

CONTEMPORARY AFRICA'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

issues, paradox
and solutions

AGYEMANG ATTAH-POKU

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To Chiraa-Sunyani Citizens (One People), All Africans (One People) and the Citizens of the World (One People)

PREFACE

This manuscript explores the various factors that have influenced the growth and development process of contemporary Africa. After discussing and weighing the schools of thought that have attempted to explain Africa's less growth and less development in the midst of abundant resources paradox, this volume comes up with comprehensive and detailed suggestions and recommendations to address this painful paradox. And in exploring the internalist, externalist and centerist scholarly interpretations of this paradox, the major structural, social, political, historical and economic factors—advantageous and disadvantageous ones—that have influenced, influences and would continue to impact on the growth and development processes in Africa, are addressed.

All the aforesaid three major schools of thought unquestionably accept that the African continent is unbelievably rich in mineral deposits, including gold, diamond, uranium, copper, cobalt, bauxite, platinum, coltan, chrome, oil, iron ore, coal, manganese, zinc, silver and more—thus all the important, vital, and strategic minerals that are needed for modern day scientific and technological advancement-- are present in huge quantities under the ground in Africa. They also agree that Africa is potentially rich in other alternative natural energy resources like solar power, hydroelectricity and biofuel. Some of these resources are tapped whilst some are in the process of being harnessed. Where the models differ markedly is their respective explanations of this paradox.

The internalists, also referred to as conservatives, blame local or indigenous disarticulations, conflicts, deficiencies and problems for the paradox. On the other hand, the externalists, also known as the Afrocentric Marxists, accuse past and present unfavorable and exploitative international dealings with Africa for the paradox. Both largely use the uni-dimensional or one- way approach. A third model, the centrists, also called Liberals, which is a toned down paradigm that reconciles both extremes, considers the activities of both external and internal factors simultaneously to explain the paradox. This is a more balanced, more open and more multi-dimensional interpretation.

This manuscript consistently says that the average or common Africans, that form the overwhelming majority of the African population, are the least, if at all, to be blamed for the paradox; but the African leadership and their external cronies are to be fully blamed. Contemporary African Political elite are slammed

more. It will be absolutely worthwhile reminding ourselves that great leadership has been an irreplaceable pre-requisite for all successful societies of the world. This has been a universal truth. The ordinary Africans have no say under their corrupt, greedy, visionless, insensitive, unpatriotic, incompetent and brutal leaders who monopolize all weapons of coercion.

This volume seeks solution to the African growth and development puzzle in corrupt-free and good governance as well as concrete, provable, solid and genuine unity. A favorable international environment and interaction will depend on how serious, courageous, determined, visionary and efficient our political leaders will be. Appropriate and pertinent Education, Science, Research and Manufacturing Industrialization, among other specific recommendations, are also highlighted in this scholarly work

Simply put, this book on Africa has courageously, vividly and comprehensively detailed the discussion of less growth and less development in midst of huge amounts of resources in Africa. It used both qualitative and quantitative analysis to boldly and realistically come up and come out with well thought out suggestions and recommendations that address this contemporary African paradox very effectively. This volume's simultaneous consideration of the various factors that impinge upon this disturbing African illogicality, the objective, comprehensive and critical scrutiny of the pertinent issues on this subject, and the open and pragmatic approach to making suggestions and recommendations to resolve this paradox make this book so inevitably significant in helping growth and development in Africa. This thought provoking, analytical and highly problem-solving analysis compares situations and look out for patterns and outliers in different areas in Africa. Prolific examples and up-to-date evidence on various aspects of this paradox are provided to reinforce authenticity, verifiability and substance. It is hoped that more scholarly works on this absolutely necessary African growth and development issue will be provoked, and more pressure will be urged for the application of the measures, recommendations and suggestions that will emerge from such scholarly works. Africa needs not be repeatedly wallowing in poverty.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview of the Issues and Paradox

Opening the discussion on Africa's growth and development in contemporary time with a brief descriptive poem on Africa, the second largest in terms of territorial size out of the seven continents of the world, will set a wonderful tone. People hear of Africa, they hear of Africans, they hear of Black people, but many people do not really know what Africa truly is. Africa, the ancestral homeland of all humans, is pushed to the back seat in all aspects of human endeavor. And the following poem on Africa in my fourth book (2000) will throw more light on what Africa is.

Tell Me about Africa

Where in Africa?

