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A United States of Africa: Insights from Antifragility

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Introduction

I revisit in this article the question of the possibility of political integration of the African continent, something first proposed by Kwame Nkrumah and then re-proposed by Muamar Gaddaffi. My focus here is not to examine the extent of African leaders' willingness to bring about integration, nor will I concentrate on the political intrigues surrounding it (though these will be briefly acknowledged). Further, I will not contest Nkrumah's economic argument (which is commonsensically correct and in line with mainstream economics) but will, instead, take up the more normative question of the possibility, and thus practicability, of political integration in light of cultural and ethnic heterogeneity on the continent. I argue that political integration is possible, and I support the gradualist viewpoint by drawing lessons from Nicholas Taleb's concept of antifragility and pointing out that there is almost as much heterogeneity at individual and simpler society levels as there is in ethnically diverse societies.

Nkrumah's Case for African Unity

Kwame Nkrumah's call for African unity is one of those proposals that reflect a convergence of theory and praxis. Prior to writing his book *Africa Must Unite*, Nkrumah had already spearheaded several attempts at this union. The first was made barely a few months after he succeeded in liberating his country Ghana from colonialism, when Ghana and Guinea united to form a nucleus for a Union of African States. In this experiment, there was an exchange of resident ministers, who were recognized as members of both governments (Nkrumah, [1963], 1998: 141). By the following year, Mali joined the union, and Nkrumah described this union as one characterized by ". . . an identity of view on most of

the problems examined and an atmosphere of perfect understanding," and this, for him ". . . shows clearly the workability of union between African states" (1998: 143).

However, opposition to a complete union soon came from countries that, in Nkrumah's words, were ". . . jealous of their sovereignty" (1998: 148). Nkrumah observed that these countries ". . . tend to exaggerate their separatism in a historical period that demands Africa's unity in order that their independence may be safeguarded" (Ibid). Thus, two opposing groups emerged on the question of African unity: the 'Casablanca' and 'Monrovia' groups. The former was a union of those in favor of African unification, while the latter seemed a rallying of those against the idea. In spite of differences, however, Nkrumah noted that there really was no rigid division between the groups, and that every opportunity and means was used for cordial intercourse and useful discussion (1998: 147). But Nkrumah made it unequivocally clear that

> Ghana has declared her stand in no uncertain terms. We have provided in our constitution for the surrender of our sovereignty, in whole or in part, in the wider interests of African unity. Guinea has made the same provision. So have Mali, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic. Every African must judge for himself which view is the more progressive and realistic; which is dedicated fully to the practical needs and interests of Africa . . . and which reflects the true voice of Africa (1998: 149).

So what sort of unity does Nkrumah strive for? By African unity, Nkrumah does not mean a mere economic cooperation of sovereign states. He means the sort of unity that is found in a singular sovereign territorial state. In short, he means a continental African political structure that is analogous to the United States of America.

Let me expose the fundamental arguments of Nkrumah's defense of a continental political integration, which can be divided into two main categories: the political and the economic. Surprisingly, he makes no cultural arguments for union, though this can be taken to mean that he saw the cultural diversity of Africans as less significant when compared with the commonly shared African identity. This seems reflected in his famous aphorism that "The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart" (1998: 221).

Nkrumah begins his economic arguments by noting that, although Africa is said to be poor, she has the potential to ". . . provide tremendous possibilities for the wealthy growth of the continent" (1998: 150). Africa provided (at the time) the following percentages of world agricultural produce: cocoa—66 percent; palm oil—65 percent; sisal—58 percent; coffee—14 percent; groundnuts—26 percent; and olive oil—11 percent (Ibid.). She also provided the following percentage of the world's minerals: gem diamonds—96 percent; cobalt—69 percent; gold—63 percent; antimony—48 percent; manganese—37 percent; chromite—34 percent; phosphate rock—32 percent; copper—24 percent; asbestos—19 percent; tin—15 percent; iron—4 percent; and bauxite—4 percent (1998: 151). In fact, Nigeria produced 85 percent of the world's supply of columbite, and Ghana was the second largest manganese producer in the world (Ibid.). Nkrumah noted that Africa possesses some of the world's greatest known reserves of uranium ore and has the greatest waterpower potential in the world, with Congo having 21.6 percent of the world total but with actual installed capacity amounting to only

about 1 percent of the world total (Ibid.). Oil had been discovered in many parts of the continent, and Africa has about 27 percent of the world's total forest area (1998: 152).

What will enable a continent with this intimidating natural potential to embark on a full pace of industrial development? Nkrumah's answer is *communication*—the sort of communication that is *unhindered by territorial demarcations and regulations*. Nkrumah is quick to note that the British are acutely aware of this potential, as they invested only in the sort of transportation that will serve to convey natural resources out of the continent and into Europe. Nkrumah quotes Lord Lugard as saying that ". . . the material development of Africa may be summed up in one word—transport" (Lugard, 1922: 5; Nkrumah, 1998: 154). Thus, it was in the interests of the colonial occupation to halt the little communication that existed between African people and to channel all communication and transport outwards to Europe.[1] Nkrumah follows up with a counter-example: "America's real expansion began with her union, which assisted the building up of a vast network of railways and roads;" he then quotes D. W. Brogan as writing that "regions as unlike as Norway and Andalusia are united under one government, speak a common language, regard themselves as part of one nation. This unity is reinforced by the most elaborate transportation system in the world, a system the elaboration of which has been made possible by the political unity" (Nkrumah, 1998: 155, quoting Brogan, 1994).

