much then as they did later. The preferred locations developed as population centres, where many of the languages within the Atlantic, Mande, Gur, Kwa, Benue-Congo, and Adamawa-Ubangi branches of Niger-Congo originated' (Newman 1995: 107).

In Central, East and Southern Africa, migrations led to the emergence of small and dispersed tribal groups. The very slow movement of the Bantu from East Africa to Southern Africa (6 kilometres/year) and the limited fertility of soils explain the dispersal of populations in tribal settlements along the way.

The famous Shaka-Zulu-driven social and political revolution that engulfed the Nguni people from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century and that reordered the tribal composition and structure of the whole of Southern Africa up to Tanzania in East Africa had its origin in the ecological imbalance, drought and dwindling land resources for herding. Wars broke out and made new tribes or amalgamated others (Ehret 1988: 616–42; Lwanga-Lunyiigo and Vansina 1988: 140–62; Ngcongco 1989: 90–123; Vansina 1992: 46–73).

By contrast, the tribal dispersal in North Africa was circumscribed and much more limited by two very powerful factors. First, the continental dispersal of populations that followed the Sahara desiccation had reduced the territorial space over which North Africans could settle. The population concentration in cities along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts and in the fertile valley did not allow for a vast tribal dispersal of people. Second, because the Phoenician, Roman, Arab, Ottoman and Portuguese colonisations and invasions occurred centuries, and even thousands of years, ago, they created a settlement pattern in North Africa that deterred the type of tribal profusion that occurred in SSA. Given the type of colonial rule and its longer time span, these different groups came to coexist in a form of settlement colonies, in which the invaders reordered the indigenous Berber social life politically and religiously/culturally. The integrated social order that emerged out of this reordering became vertical, dominated hierarchically by the invaders, notably the Arabs. In a sense, the ‘Arab tribe’ ‘ate up’ all other indigenous Berber tribes – despite the latter’s revolts and resistance from time to time. This tribal verticality differs fundamentally from SSA tribal horizontality (I return to this concept below), where European colonialism never succeeded in reordering tribal verticality.

Thus, geo-ecology caused a higher dispersal, profusion and number of ‘tribes’ in SSA than in North Africa and the two other developing regions. There are about 4,600 ‘tribes’ in SSA. North Africa (minus Western Sahara and Mauritania), by contrast, counts about 96 ‘tribes’, most of which are Berber. SSA has about 48 times the number of ‘tribes’ of North Africa. It displays an ‘anomaly’ when compared to other regions. Indeed, SSA has had historically the lowest average population density of the three comparative regions (18 people per square kilometres versus 25 people per square kilometres in North Africa, 31 people per square kilometres in South America, and 70 people per square kilometres in Asia); yet it has the highest number of tribes. By comparison with North Africa, Asia and South America, the SSA ‘tribe/population’ ratio is higher. There are far more tribes per population cluster in SSA than is the case in North Africa and the

two other regions.² This tribal dispersal and profusion was exacerbated by slavery, thus further distancing SSA from North Africa (and contributing to SSA's tribal horizontality versus North Africa's tribal verticality).

Slavery

SSA did not hold a monopoly on slavery either. Slavery has existed in almost all continents. Yet, by any standard, slavery in SSA was exceptional because of its three exceptional features. First, slavery in SSA was the largest migration in history. It differed from all others by its highest rate of mortality and social dislocation. Second, its impact was not confined to SSA but extended to all the continents, except Oceania. In all of them there were sellers and buyers of SSA slaves. Third, its effects have persisted and endured in all the continents up to the twenty-first century as attested to by refugees (e.g., Somalia 'Bantu people' in the US), political debates, and the intractable socio-economic low status of and discriminatory practices against the descendants of the slaves in all continents. What, then, explains the exceptional nature of slavery in SSA?