About what in Africa?

Africa, a great landmass; an incredibly large territory.

A continent!

The second largest; after Asia in territorial size.

With huge oceans, gigantic seas, remarkable lakes,

big, small, long and short rivers

estuaries, deltas, islands and peninsulas,

meanders, cliffs, waterfalls and rapids,

moles, hills, mountains, plateau and valleys.

An ancient topography ...

Africa is an enormous entity!

Of forests, deserts and grassland,
trees, vines, fruits, vegetables and tubers,
birds, animals and reptiles.

Africa is a huge landmass of :
minerals, minerals and minerals.

A gigantic landmass: with more than four dozen countries!
Countries, regions and districts, cities, towns and villages, big and small houses;
shops and markets, schools, cultural centers, museums, hospitals,
clinics, health centers, factories, farms and mines,
recreational centers, beaches and all.

Africa—land of plenty sunshine,
Nice and beautiful people: culture and cultures.

But where in Africa?
Too much to say.
Too much in existence
And too much in store.

Where in Africa?
And about what in Africa?
Aim at straight shots! Be specific! Be precise!
Africa is a one huge, vast, gigantic landmass ... a continent

A snoring giant.
Will soon be awake again (Attah-Poku, 2000: 45-46).

After defining the African continent as one huge and gigantic landmass and waters, with all resources and friendly people, I will throw in another poem on Africa from my book poems (1998) to summon adequate levels of attention on Africa.

I'm Mother Africa

I'm the sister of Mother Earth
And the brother of the magnificent Planet
... Third in command

Don't forget me; don't overlook me

I'm mother Africa.

I'm the cradle of humankind
The very source of life and inspiration
Don't treat me with disrespect
I don't deserve it

I'm Mother Africa
I'm the beginning and the start of life

Alfa and Omega's first creation
I was created with love and compassion

With understanding and dignity
With peace, justice ...

And all that is good.

Mutual coexistence is my major belief
Don't discredit me
Give me my due recognition
Let's jazz on together (*Attah-Poku, 1998:14*).

Before I continue with the exploration of the contemporary African growth and development situation, I want to make my position crystal plain to readers; that I am a loyal messenger of truthful scholarship. And that I will be soldiering on armed with only one weapon: the TRUTH. The truth sometimes hurts, and the truth sometimes steps on toes. But in good faith, I urge readers and listeners not to massacre the messenger. I am only a messenger sent by the truth to make an absolutely necessary errand.

The Question

It is baffling and mind-boggling to both Africans and the international community that Africa, so rich in mineral deposits, having unquestionable abundance of tapped and potential solar energy, possessing large quantities of hydroelectric power (and more electricity could be harnessed from the numerous rivers that cascade on the ancient African plateau general landform), containing vast land with the natural vegetation, soil and climatic conditions that are suitable for the production of crops used for bio-fuel, and exposed and hidden talents waiting to be fully utilized, is consistently and repeatedly lagging behind other societies in terms of aggregate growth and development—a phenomenon that is aptly referred to as the paradox of less growth and less development in the midst of abundant resources. And what makes the whole man-made problematic African situation even worse is that, there is no discernible light in the tunnel as yet, because the culprits are not willing to change. Most of the important factors and resources that are needed for scientific, technological and industrial advancement in the modern world are present in huge quantities, but Africa is still not doing well in terms of aggregate growth and development. This presents a mon-

strous inconsistency that needs to be addressed. And to achieve effective results, all stakeholders need to be simultaneously summoned and addressed.