In contrast, Nkrumah notes that Europe learned this lesson very late, when it had begun to shrink against emerging world powers, and remarks that "It seems, then, curiously paradoxical that in this period when national exclusivism in Europe is making concessions to super-national organizations, many of the new African states should cling to their new-found sovereignty as something more precious than the total well-being of Africa and seek alliances with states that are combining to balkanize our continent in neo-colonialist interests" (1998: 158). This is where Nkrumah switches to the political dimension of his submission for unification. He accuses many African states of seeking alliance with European associations with the mistaken belief that they will benefit from such alliance, and he accuses them of failing to see obvious gimmicks employed by some of such associations, gimmicks such as approving project proposals restricted to construct roads, railways, and ports and ignoring proposals for the establishment of industries (1998: 159). He also chides these countries for being romantic enough ". . . to think that the European Fund could ever be big enough to provide anything like the investment capital the African states require for substantial development" (Ibid.).

Alternatively, Nkrumah suggests that it is political integration that will pool the funds necessary to undertake major industrial development on the continent. To this end, he proposes three things.

First, Nkrumah proposes an African Common Market, devoted uniquely to African interests, to oversee common policies for overseas and inter-African trade (1998: 162). One of the objectives of this organization will be to neutralize the divide-and-rule tactics used by European powers to continue to sap African states by setting them up against one another. As an example, Nkrumah notes that:

> Ghana and Nigeria between them produce about 50% of the world's cocoa. So far we have been selling against each other, but in uniting our policy, we can beat the undercutting tactics of the buyers who set us one

> against the other. The surpluses derived from a common selling policy could be placed to realistic development (rejected by the European Development Fund) (1998: 163).

Second, Nkrumah proposes a common currency to eliminate difficulties of exchange and illegitimate dealings (Ibid.). Third, Nkrumah proposes the establishment of an African Development Institute to train economists and provide experts who could carry out research and be sent to African states upon request. The central purpose of this institute is to counteract the excessive duplication of experimental work on the continent that arises from the lack of central planning (1998: 157).

Returning to his economic argument, Nkrumah argues that only the total integration of the African economy can lead to the levels of development found in industrialized countries (1998: 163). To support this argument, he points to the economics of scale, in which industrial development in today's economic reality depends on (1) large expanses of land and (2) massive populations (1998: 164). Nkrumah notes that the most that individual African countries can achieve are "Expansion of extractive industries, extension and diversification of agriculture, establishment of secondary industries, some infrastructure, [and] the building of a few key industries," then adds that "even this is not assured" (1998: 168). And integrated planning, in Nkrumah's view, cannot be substituted by the kind of tinkering that limits us to inter-territorial associations within customs unions and trade agreements, "For such tinkering does not create the conditions for resolute development, since it ignores the crucial requirement for continental integration as essential prerequisite for the most bountiful economic progress . . ." (1998: 171). The greatest historical lesson, Nkrumah warns us, is that of the uncounted advantages of planning over *laissez faire* (1998: 165), especially when there is greatness of land and population, and he points to the extraordinarily fast development of countries like the former Soviet Union and China (1998: 164–66). Nkrumah gives three examples in support of his argument: First, larger land area under a single administration is more attractive to foreign investment. Second, projects like the Inga dam proposed for the Congo area, four times bigger than the biggest dam in the Soviet Union and potentially able to electrify the entire continent, cannot be funded and built by a single country (1998: 169–70). Third, only by being united are we able to secure the highest benefits of modern technology, since it demands investment the magnitude of which is only justifiable by higher population and resources (1998: 168).

Nkrumah concludes his submission on a political note by emphasizing that a centrally planned industrialization is one that must work towards the social objective of uplifting the people as much as possible and must seek to eliminate (or, rather, to moderate) acquisitive tendencies that lead to sectional conflicts. Only in these ways can such a planned program succeed and lead to economic freedom (1998: 171).

In the wake of his political and economic submissions, Nkrumah has one last point to make: that action is crucial. It strikes him that, "At the moment, we call conferences and meetings, which, while obviously useful, must remain ineffective unless supported by joint action" (1998: 167). He notes that we have inspiration from countries that are operating economies on the continental scale, and that we need to take action to break out of the vicious circle of poverty. Once this break is achieved, he avers, the momentum of change will increase (Ibid.). Nkrumah concludes by saying that leaders must begin now to seek out

the best and quickest means to collectivize the continent in order to raise a great industrial, economic, and financial power. He notes, though, that this project is impossible without sound political direction to give it force and purpose and that this direction can only be unity, with which we must come to grips (1998: 172).

Economics of Scale versus Heterogeneity

Evidence from mainstream economics endorses Nkrumah's economic argument for unification. Donald Wittman (1991: 126) argues that " … wealth maximization (broadly defined) is the underlying fundamental determining size of nations." In fact, Wittman compares nations to firms, and asserts that "Firms acquire other firms if the value of the joint firm is greater than the total value of the firms as separate entities" (Ibid.). On this view, Wittman advises that "Countries should merge when the economic value is greater for a unified country than as separate sovereign states" (Ibid.). Wittman adds that "In warfare especially, there are often great gains in military strength when two small states merge." Unwittingly resonating Nkrumah's argument for political union, Wittman also argues that "Firms may create cartels to lessen competition among themselves thereby gaining an advantage on either their suppliers or demanders. In a similar way, countries may create alliances or even merge in order to reduce competition among themselves and gain an advantage over others not in the alliance" (Ibid). Buttressing this point, Wittman argues that "Synergy arises when the merger of the two unique nations produces more than the sum of the parts. Synergy is maximized when the set of merged states creates greater wealth than any other combination of states" (1991: 127).