The answer is SSA exceptional geo-ecology. Consider the five major reasons imputed to SSA itself to explain slavery: lack of private property, better epidemiological resistance to diseases by SSA slaves, the Ham Curse, states' weakness and inability to fend off slavers, and the active participation of SSA rulers in the slave trades. All five reasons resulted from SSA harsh geo-ecology. For space reasons, I make only bare skeletal points. In SSA, slaves were used by some individuals/rulers and by lineages. Why this reliance on slaves? Because of SSA formidable geo-ecology, a special premium was put on land. This forced the dispersed tribal groups to opt for communal land ownership. Indigenous slavery compensated, thus, for the lack of private property in land by serving as a source of private wealth for some individuals/rulers; it also served as a source of extra labour power for lineage members to alleviate the burden of the lineage and its members within such a forbidding environment. This situation imparted to SSA indigenous slavery its distinct character. Because some individuals and lineage members depended so strongly on this geo-ecology-induced wide and deep indigenous slavery system, SSA rulers easily participated in slave trades when goaded by Arabs and Europeans. As for the other causes, suffice it to mention that the epidemiological advantage of African slaves and the Ham Curse, which is linked to skin colour, are direct by-products of SSA geo-ecology that imparted to the people of SSA their phenotype and differential resistance to the parasites and disease load. The 'strong states' of South and Southeast Asia emerged in a fertile environment of intermediate tropical zone as opposed to the equatorial wet zone. In

SSA, the ever-wet and most tropical environment and the attendant tribal dispersal could allow only fragmentary and small states unable to fend off the encroaching slavers.³

Fragile Traditional Economic Organisations

Harsh geo-ecology had a negative impact on SSA's ability to build viable economic organisations. It is no mystery why food production did not take place as early as was the case in Asia and the Nile Valley in Egypt. The paucity of domesticable native plant species, the much smaller area suitable for indigenous production, and the often stingy climatic zones deterred such an occurrence (Diamond 1999: 376–401). The very features that made SSA geo-ecology exceptionally negative required survival and subsistence type economic activities at the expense of vibrant forms of production. Both tribal dispersal and slavery exacerbated and codified this fragile subsistence economy. Geo-ecology and tribal dispersal determined both the relations of production that came to rest on communal ownership of the land and the attendant technology that remained rudimentary. For its part, slavery reinforced the traditional economy through generalised insecurity that prevailed from roughly the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries and through its strengthening of the tribal dispersal. The latter had implications for state formation and centralisation that impacted negatively on long-term economic development (Nunn 2007).

Organic Nature of Politics and its Modifiers in SSA

Thus, geo-ecology generated three intermediate exceptional factors that modify politics in SSA: tribal dispersal, fragile traditional economies and slavery. Slavery's major impact on SSA was not, as is often maintained, the demographic loss or the fostering of autocratic rule. Although these did occur, their impact is exaggerated. Instead, slavery had three particularly severe internal consequences for SSA: it strengthened and exacerbated tribal dispersal; worsened the fragility of traditional economic organisations; and devalued SSA and its people. Tribal dispersal, fragile traditional economies, and slavery directly impact SSA politics through their three structurally exceptional effects. The first structural effect is *tribal horizontality*, which is exclusive to SSA and not observed in North Africa and the two other developing regions. Tribal horizontal relations differ from vertical ones. Tribal vertical relations are pyramidal, unequal, and dominated by one tribal ('ethnic') group politically, economically and socially. Tribal vertical relations characterise North Africa, Asia and South America, where some 'ethnic' groups dominate all other groups (Arabs in North Africa and the Middle East, Europeans or Mestizos in South

America, Han Chinese in China, Indo-Aryans in India). By contrast, tribal horizontal relations characterise SSA. Tribal horizontality rests on assumed and built-in equality among tribal groups. The expectation is that no single group dominates the others by controlling political power exclusively; power is potentially accessible to all tribal groups. And this is so even in countries such as Rwanda, where the Tutsi are temporarily dominant. The reality is that the Tutsi have not controlled power all the time or exclusively. The Hutu have also controlled power and are likely to do so again in the future. That tribal horizontality characterises SSA exclusively is the result of the tribal dispersal visited upon SSA by its exceptional geo-ecology and slavery.