Africa sits on enormous deposits of gold, diamonds, oil, copper, cassiterite, iron-ore, coltan, uranium, platinum, cobalt, nickel, chrome, zinc, silver, coal, bauxite, manganese and more. Exploitation of some of these minerals are on going, but still huge quantities are yet to be prospected, explored and mined. Also, Africa is situated on the equator, or latitude 0^0 . This imaginary line almost bisects Africa into two equal halves from the northernmost and the southernmost parts, so most places in Africa see the sun throughout the year. Hot, warm and sunny climate is characteristic with most areas in Africa. Even the few places that are mild have enough sunshine for excellent solar energy projects. All that Africa needs are more and more solar panels to capture and utilize sun into energy. If contemporary African political leadership do not gang up with foreign exploiters to dissipate and loot scarce resources, Africa can save and accumulate capital for such important solar projects. Also as hinted earlier, the ancient African plateau's solid rock topography makes it suitable for many of the rivers and waterfalls to be tapped for hydroelectricity. Apart from famous hydroelectric dams like the Sennar and the Aswan High on the River Nile (in Egypt and Sudan respectively), the Akosombo on the River Volta of Ghana, the Kainji on River Niger in Nigeria, and others, most African rivers can be used to produce hydroelectricity; here too it is the African leaders proper use of scarce capital and not stealing Africa's foreign exchange, that will provide funds for vital hydroelectric schemes. Another important blessing is that of African soil, having the natural nutrients and ingredients that suits the cultivation of famous crops needed for alcoholic oil. Crops like sugarcane, maize, sorghum, sunflower and others that are fermented, decomposed and their alcoholic oil extracted and worked at to produce organic fuels like ethanol, grow luxuriantly in Africa. Africa has skilled and unskilled people to manage and work these natural assets. Some of these people are in Africa underemployed and others unemployed. Some are living abroad. But with all these resources in Africa, the complex issue of the growth and development paradox persists in Africa. This situation does not make logical sense or meaning. And so this puzzle must be solved.

The Answer

Indeed scholars and non-scholars are equally puzzled as they look for answers. The findings from this study answer the burning questions of the aforesaid paradox, enlighten Africans, the international community and students on these questions; and provide an important resource material for further studies on the vital issue of growth and development in Africa. Before one can find the answer or answers for any problem, one has to find the real causes of the problem. The discussion of the three major explanatory paradigms of the Africa growth and development paradox in chapter two will look for answers to this disturbing

African puzzle. This volume comes up with policy recommendations and suggestions that could be adopted, adapted and applied to address this anomaly. After dilating on the three main schools of thought namely: the Conservatives and the Afro-Centered Marxists at the opposite ends of the spectrum and the Liberals at the center, the study concludes, that even though Africa has been enslaved, colonized, bullied, brutalized, and exploited by non-Africans for many years, many wicked, selfish, greedy, corrupt, inefficient, timid and visionless contemporary African leadership (both the political elite and the business elite, particularly the former), is also to be adequately blamed for the less progress in the face of numerous natural resources paradox. Thus this volume gives more credence to the more balanced position of the Liberal's model; although it worries much by the systematic plunders of African resources and African humanity over so many years by external forces.¹

The Conservative's or the Orthodox's argument seems narrow by putting all blame on internal African factors when explaining the paradox. In the same line of analysis the Afro-Centric Marxist's or the Dependency theorist's debate looks narrow by putting all blame on external non-African factors when explaining the paradox. The Liberal or the Moderate's position, which gives much weight to both external and internal factors simultaneously, looks more open and more inclusive. When a liberal's position tilts toward the conservative's interpretation, we say right-of-center school of thought. But when a liberal's position is skewed toward the Afro-Centric Marxist's interpretation, we say Left-of-Center school of thought. But this book will dwell more on the three main schools of thought.

Based on my conviction of not allowing any of the negative forces that militate against the growth and development process of Africa to go scot free, this volume ceaselessly assails both external and internal centrifugal forces that have done so much damage to Africa and Africans. In all, the contemporary African political elite receive more of the lashes, because at this contemporary time, the ball is largely in our court. With great and excellent African political leadership, most of the disruptive and interruptive forces could be turned around. With good governance, much, if not all, of the social, economic, political and insecurity problems in Africa will be taken care of. When good political leadership makes good decisions, prioritizes resource allocation optimally, ensures rule of the law, fairly distributes opportunities and public infrastructural assets, serves the people with decency, respect and justice, shows much seriousness, efficiency and effectiveness, leads with accountability, probity and transparency, displays real patriotism and exhibits diligence, consistency and firmness, portrays much vision, courage, wisdom and persistence, the people will unite behind them to crush self-centered and exploitative foreign individuals, foreign governments, foreign organizations and foreign businesses. With good governance, meaningfully no-nonsense leadership and genuine African efforts toward unity, there will be no room for uncontrollable internal political and ethnic conflicts. Political stability, political security, political sanity and political dignity will facilitate

economic security and economic progress, and a general benevolent cycle of prosperity will be set in motion. However, much of the responsibility resides with the contemporary African leadership caliber and leadership activities. Ultimately, they control the resources of Africa and so they control our destiny. Judicious and brilliant allocation of resources is imperative in Africa.