Wittman's arguments have been corroborated by Alberto Alesina, who outlined four major benefits of larger size for nations. Firstly, Alesina (2003: 303) argues that the per capita costs of many public goods are lower in larger countries, where more taxpayers can pay for them (public goods such as defense, judicial system, financial system, public health, communication, and so on). Secondly, he argues that a larger country (in terms of population and national product) is less subject to foreign aggression, since safety is a public good that increases with country size. Thirdly, he argues that the size of a country affects the size of its markets, and to the extent that larger economies and larger markets increase productivity, then larger countries should be richer. Fourthly, Alesina argues that large countries can build distributive schemes flowing from richer to poorer individuals and regions of the same country, which would not be possible to regions acting independently. This is why poorer than average regions would want to form larger countries that include the richer regions, while the latter may prefer independence, since the burden of transferring wealth will be on them (2003: 304).

We can add to these points an adaptation of the arguments of geographers like Jared Diamond, which holds that genius seems evenly distributed across human populations, so more population means more genius (and therefore, the products of genius). Also, larger land mass, and freer communication within the land mass, means that human beings have access to inventions from even further off, boosting one another's sciento-technological levels even more.[2]

Thus, the economic dimension of Nkrumah's push for continentalism in Africa is beyond question. But continentalism is not all about economics, technology, and material

progress. In fact, Alesina (2003: 304) notes that "If there were only benefits from size, then the tendency should be for the entire world to be organized in a single country. This is not the case." Why? Alesina (304–5) gives two sobering reasons. The first is that as countries become larger and larger, administrative and congestion costs may overcome the benefits of size pointed out previously, though these overwhelming costs are more likely only in very large size unions. Second, as countries become larger, diversity of preferences, culture, language, "identity" of the population (in one word, *heterogeneity*) increases. As heterogeneity increases, more and more diverse individuals will face the burden of agreeing on policies, and more and more individuals will be less satisfied by the central government policies. Supporting this thesis, Easterly and Levine (1997: 1207) have shown how ethnic heterogeneity can interfere with the implementation of meaningful and growth-enhancing government policies. Specifically, these authors charge that "Indeed, after accounting for the effects of ethnic diversity on education, political stability, financial depth, black market premiums, fiscal policy, and infrastructure development, ethnic diversity alone accounts for about 28 percent of the growth differential between the countries of Africa and East Asia."

As the views presented above show, increasing the size of a nation has very clear economic (and, therefore, political and military) benefits, but this comes at the price of heterogeneity. In fact, cultural heterogeneity is the chief argument offered by most of those who are opposed to the idea of the instantaneous political unification of Africa. In response to Nkrumah's drive for continental unification, Julius Nyerere advocated *sub-regionalism* (building multi-lateral institutions to enhance political, security-related, and economic interaction among states in regions). Gilbert Khadiagala sees this approach as ". . . more introspective, modest, gradualist, and pragmatic" (2008: 3). It resulted (or coincided) with the emergence of regional bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). But this approach has also coincided with (in my view, *caused*) an ineffective continental organization, the Organization of African Unity, which has become so impotent that Packer and Rukare (2002: 377) describe it as resembling "an empty shell." Khadiagala notes that a bold move was obviously required to restart the organization, and this feat was attempted when the Libyan leader, Muamar Gaddaffi, stepped in to reinvigorate the continental dream that Kwame Nkrumah had earlier articulated. In comparing Gaddaffi to Nkrumah, Khadiagala remarks that continental leadership has often stemmed from Messianic-type leaders who are ready to defy the constraints of resources, culture, colonial legacies, and geography in propounding grandiose continental visions. But when Khadiagala compares this to the (in his words) "more introspective, modest, gradualist, and pragmatic" approach of Nyerere, he seems to suggest that the latter approach is more appropriate. This regional approach was taken up by Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo to checkmate Gaddaffi's continental scheme. They pleaded for ". . . African institutions that dovetailed with the realities of Africa diversities and levels of economic development" (Khadiagala 2008: 3).

Generally, the regionalists are also continental gradualists in verbal utterances, but I am not sure about the actual motive behind their arguments for regionalism, and this is for two major reasons. Firstly, they just happen to be leaders of the richer countries, and we may recall the earlier analysis by Alesina (2003: 304) that richer countries will likely be less enthusiastic about a merger, since the burden of redistribution of wealth will ultimately

fall on them. Secondly, as leaders of the richest countries in their respective regions, they will likely prefer more localized spheres of regional leadership (or to be local champions), as opposed to having to subjugate themselves to a higher kind of sovereignty where they are not so sure of their status. In the same vein, it could be argued that Gaddaffi was not solely motivated by messianic reasons, as his call for African unity "coincided" with Libya's aggressive economic investment throughout Africa, particularly in energy and infrastructure (Khadiagala 2008: 5), and that he just happened to be, by all accounts, a despot who is consistently shown to have had pathetic levels of power lusting.

My focus in this paper will not be on these political intrigues. They do, however, help me clarify one point that is crucial to my analysis on the normative issues of political integration: namely, that the existing gradualist school can more sincerely be described as regionalists than continental gradualists. Even to call them regionalists will be quite generous, as I will show later, but let me at this point attend to the more normative question: Is a continental political integration of Africa possible in light of the extent of heterogeneity replete in the continent? My answer to this question is in the positive: yes. The arguments that I will deploy to support my verdict fall into two categories: arguments that answer the "why" of my position, and those that explain the "how" of same position.