The higher tribal dispersal and profusion caused by SSA geo-ecology was reinforced by slavery in all the sub-regions of SSA through consolidation and splitting. Tribal consolidation took place in those instances, where slave trades and capture dictated wars of territorial expansionism by SSA rulers and slave traders. Tribes were made bigger and new 'sub-tribes' made appendages of the expansionist tribes. The Ashanti and Bemba super-tribal groups and their relations with neighbour tribes are examples. It also occurred when some tribes coalesced to fight off enslaving forces. The Mossi are an example. Territorial splitting, on the other hand, was the main outcome of the flights of hounded populations and their resettlements in protective places. This often led to the formation of new tribes. Tribal dispersal reinforced tribal horizontality in SSA politics.

The second structural effect is *a more extreme form of socio-economic deprivation* that dominates political competition more in SSA than in North Africa and the two other regions. It is an effect of fragile traditional economies, themselves structurally conditioned by the combination of geo-ecology, slavery and tribal dispersal.

The third structural effect impacting directly on politics is *a higher level of insecurity and inferiority complex* that characterises SSA political leadership than is the case in North Africa and the other regions. It derives from the devaluation of SSA and its people by slavery in two major ways. The first way is the devaluation by outsiders, that is, people from all the other regions of the world. The reasons for this are twofold. The slave ideology contained in itself the venom of the devaluation of the people in SSA. In addition, the presence of SSA slaves in Europe, the Americas, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia had established the 'objective basis' for the denigration of their land and culture of origin as SSA. SSA slaves automatically invoke and remind one of the 'low value' of their ancestral home and people. This is made easier by the low socio-economic standing of most descendants of slaves and the consequent social behaviours they display (e.g., crime). In

many South American countries, the descendants of slaves themselves, who are forced to denounce and dissociate themselves from SSA because of the social opprobrium they face, facilitate the devaluation.

The other slavery-derived type of devaluation is self-devaluation by the people of SSA themselves. This behaviour has deep roots in slavery and is tied up with the tale of the *white revenants*. The wealth obtained from the slave trade by Arab and European slave traders so impressed the Africans that they explained it through the social death of slaves: when slaves were taken to the Americas and the Arab world, they died. And as spirits, they reappeared as *white revenants* with massive wealth. This tale or myth derived from the reality of slavery of centuries ago has become 'part of the culture'. The wealth and magic of the 'white man' are held in higher esteem, and one can accede to it only through sorcery-sanctioned death of a human being. Consider here the ritual killings of Albinos in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Congo for wealth making. Consider also the routine invocation of the link between sorcery and wealth and fortune in SSA music and daily scenes. Slavery did not create sorcery, but it fortified it. The death of slaves and of the sorcerer's victim is the symbolic devaluation of Africans by Africans themselves in the face of the 'white man's' wealth and prestige. Because myths become routine, they acquire structural strength by becoming 'reality'. Both the intelligentsia and the populace in SSA recognise the daily empirical manifestations of this situation. A Ghanaian returnee best summed it up: 'Nothing pleases a Ghanaian worker more than to have a white boss. The more abusive the boss the better, and the more endearing the staff are to them.' He contrasted this attitude to the aversion of the same Ghanaian workers and populace to value their fellow Ghanaian bosses (Awuah 2006: 2). Slavery-derived devaluation of SSA by both outsiders and the people of SSA themselves creates a complex of superiority for the outsiders and of inferiority for the people of SSA. It adds an extra layer on top of the colonial devaluation SSA shares with all colonised non-European peoples. It has implications for politics.

Thus, tribal dispersal, slavery, and fragile traditional economies modify politics and directly impact it through their three structural effects. A characteristic feature of the three is their *organic and systemic nature* as highlighted in four specific areas. First, they all relate to and bear the imprint of SSA's exceptional geo-ecology. Second, the three determine and reinforce each other: tribal dispersal and fragile traditional economies prevented the emergence of 'strong' states to fend off slavery; slavery, in turn, exacerbated tribal dispersal and the fragility of traditional economies; tribal dispersal codified and put its imprint on traditional economies (e.g., collective land ownership and subsistence), which, in turn, reinforce tribal dispersal by

provoking the overuse and degradation of the land and soils and, hence, the migrations of the populations to new settlements. Third, the three factors are found in all SSA sub-regions. Although the three factors and the underlying geo-ecology display variations in individual countries, they impact directly or indirectly on all SSA countries alike. Fourth, their three structural effects are found in all SSA countries and directly affect politics in roughly the same way. In this sense, they are to their variations in individual SSA countries what the trunk of a tree is to the branches. Attempts to save one or several dying branches of an infected tree remain ineffective unless one treats the infected trunk of the tree.