This book, for example, asks for more and more education—technical, vocational, professional, scientific, liberal and civic knowledge acquisition. It is also asking for more and more manufacturing industrialization, as well as more and more effective health care, balanced food, potable water, sanitation, adequate housing and sufficient protection for the African people. This might sound over ambitious, but it is not, because Africa has what it takes. Resources! Resources! Resources! But the people have very little or no power over the African resources. So the contemporary African leadership is urged to roll up their sleeves and show more seriousness, more commitment, more dedication, more vision and more courage than they are doing now and truly lead. They must display more genuine leadership to dismantle the African less growth and less development in the midst of abundant resources paradox. It is important to stress that many Africans do not have the needed capital to embark on lucrative projects. And if African leaders continue participating in and condoning with robbing, looting, hijacking and wasting the tax payers' money and the foreign revenues from the sale of African resources, then there cannot be any growth and development in Africa. Hence the conclusion, that bad African leadership and its consequent bad governance play a gigantic role in causing the African growth and development paradox.

This study, after exploring all the facts of the paradox is plainly asking contemporary African political elite not to continue betraying the African continent, the African, and the dignified global citizens. They cannot cheat and fool us forever. Patience will run out. The following poem will serve as a good warning:

Waiting For True Leadership

As calm as the lamb
As peaceful as the olive tree
The average African waits
Ever prepared for the true leader
But patience isn't limitless (Attah – Poku, 1998:46).

Method and Organization of Chapters

Like Mark Anthony said to the Romans during his oration at Caesar's funeral, I say, "friends", Africans and citizens of the world "lend me your ears", lend me your minds and lend me your hearts. I have engaged myself to speak the truth—

nothing but the truth—about the unbearably painful African experience of less and no progress in the midst of abundant resources in Africa: an experience that is commonly known as the African growth and development paradox. Very much illogical! Puzzling indeed! Many Africans, a vast of majority, are in real pains.²

In the same passionate tone with which Mark Anthony grieved, I say, “you are not wood, you are not stones, but” humans. “And being” humans—of course being dignified and open-minded humans—“hearing” the explanations, the analysis, the causes, the effects, the ramifications and the illustrations of the various aspects of this painful paradox, “it will inflame you; it will make you mad.” But this is exactly what this volume is set to do: telling the story “like it is.” And by sounding such an urgent and serious note, this work hopes to galvanize all attention that the African situation deserves, to address the contemporary African paradoxical dilemma; it also hopes to provoke the fullest realization, that this paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty is simply unacceptable; and must be dealt with at all costs.³

I believe that since the contemporary African growth and development issue is a paradox, it is a puzzle. It is not easy to discern, disentangle and solve puzzles, but with courage, perseverance and wisdom it is not impossible to solve. Frederick Douglass once said, where there is a struggle, there is always progress. He meant positive struggles any way. And Winston Churchill told us never to give up. Armed with these adages the task of assessing and solving this paradox will continue and succeed. “Ladies and gentlemen”—the young and old—“if you have tears prepare to shed them” as lamented by Mark Anthony over Caesar’s death. Africa is not dead but the African situation is very pitiful and painful. The internal and external forces that militate against Africa and African’s progress in contemporary time are so wicked, so insensitive, so stubborn and so overwhelming. That is why readers are being cautioned to prepare to shed tears.⁴

Examining contemporary African issues, is like making an extremely difficult, but absolutely necessary, journey -- too long, with too many curbs, too many potholes, and too many steep slopes and cliffs. Notwithstanding these and the added contours, meanders and cascades of the road, this journey must be made. Thus the complexities, the complications, the turbulences, the trials and tribulations cannot stop the trip. It is a do-or-die challenge. Africa must survive. Africa must live and not just exist. And the sons and daughters of Africa must live decently in Africa and abroad. To achieve these, one must be hopeful, determined, diligent and visionary. One must choose hope over fear to explore and to address this contemporary African issue of non-progress in the vast ocean of human and nature’s prosperity. This path of the genuine African patriot is delicate, slippery and, in most cases, dangerous (could be deadly) because local and international forces, that benefit from the contemporary African messy developmental terrain, determinedly want the status-quo to be maintained. And bulldozing through these local and foreign power brokers is an uphill task. They monopolize control of everything but in crooked, viscous and unpatriotic ways. They control the capital. They control the media. They control the schools. They