The Possibility of Political Integration

So why do I think that continental unification is possible in Africa? My first response is that it is simply contradictory (and hypocritical) to make a lot of charges of racism against Caucasians and the West (as many of us have been making for the past century) if we are *no less discriminatory and ethnocentric* to *members of our own race*. For example, and speaking from the author's experience, it is common to see African intellectuals rail against the racism of White counterparts, but then embroil themselves in tribalism at home. These events prompt one to think about the proverbial injunction to take out the log in one's own eyes before admonishing another to remove the splinter in hers.[3] Such reflection could likewise note that apartheid, the greatest symbol of the difficulty of heterogeneity, has been defeated and that blacks and whites worked together to make South Africa the continent's biggest economy (for decades). Incidentally, the country that has recently overtaken South Africa as the continent's biggest economy, Nigeria, has 522 operative languages, a chunky one-fifth of Africa's ethnic diversity.[4] In fact, a Nigerian musician, Evi-Edna Ogholi, released a song in which she sang, ". . . one kilometer (in Nigeria) means another language." If such a culturally diverse economy is recording this sort of growth, and if the overtaken economy is not overtaken because it was in crisis, then these statistics deal a deathblow to our assumptions about the capacity of cultural heterogeneity to hamper unity and demonstrate with proof that these assumptions are too exaggerated and defeatist.

My second response regarding the viability of African unification is that the concept of cultural heterogeneity is quite misunderstood and is seen in too narrow a sense as being between ethnic groups and nations. But cultural heterogeneity is much broader than this: There is enough heterogeneity between individuals to warrant the kind of concern that is traditionally directed toward the heterogeneity between tribes and nations. This, for example, is why the concept of a life-long marriage between couples is one of the most difficult tasks of life. In marrying, couples bring together the value systems, norms, expectations,

(and weaknesses) of two whole societies of experience. The idea is not to avoid the inevitable collision of values and sentiments, but to embrace it and weather its shocks in order to continue a working (and loving) relationship. Indeed, the relationship between any two individuals is never fully actualized until they have experienced (and survived) serious disagreement. This strongly suggests that the burden of heterogeneity is not really a function of the size of participating polities, but of how participants have been coached (or have coached themselves) to handle diversity.

My position is somewhat corroborated by that of Ward Goodenbough (1976: 4–7), who undertook a seminal work regarding multiculturalism in which he concluded that multiculturalism is needed at any level of interaction in human life, so far as it involves two human beings. Introducing his thesis, Goodenbough had remarked that "Anthropologists traditionally have acted on the assumption that most societies are not multi-cultural, that for each society there is one culture. They have seen multiculturalism as developing only in the wake of urbanism, economic specialization, social stratification . . . ." To this he adds that ". . . minor cultural differences from household to household or . . . even from village to village can often be conveniently overlooked" (1976: 4). Goodenbough urges us to look at culture as process, in which we no longer look at societies as wholes, but at individual people as learners of culture in the context of social interaction as they pursue their various interests and try to deal with various problems that involve the necessity of choosing between conflicting goals, competing wants, and long-range versus short-range concerns (Ibid.). He argues that from the standpoint of process, we no longer see multiculturalism as a feature of complex societies alone, but of simple societies as well. He puts it this way:

> In the learning process, people inevitably find that they cannot generalize the same expectations onto everyone. Children learn that the expectations of their parents and other adults are not the same in many respects as the expectations of their playmates. They find that the expectations of their mother and their father's sister are different, and so on. There are different role-expectations that go with different social relationships and social situations. Each of these different expectations constitutes a different culture to be learned (1976: 5).

Goodenbough urges us to see these levels of culture as micro-culture and to reserve the term "culture" for only a level in the organization of that phenomenon. Importantly for him, all human beings live in what is for them a multi-cultural world, and everyone develops varying degrees of multi-cultural competence in at least some micro-cultures. Inter-societal contacts make at least some people minimally competent in some aspects of different macro-cultures as well, and the range of cultural diversity increases in complex societies, where multi-cultural competence at the macro level, as well as at the micro level, may play an important part. But basic to Goodenbough's thesis is his conclusion that "Multiculturalism is present to some degree in every society" (1976: 6).

From the above analysis, we see that cultural heterogeneity begins to exist at the level of *interpersonal* relationships and that the difference between heterogeneity among individuals, communities, tribes, nations, and continents is *just a matter of degree of the same substance*. Importantly, the acquisition of multi-cultural competence at the personal level is a

strong indication of the ability to acquire the same skill at a higher level. There seems to be nothing to suggest that this skill cannot be acquired at *any* certain level—what seems to matter is *how* this is done. This conclusion is important for explaining the "how" of the possibility of continental unification in Africa. What suffices here is my argument that the citing of cultural heterogeneity as a reason for the impossibility of African unity is quite hasty.

It is obvious from the foregoing that managing heterogeneity (or acquiring multi-cultural skills), whether at the interpersonal, inter-family, inter-village, or inter-societal level, is a task, a burden, or, most specifically, a stressor to be overcome.[5] To better understand this, I will briefly define what I see as the opposite of managing heterogeneity, which is *ethnocentrism*. "Ethnocentrism" has been defined as placing an especially high value on one's own ethnic origin and culture in relation to others,[6] or as the feeling that one's group has a mode of living, values, norms, and patterns of adaptation that are superior to those of other groups.[7] It is this "ethnic-group" understanding of ethnocentrism that leads Elizabeth Cashdan (2001: 760) to comment that "people readily though not inevitably develop strong loyalties to their own ethnic group and discriminate against outsiders."

In view of redirecting our understanding of heterogeneity from an inter-societal, inter-tribal, or inter-group to an interpersonal one, I think the "ethnic-group" understanding of ethnocentrism is restricted to the societal level. The concept of ethnocentrism should likewise be broadened to the individual level to mean the tendency to see one's own values, way of life, ideas, or group as the central value upon which those of others can be judged. In this way, we can understand that a professor who looks down on a trader is being ethnocentric and is, therefore, not making enough effort at acquiring multi-cultural skills or at managing heterogeneity. Leaving one's comfort zone or the familiar terrain of one's values, culture, or family/friends to relate with someone or something less familiar is to attempt a relationship that comes at additional relational stress or *stress of interaction*. By "stress of interaction" I mean the additional burden of coming to terms with new and unfamiliar meanings and values in an interaction, as well as confronting new or unfamiliar expectations. Here, it becomes clear that ethnocentrism is the *natural* human tendency to shy away from this additional relational stress. But the fact is that without stressors in general, living organisms tend to degenerate and die. Conversely, by entertaining stressors, organisms grow stronger and develop. Put another way, by avoiding stressors, organisms become fragile, while by embracing stressors, organisms grow *anti-fragile*, more rugged, and, thus, more competent. For this insight, let me consider some arguments from Nassim Nicholas Taleb's concept of *antifragility*.