As structural effects, tribal horizontality, the more extreme form of socio-economic deprivation, and the more acute form of inferiority complex make SSA politics exceptional when compared to politics in the other developing regions. This process is more complex than can be analysed here. Suffice it to say that because of the three factors, politics, which is by definition conflict-ridden, acquires in SSA *a more Hobbesian character* than in the other developing regions. Political compromise, generally difficult to reach in developing regions, is made even more so in SSA. Because politics makes and shapes the state, exceptional politics in SSA makes its state exceptional as well. Herein lies the difference between the SSA variant of the over-politicised state and that of North Africa and the two other regions. This explains why in SSA the institutions of the state have been more predatory and viciously appropriated by some groups or individuals, often and almost always tied up with tribal claims and interests; e.g. why extreme forms of political buffoonery verging on sadism have occurred there (e.g., Idi Amin, Bokasa, Doe, Abacha); why SSA has brewed more civil wars than any other developing region; why it has a higher political strife index and lower peace index than the other developing regions; why in the 'consolidated democracy era', SSA has witnessed the larger number of military coups (e.g., in Mauritania, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Niger, Mali); and why there are more so-called 'failed states' in SSA than in the other developing regions.

Yet we know that the state is the institutional format through which public policies are taken to tackle the problems of security, welfare and the conflicting demands on scarce resources. In other words, it is the state that is the catalyst for socio-economic development. The viciously Hobbesian character of politics in SSA and its variant of the over-politicised state prevent the state from acting as such. Beyond the causes of 'Third World underdevelopment' SSA shares with the other regions, it is the cumulative result of this exceptional political competition that explains the gap in socio-economic outcomes between SSA and North Africa (and other developing regions) as shown in Table 1.

Unifederation as the Organic Institutional Solution

The consequences of politics in SSA are, thus, different. The causes of the SSA lag are *organically embedded in the SSA fabric*. They systemically affect all SSA sub-regions and countries, albeit with local variations. The design of the institutional format apt to solve SSA predicament needs to reflect and respond to these organic differential causes and consequences of politics. In light of this, the natural impulse to let each SSA country fend for itself and solve its own development problems loses its rationale. This includes the impulse to rely on 'ethnicity' as the basis for political reorganisation in each country. Ethiopia, the first SSA country to clearly subscribe to the strategy of reorganising the polity on the basis of 'ethnicity', has not moved away from the collective fate of other SSA countries. Solutions to individual SSA countries may temporarily impact local variations and alleviate some aspects of the predicament. But they will not solve the problem for the organic SSA. The shared causes and 'untreated' countries, like the infected trunk of a tree and its untreated branches, will re-infect the 'treated' ones. For the manifestations and causes of the SSA predicament resemble the Greek mythological hydra, the gigantic monster with nine heads, all of which were anchored by a central immortal head. As one head was cut off, two grew in its place. Only by burning out the roots and severing the immortal central head from the body did Heracles destroy the monster. Whatever country-based solution is proposed to SSA socio-economic ills will not be able to sever the immortal central head of the hydra. It will not treat the infected trunk of the tree. For example, the socio-economic situation of Congo-Kinshasa was relatively better than that of Rwanda before the 1990s. So was that of Côte d'Ivoire compared to its neighbours. Today both Congo and Côte d'Ivoire are 'basket cases' because failure to solve Rwanda's and Côte d'Ivoire's neighbours' problems has re-infected Congo and Côte d'Ivoire via tribal political strife. The need to respond to the organic socio-economic outcomes in SSA and their causes requires that the response be organic as well. The common pitfall of Pan Africanists is to be oblivious to the specifically organic nature of the SSA predicament. The latter requires the administrative and political separation of SSA from North Africa (hence the repudiation of the AU) and the urgent need to organically tackle the predicament for SSA as a separate whole.