The Concept of Antifragility

Taleb (2012: 3) reminds us that the concept of fragility is very familiar to us. It applies to things that break when you strike or stretch them with a relatively small amount of force (things like porcelain cups and single pieces of thread). Things that do not break so easily when you apply force or stress to them we call strong or resilient, even robust (like a cast-iron pan). However, Taleb argues that there is a third category here that is often overlooked, and that it includes those things that *actually get stronger or improve when they are met with a stressor* (up to a point). He gives as an example weight-lifting: If you try to lift something too heavy, you'll tear a muscle; but lifting more appropriate weights will

strengthen your muscles over time. Muscles grow strongest when they are taxed with the highest amount of weight beneath their breaking point: the more progressively intense the stress, the more the muscle responds, and the stronger the muscle becomes (Taleb 2012: 46–47)). It is even better to exercise the body by running on uneven surfaces and lifting rough objects. He gives another example with poison: An organism can gain tolerance to a poison by way of being exposed to the poison in small (and then maybe progressively larger) doses (2012: 36–37). In fact, some toxins, when taken in small doses, not only induce a tolerance in the recipient, but they even act as a kind of medicine. Taleb (2012: 37) argues that even ancient religions understood the benefits of caloric restriction and fasting (the body being kept from the things it needs—such as water, food, and sleep). We get sharper and fitter in response to the stress of the constraint. Taleb calls this property the quality of being "anti-fragile" and argues that this property can be said to apply to living things generally, as well as to *systems that are run by living things*. He hints on the famous aphorism "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

The only example, of which Taleb is aware, of an inanimate object that possesses this quality is seen in an experiment that shows that composite material of carbon nanotubes, when arranged in a certain manner, produces a self-strengthening response previously unseen in synthetic materials, "similar to the localized self-strengthening that occurs in biological structures" (Taleb, 2012: 54). This exception is important because it suggests that the distinction between fragile and antifragile may not be reduced to the distinction between the nonliving and the biological. In fact, many things that are man-made grow on their own to reach a kind of self-organization (such as society, economic activities, markets, cultural behavior), or they come to resemble the biological in that they multiply or replicate (such as rumors, ideas, technologies and businesses). So the distinction that should concern us more is the one between noncomplex and complex systems (2012: 56).

Taleb explains that a complex system is one with multiple interdependent variables and an ability to self-organize in some way (2012: 56). To illustrate what he means by multiple variables, Taleb explains:

> Artificial, man-made mechanical and engineering contraptions with simple responses are complicated, but not 'complex,' as they don't have interdependencies. You push a button, say a light switch, and get an exact response, with no possible ambiguity in the consequences, even in Russia. But with complex systems, interdependencies are severe. You need to think in terms of ecology: if you remove a specific animal you disrupt a food chain: its predators will starve and its prey will grow unchecked, causing complications and a series of cascading side effects . . . consequences that were hard to see ahead of time. Likewise, if you shut down a bank in New York, it will cause ripple effects from Iceland to Mongolia (Ibid.).

The multiple interdependent variables of a complex system interact with one another to yield self-organization. This is evident from the passage quoted above. In the case of ecology, the parts interact to produce a certain stable ecological system. Most complex systems are designed to benefit from the impact of stressors. Biological creatures are also complex

systems, and Taleb argues that the lack of periodic stress tends to lead to degeneration and atrophy, such as when you become bedridden for a long stretch due to illness (2012: 55), or when you try to make life easier by eliminating stressors. In response to Taleb on this point, one can reflect upon the finding that the advent of many terminal diseases is generally linked to the advent of technology and sedentary lifestyles.[8] Indeed, for Taleb, all that lives, and all the complex things that these living things create (like societies, economic systems, businesses, etc.), have confronted, or must confront, this property in some way. He argues that understanding this is important, so as to enable us know how to approach these systems and organisms, and thus to profit from them; failing to understand it can cause us to unwittingly harm or even destroy them (and to be harmed by them).

Taleb makes an additionally strong argument about randomness: most complex systems not only gain from small stressors, but they are designed to gain more when these stressors are distributed irregularly, or randomly. He notes that this point is more difficult to accept because we tend to dislike disorder and randomness: disorder can be frightening—because it is unpredictable by nature—and it is therefore not something that we readily welcome. So what we often do is attempt to remove the random and the disorderly from our systems (and to eliminate the shocks) in order to make the systems smooth. For example, we may try to take the boom and bust out of the economy and instead aim for a gradual upward trend. Taleb argues that this is a big mistake, because while removing the small shocks in a complex system may create stability for a time, it actually makes the system prone to major shocks in the long term.[9] What's more, unlike the small shocks (that refine and improve the system), the major shocks are usually damaging, and can even destroy the system.[10] So removing the small shocks from a complex system doesn't create stability; rather, it creates the illusion of stability. In the economy, for instance, you get a long period of stability followed by a major crash.

This phenomenon is not just confined to the economy. Indeed, Taleb maintains that it is the spirit of the age to believe that we can remove the disorder from any system (and eliminate the shocks) and render it orderly, smooth, and predictable. We are almost always mistaken in this belief, and we end up creating systems that are prone to major damage and even outright destruction (in Taleb's language, we "fragilize" these systems).[11]

Taleb argues that it would be far better to accept and even welcome a certain amount of disorder, randomness, and jaggedness in our lives and systems, and to put ourselves in a position to profit from the unpredictable, rather than eradicate it. Additionally, he concludes that we simply need to recognize what systems are fragile (and therefore prone to collapse) and what systems are antifragile (and therefore prone to grow stronger from stressors). Our decision should be to get out of the way of the former and to put our faith in the latter (thus *antifragilizing* ourselves in the process). This applies not only to large, overarching systems like corporations, economic systems, and political societies, but also to our own bodies and *minds*.

I largely agree with Taleb's concept of antifragility of living and complex organisms, since I find his arguments to be very convincing. I do think that this is a concept that humanity has largely overlooked in its bid to simplify (and thus fragilize) societies and groups. I also think that an application of this concept to the subject of African unity will reveal dimensions of this debate that have been ignored up until now. Thus, let me explore how this concept shapes the topic of African unity. In discussing this, I will focus on the

implications of the concept of antifragility to the relationship between cultural heterogeneity and multi-cultural unity.

Antifragility, Cultural Heterogeneity, and African Unity

What are the implications of applying the concept of antifragility to the relationship between cultural heterogeneity and multi-cultural unity? The first is that *too much comfort is a fragilizing process*. And to the extent that homogeneity in any form is comforting, it is also fragilizing. Conversely, we can see that cultural heterogeneity in this context is a stressor, since it involves the challenge of being able to relate with others at *all* levels of human interaction, ranging from the interpersonal, through the inter-family, inter-tribal, international, to the inter-racial. It should strike us that the challenges of multiculturalism involved on these platforms of social interaction appear in increasingly progressive levels. It is not difficult to see that a human being seeks to master these challenges one before the other. Let me illustrate this with an example. A baby learns to relate with her immediate family, and then she embarks upon higher forms of multicultural interaction by going beyond the family to the school, to the society in general, possibly to further education, and to work across the world. She is able to acquire these multicultural competences in a progressive manner: nature has arranged events in such a way that stressors of multiculturalism are applied to her in progressively increasing doses.

To be sure, there are advantages to be derived from becoming increasingly competent in the ability to relate multiculturally, and thus becoming multiculturally antifragile. First, the ability to relate with individuals (and societies) of very diverse views is what has been termed *cross-cutting*. Dennis Thompson (2008: 504) has argued that individuals who have been exposed to conflicting perspectives on an issue (i.e., cross-cutting) are less vulnerable to elite framing effects or political indoctrination. The verdict of a broad study conducted by Donatus Amaram (2007: 4) regarding multicultural business organizations appears to corroborate this: multicultural organizations are less susceptible to "group-think". A second advantage is that multi-cultural organizations are found to be better at problem solving, possess better ability to extract expanded meanings, and are more likely to display multiple perspectives and interpretations in dealing with complex issues (Ibid.). They are thus able to reach better understandings of the requirements of the legal, political, social, economic, and cultural environments of foreign nations (Adler, 1991; Amaram, 2007: 4). Third is that multicultural organizations tend to possess more organizational flexibility, and they are better able to adapt to changes (Amaram, 2007: 4).

On the basis of these findings, let me submit that I see cultural heterogeneity not so much as obstacle but as building block for organizations that derive their strength from the diversity of their parts. The civil, cultural, and religious tensions that we fear can actually be needed stressors that serve to make a society much more difficult to break, especially when compared to others lacking this advantage.

It is not as if diversity comes without problems. We can expect there to be drawbacks with diversity, especially in its early (and experimental) stages when participants are still in the process of tuning in to one another. In such situations, extra costs in time and relational capacity can counteract the benefits of synergy, and the situation might degenerate into dysfunctional conflicts. This appears to be the problem encountered by multi-ethnic

African countries in the twilight of political independence from colonial masters. But a pointed pessimism about such dysfunctional conflicts is, to my mind, a hasty conclusion. Given the political will for continued unity, such initial dysfunctions can be gradually moderated in favor of the great advantages of multicultural organizational life examined above.

It is, I think, not correct to see instances of inter-ethnic dysfunction as negatives. For one, it is these tensions that contribute to the robustness of a political mother body. First, the proposal to approach African unity in a piecemeal structure of progressive multiculturalism stems from the concern to cautiously reduce such multicultural dysfunctions to a minimum. But it should be clear that it is *not even* in our interest to see multiethnic tensions disappear: they are precisely the cultural stressors needed to make us antifragile as a people.

The illustration of the baby above shows us that we need not wait for nature to arrange for us the challenges of mastering heterogeneities or becoming multi-culturally competent in an increasing order. Let me remark here that many individuals in Africa are not as lucky as our baby: their progress in meeting challenges of heterogeneity stop at very simple levels, like the village, town, regional, state, or national levels. This lack of broad exposure creates the uncertainties, I think, that inform deep pessimism regarding the ability of the African to get along smoothly with his or her counterpart from across the continent. It seems to be this fear, rather than the diversity itself, that leads regionalists to refer to "realities of African diversities . . ." This is because we can have diversities and members of these diversities are able to relate with one another.

In lieu of African unity, I will remark that many Africans are still in the process of transferring their primary allegiances from their ethnic groups to their country. If this process is actualized in the fullness of time, it is not out of place to propose a continued transfer to a regional political state structure, and then (also in the fullness of time) to continental political unity. This gradualist and piecemeal method seems to represent the best approach to acquiring the robustness needed for continental political unity. If we are to aim at continental unity, then jumping this process is to jump to a stressor that might be too much to handle. To follow this process is to use smaller stressors to build the resilience required to handle bigger ones.

This approach somehow serves to reconcile the disagreement between Nkrumah and our regionalists. It buys Nkrumah's desire for political integration but rejects his instantaneous approach. It buys the regionalist proposals of the regionalists but rejects their deep-seated pessimism of continental political integration.