What, then, is the institutional answer for SSA? The concept of organic SSA militates against country-based solutions and regional economic organisations that emulate those proposed in other developing (and developed) regions. It also militates against identity-seeking Pan Africanism that links SSA to its dispersed diaspora. Although there remains a historical and 'racial' bond

between SSA and its slavery-created diaspora in the world, SSA issues are no more the diaspora's than they are North Africa's. The problems faced by SSA differ from those experienced by its diaspora. Rather, the concept requires that the solution for SSA *differs radically* from that proposed for other regions. To devise such an organic institutional solution, one needs to answer the question of how to tackle the organic causes of SSA socio-economic lag.

The answer is *the state*, the institutional format through which public policies are devised to tackle the problems of socio-economic development. Although the state is made and shaped by politics, the state and its institutions structure politics in return. SSA rests on a paradox. The causes of exceptional politics and of the SSA variant of the over-politicised state are organically regional and applicable to SSA as a whole; yet the (over-politicised) states themselves are national and 'sovereign'. The challenge is to make the state as regionally organic as the causes of exceptional politics so as to allow it (the state) to structure and shape politics positively in return for SSA as a whole. Such a revolutionary transformation of the state, which makes it the centre of decisions for the whole of SSA, requires that the national state lose its sovereignty.

In contrast to the EU model copied by AU and the generally loose and functional integrative model that guides most regional integrations, SSA should rely on a *tight integrative model* that reflects its organic exceptionalism. A tight integrative model assumes unique sovereignty of the integrative state as opposed to multiple sovereignties of the constitutive states. It rests on rearranging the SSA political space that dismantles the highly instrumentalist national state to allow its transformation into a SSA organic state.

The rearrangement involves a new institutional format. Let me resort to a neologism to refer to this institutional format as a *Unifederation*. By Unifederation I mean a reconfigured and unified political and territorial body whose local and sub-regional entities make no claim to complete sovereignty as in the AU and other regional groupings in the world. Neither do they claim complete but progressively delegated sovereignty as in the EU. Nor is their claim about 'residual sovereignty', which is the source of interpretative frictions between the federal government and the states in the US (Tribe 2000). Rather, local and sub-regional entities are decentralised under the complete and unified sovereignty of a newly constituted SSA multi-territorial state. Unlike other regional groupings, in which institutional decisions are either not binding or loosely and selectively binding, the new institutions attached to the SSA organic state impose sovereign and constraining obligations on all members. It also means that territorial borders separating the previously sovereign countries lose their meaning as a new geo-spatial space is created.

The idea of decentralisation implies autonomy for the decentralised entities. In this sense, the Unifederation has much in common with federalism. Yet this does not make the SSA situation less exceptional. Federalism, like unitarism and confederalism, is a simple institutional means to manage power relations within a state. It can be and has been adopted by small and big countries alike without overshadowing the *historical reasons* that led to federalism. The fact that SSA adopts a form of federalism does not mean that its reasons for doing so are similar to those of Canada or the US. Its historical uniqueness is that, institutionally, it maintains the decentralisation and practical autonomy of its constitutive entities while deriving its unique sovereignty *from the organic nature of the causes* of the SSA predicament. The Unifederation reflects SSA exceptionalism.

Conclusion: Payoffs and Feasibility

An SSA-centred Unifederation with its unique sovereignty would help to better overcome the organic causes of SSA exceptional politics and the attendant lagging socio-economic outcomes than do the current individual states. It can do so because it is the centre of decisions for the whole SSA, targeting roughly the same problems in all SSA sub-regions. It is the means through which a unified and purposeful policy can tackle, beyond national variations, the organic nature of the factors that modify politics negatively in SSA. There are four specific payoffs.

First, the Unifederation sets up conditions for democratisation through territorial reorganisation. By rearranging the geopolitical and economic space at the SSA level, the unifederal organic state frees the competing groups from their dependence on the national instrumentalist state. The freeing leads to broader and multi-territorial political coalitions within the unifederal larger space. Previously competing groups at the national state level, including tribal groups easily mobilised by the prospect of equality offered by tribal horizontality, have now to contend with many other groups of similar strength or coalitions of many groups at the unifederal level from all the sub-regions of SSA. This creates a perfect or semi-perfect equilibrium of political forces. The result is a search for compromise. Compromise begets democracy. Unifederal broader political coalitions minimise the fear of domination and injustice generally felt by minority groups and regions. They also blunt any claim of 'greatness' harboured by some tribal groups or regions.

As a second payoff, the unifederal organic state provides the political framework and means to tackle SSA's socio-economic lag. Because the fragility of traditional economic organisations is for a major part due to SSA harsh geo-ecology, it is almost impossible for individual countries to solve

the latter's intractable socio-economic consequences. The unifederal organic state remedies this situation by being the centre of decisions for the whole of SSA; it provides resources and coordination in the transformation of traditional economies. It allows different sub-regions of SSA to compensate for their specific geo-ecological disadvantages by benefiting from the geo-ecological advantages of the other sub-regions. Because of its rearranged socio-economic space, it reduces tribal dispersal and horizontality and, thus, transforms the traditional forms of economic organisations. Only within such a rearranged space can the much-talked about and much-needed land reform, improvement in rural agricultural production and upgrading of human resources and skills succeed in SSA. Successful integrated industrialisation is possible only with these improvements.

Most studies on globalisation cite SSA as the region the least integrated into the current global economy. Because it is a better institutional solution, the Unifederation accommodates globalisation better than does the AU or individual countries. It uses its unique sovereignty to dictate the direction and goal of SSA integrated involvement in world markets as opposed to being dictated serially by global actors. Moreover, the Unifederation allows for a more vibrant and open economic and political system, a bigger and organically integrated geographical space, and a larger and more skilled population. These conditions favour globalisation's information technology, foreign investments, international travel, trade, financial markets and the movement of capital in SSA.

Third, the Unifederation addresses the issue of SSA's inferiority complex. Much of the devaluation of the African self results from SSA's extreme form of economic deprivation. The expected socio-economic payoffs of the unifederal organic state have the added benefit of curing the people of SSA of their complex of inferiority vis-à-vis economically better-endowed outsiders. Beyond this, the Unifederation deters and eliminates the policy consequences of the acute insecurity and inferiority complex felt by the political leadership. Indeed, Unifederal broader political coalitions and the attendant equilibrium of political forces deprive the political leadership of its three main allies in enacting inferiority complex-driven policies: the leader's own arbitrariness, his fellow tribesmen and unenlightened expatriates. Unifederal coalitions constrain the leader's freedom of arbitrary actions; render insignificant his tribe's or region's support in the face of other coalesced tribes and regions; and take away the usually exorbitant power and influence expatriates have over political leaders.

Fourth, because it rearranges the SSA space, democratises it, and stands as the centre of sovereign decisions, the Unifederation helps eliminate

the conditions that breed strife, civil wars, militarism and undemocratic behaviours. It fosters peace. Hence disappears the need for costly military assistance or interventions by the US and other SSA 'partners'. The socio-economic outcomes of the Unifederation enhance security and deter the conditions that have emboldened Islamists and Al Qaeda in SSA. Moreover, they reduce the need for US and other foreign powers' development assistance (as was the case with US assistance to Europe, Japan and South Korea). The Unifederation helps, thus, reach the goal of Pan Africanists – deterring foreign encroachments – without resorting to the ill-conceived continental union with North Africa.

The 'unification of Africa', as proposed by Pan Africanists, has often been derided as a 'pipe dream' by critics. The scepticism is likely to be strengthened now that the EU, the model for the AU, is facing an existential crisis. AU aforementioned growing pains are likely to serve as powerful re-enforcers for the sceptics. In fact, the election of the South African Dlamini-Zuma as the AU commissioner strengthened the position of the AU wing opposed to a rush to political union. The scepticism is justified. An AU-driven 'unification of Africa' is indeed a pipe dream. Not so much because it is difficult to implement as because it *will not solve* SSA lagging socio-economic outcomes. By contrast, the Unifederation is not a pipe dream because it squarely addresses SSA's lagging outcomes and their organic causes. It has the chances of fundamentally altering SSA's status as the 'poorest region' of the world. Reliance on individual SSA countries' ability to make themselves 'the next Asia' and the excessive faith of Sinophiles in China's ability to develop SSA are the real pipe dreams. China or India will not eliminate the organic causes of SSA's socio-economic lag. Unless people in SSA have resigned to their fate and have accepted at the outset that they will always occupy the last rank, compared to all other developing regions, only SSA itself can do this. And the Unifederation is the way. Unlike the AU, the Unifederation passes the only feasibility test that matters: how the institution addresses the organic causes of SSA politics and socio-economic lag.