If we consider the above piecemeal method to African unity, then we see that Nkrumah's top-down approach of instant political integration is quite risky. In this regard, we first need to ask ourselves: What is the purpose of African unity? Is it not to attain a much more capable, resilient, robust (and therefore antifragile) body polity? Any such project must respect the piecemeal process of building complex and antifragile systems. A bottom-up approach will beat a top-down approach in terms of attaining ruggedness. Thus, the gradualist approach seems more appropriate. It seems more reasonable to argue that Africa should take baby steps towards unity than make many failed attempts at direct integration.

It does not seem, however, that what we see from Nyerere, Mbeki and Obasanjo can really be interpreted as a gradualist approach. This is because a gradualist approach to continental unification does not just presuppose a movement from regionalism as method to

continentalism as goal, but it also mandates a serious hold to the ultimate goal. With this understanding, we might then ask: What goal do these proponents have in mind when they propose regional coalitions as against continental integration? Are they proposing regionalism *as a step toward* continentalism? Evidence of this is not conclusive.

First, recall that their central argument was for " African institutions that dovetailed with the realities of Africa diversities and levels of economic development" (Khadiagala, 2008: 3). This argument evidences their support for the "reality" of regionalism as the only goal that is currently realistic. They also express the need for some sort of productive cooperation among African countries, but their definition of "African unity" so far seems to be just this. They hardly lay out any further planned progression to continental political integration, or a United States of Africa, as a broader goal. In fact, the opposite has been the case since they embarked on regionalism in a manner that rendered the OAU (Organization of African Unity) virtually impotent. One would expect that gradualists, in taking the small first steps that are consonant with gradualism, will keep the ultimate goal of gradualism in mind, but it is not evident here. It is a matter of debate whether they sincerely wish for an eventual continental political integration, or whether they desire respective local spheres of political influence and local championship.

Second, it might be a bit generous to describe these leaders as not only gradualists, but even as regionalists. One would have expected that, at this time (almost forty years since the May 28, 1975 formation of a regional body like ECOWAS), trade and travel barriers *within* their respective regions will have disappeared *as practical steps to regionalism*, like the gradual disappearance of trade tariffs, import duties and residency permits. If, for instance, I am a Nigerian, it is funny to think that I should be required to pay five hundred or a thousand United States dollars to legally reside in Ghana for twelve months, or that trade goods from a West African country are not allowed into a sister West African country, or that tariffs are paid for transporting commercial goods. But few if any barriers such as these have disappeared, which leads one to think that the objections made by so-called gradualists to proponents of continentalism seem to stem from rivalry or envy rather than from substantive concerns. And to this I will add a major suspicion of my own: Nkrumah had charged anti-integration states with being jealous of their sovereignty, but this suggests that the opinions of the people of these states about continental political integration were in fact solicited, through referendums and plebiscites, for example. But no such referendums have ever been offered to African peoples in the history of political determination. Thus, in contrast to Nkrumah, I instead charge these leaders with being jealous of personal sovereign political positions. Therefore, although I am not comfortable doing this, I will, for the convenience of this paper, call these leaders regionalists rather than gradualists; based on the above observations, calling them regionalists is still quite generous, I think. These distinctions are important for my next sub-topic.

The Practical Feasibility of Political Integration

What we have so far in the debate regarding African unity are three positions: Nkrumah/Gaddafi's immediate top-down approach, Nyerere/Mbeki/Obasanjo's regionalism, and a more sincere notion, in my view, of gradualist continental integration expressed by Tafawa Balewa as follows:

> There have been quite a lot of views on what we mean by African unity. Some of us have suggested that African unity should be actualized by the political fusion of the different states of Africa, some of us feel that African unity could best be achieved by taking practical steps in economic, political and scientific and cultural cooperation and by trying first, to get the Africans to understand themselves before embarking on the more complicated and more difficult arrangement of political union (Balewa, 1964:159).

It is this third position that I support and develop, although one hopes that it is not merely a cover for regionalism.

Let me examine the feasibility of all three positions, beginning with the top-down idea of immediate political integration. This approach underestimates the level of heterogeneity involved in this immediate political union and, as a result, overlooks the processes involved in getting people progressively equipped with multicultural competences in such a heterogeneous society. Let me begin with the level of heterogeneity. A look at the ethnic heterogeneity ranking of countries in the world shows that African countries occupy almost all of the top thirty positions and, with the exception of Papua New Guinea, virtually all of the top eighteen positions.[12] For instance, Nigeria, which ranks number eighteen, has 529 languages, with 522 living and 7 extinct.[13] There are more than 3,315 languages in Africa, although there could be more, as David Barrett got this total by underestimating the languages in certain countries, e.g., 455 for Nigeria.[14] With figures like this, Africa is easily the most ethnically diverse continent in the world.[15] This is quite a lot of heterogeneity, and there exists no precedent regarding any political integration of such a vast area. It is in this kind of situation that Nkrumah proposes the creation of an instant central government, with a very centralized central planning system for its very diverse economy (1998: 157).

I welcome the prospect of political integration for Africa, but I feel compelled to note that such a system, to properly handle the diversity of the continent, will have to consist of quite a good number of tiers/levels of government.[16] This will make it a highly tricky and expensive venture. There are some great burdens here, namely, the complexity and extensity of maintaining a balance between holding the center and keeping in touch with the average citizen, the financial cost of this administration, and the suddenness of bringing such diversity under a single overall political unit. The odds against such a sudden burden being overcome are not hard to fathom. It seems that we should prepare ourselves for such a stressor by confronting and mastering lesser stressors like regional integrations.