Yet one has to still deal with the question of how to actually implement the project. Proposing today that the AU be dismantled would seem to be pure folly in the face of the efforts deployed by Pan Africanists for the last 50 years. Actually, it is not. The AU has performed one major positive deed that facilitates its own demise in favour of the Unifederation. And this is the establishment of constitutional norms in its Constitutive Act that join and are consistent with the two most powerful movements of the post-1991 period: globalisation and democratisation. Indeed, under the aegis of the AU, all SSA countries have been sensitised to today's international democratic norms,

even when the AU itself does not always follow them in some disputed cases. Sensitisation to the democratic norms serves, thus, as the necessary transitional period before the implementation of the Unifederation. It has provided the masses in SSA with enough incentives and means to redirect their efforts democratically toward implementing the Unifederation.

Relying on the democratic gains of the last 20 years, the implementation should feature two concomitant strategies. First, at the national level, where the popular masses fight for democracy. Each SSA country organising elections or other non-electoral actions should feature political parties and mass organisations that explain to the general populations why SSA lags socio-economically behind its previously equal fellow 'Third World' regions; why the solutions proposed since independence by their nation states and leaders have not worked; and why the AU, the organisation aimed at solving the problem at the continental level, is ineffective when compared to the SSA-based Unifederation. Second, at the AU elite level, where the AU edifice was built. The frustrated elite and 'intellectuals', who have worked within the AU bureaucracy only to decry its ineffectiveness, should join the masses in the fight for the dismantling of the AU and its transformation into an SSA Unifederation. Their expert advice and clear understanding of the causes of their frustration and of the unavoidable failure of the AU should strengthen the democratic process of liquidating the AU in favour of the Unifederation. We, thus, have both a bottom-up and a top-down strategy of implementing the Unifederation project.

The implementation process benefits greatly from globalisation's lower communication costs and breakdown of trade and cultural barriers among countries. By challenging state sovereignty, globalisation facilitates the process of territorial and sovereignty rearrangement dear to the Unifederation. Globalisation allows people in SSA to challenge the 'tyranny of place' associated with the current SSA state. As one of the legacies of the Westphalia Treaty of 1648, state sovereignty is not as sacrosanct as is believed. USSR, Czechoslovakia, and East and West Germany are examples of altered sovereignty in two opposite directions.

As high as the hurdles faced by this process seem, they are by far the more salutary for SSA than the 'growing pains' of the AU, which will never eliminate the gap between SSA and other developing regions. The choice is between the status quo and its attendant perpetual lowest ranking for SSA, on the one hand, and the implementation of a salutary intellectual alternative for a positive transformation, on the other. The difference between these two options can be measured. Ask the best statisticians in the world to gather all the available data. Let them calculate and compare

the human, economic, financial, political and psychological costs of maintaining the status quo represented by the AU and SSA today and of implementing the alternative in the form of a Unifederation. There is no doubt that the cost of the status quo for SSA is exponentially higher than the cost of implementing the alternative.

Notes

1. Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, the author of the compromise, recognised that political union was the only solution for the predicament.
2. Data were computed from Yakan (1999), perhaps the only relatively exhaustive and encyclopedic description of tribal groups in all African countries. Population density was calculated by using figures from Hammond (1990: 48); World Bank (1989: 221); Krabacher *et al.* (2009: 104–53); Madison (2001: 175).
3. There is a vast literature on slavery. This paper is informed by Curtin (1968); Miers and Kopytoff (1977); Rodney (1982); Lovejoy (1986; 2000); Meillassoux (1991); Thornton (1992); Inikory (1992); Manning (1996); Fage (2002).

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