Evident in the top-down approach, therefore, is that its proponents simply assumed that Africans have the capacity to deal with multiculturalism at the outset. However, it seems that such abilities should be cultivated through the acquisition of skills in dealing with narrower and more localized scopes of multiculturalism. But what about the concern of the "realists" (Nyerere/Mbeki/Obasanjo) with "realities of Africa diversities and levels of economic development" (Khadiagala, 2008: 3)? Let me grant the proponents of regionalism a point about political safety: if we are to choose between continentalism and regionalism for an immediate political venture, we will choose regionalism as being much safer and less risky. But if we are told to remain as regional unions, then this kind of realism is really a benign way of advocating maintenance of the status quo. Even more gravely, *there is a logical problem with the belief that we cannot achieve continentalism but we can achieve regionalism.* If

both are projects in multiculturalism, and the multicultural competences involved are only in slightly different degrees, then it becomes logically difficult to see how despair toward continental integration can produce successful regional integration. As evidence shows, it does not seem that the regionalism project is doing great with this kind of prevailing political attitude.[17] In fact, leaders continue to trade outside the continent rather than with continental neighbors, contrary to stated intentions of regionalism.[18]

This leads me to a grave consideration: pessimism toward continental integration is really a function of an overall difficulty with multiculturalism *at all levels*. Closer observation seems to suggest that proponents of regionalism have difficulty in ordinary interpersonal relations, and in local politics. This reminds me of debates about carving out a state of Biafra from Nigeria. One of my concerns about this topic was that securing a political entity that is free from co-living with the North (of Nigeria) would enable Southerners to begin to realize the depth of divergences and differences that exist among them—differences that have been long muted by their collective antagonism toward the North. Securing political independence in the South has the potential to recreate the traditional North-South antagonistic relations as antagonistic relations *among* Southern ethnicities. It would be even worse if the North were to be left to itself: antagonism to the South has successfully prevented the world from noticing that the mutual antagonism between the Fulani and the lower-North Christians offers a potential for the kind of crisis we see in the Middle East. Ethnic antipathy is not really a question of the size of political organizations. It is not the size of polities that creates ethnic antipathy, it is the *will* to antipathy itself, socialized into peoples from smaller cultural units or smaller units of multiculturalism like interpersonal, inter-family, and other platforms. Living in simpler societies cannot eliminate the burden of multiculturalism.

I also see a problem with the regionalists' reference to realities of "levels of development" as a reason for having cold feet over continentalism. The concept of development is much more than an economic term, but let me grant, for purposes of this discussion, that the regionalists are referring to levels of economic development. Even so, it is not clear if the "levels of development" that they contemplate refer to economic disparity *between* regions or *within* regions. If, for instance, we assume that the term refers to disparity between regions, then it is difficult to imagine why regionalists from economically weaker/poorer regions would be opposing a union with those from stronger/richer regions. But if we pause to assume, to the contrary, that it refers to disparity within regions, then we see a clearer motive behind the argument of regionalists: They are frequently leaders of richer countries within their *respective* regions, whose natural desire for local championship must sit in unhealthy juxtaposition to an outright regional political union that will place the economic burdens of their weaker regional neighbors on their shoulders. One wonders, then, if it is mere coincidence that the regionalists advocate for *mere* economic cooperation among nations in a region rather than for regional political integration. We must, therefore, also question the motive behind their general preference for regionalism.

Finally, if we have to choose to propose regional integration as a step toward continental integration, then I do think that continental political integration is possible. But my proposal is not so simple. Each instance of aiming for political integration must be preceded by an instance of aiming for economic cooperation. If I am to outline my proposed procedure, it will look like this: I propose (1) regional economic cooperation as a step toward regional political integration, (2) regional political integration as a step toward

continental economic cooperation among politically integrated regions, and (3) this continental economic cooperation as a step toward continental political integration.

This, I think, represents the most elaborate method of taking things one step at a time. It is not just consonant with Taleb's theory of taking on one stressor at a time, it is also consonant with a functionalist approach to achieving integration. The first gingerly executed steps toward integration could be taken by creating a transnational complex of economic and social organizations, in which international activities could be organized around basic functional needs such as transportation, health and welfare necessities, cultural activities, trade, and production. The steps do not involve the surrender of national sovereignties. Their effect should be to increase interaction among different peoples, and the frequency of such interaction will hopefully build people's multicultural competencies and reduce levels of ethnocentrism. Another benefit is obvious: this approach will increase the economic activities within the continent and among her nations, and the effects of this are obvious from Nkrumah's presentation, though this is only secondary to my main point.[19]

Political integration is a move that can be made in the fullness of time after practicing economic integration.[20] By this I mean that politicians can begin to tinker with the idea of political integration if they feel convinced that economic cooperation has successfully brought diverse peoples together and created common sentiments. It is such sentimental convergences that could act as a substitute for ethnic homogeneity. Though these two things are clearly not the same, it is important to see evidences of these sentimental convergences before going further. One way to do this will be to subject the idea of political integration to periodic referendums across the continent. These should be preceded by (1) a reasonable length of time spent on successful economic cooperation and the spread of economic and social organizations, and (2) thorough public enlightenment campaigns about the benefits of political integration. These referendums should not only be periodic, they should come after reasonable practice of economic cooperation. The reason behind this is obvious: While it is important that the masses of Africa be the architects of continental political integration, it is even more important that they be tactfully guided and guarded into doing this. Please excuse me for imagining that premature referendums might not guarantee positive results.

There is, however, one major requirement for a successful project of political integration that cannot be omitted: African unity must be driven not simply by ideology, but also by common interests. Interests represent the greatest driving force of any progressive activity between human beings. In this regard, interest defeats ideology, except where ideology coincides with interest, or ideology is itself driven by interest. Thus, ideology should be made to serve interest, and proposals for African unity should ultimately be justified around core interests of the continent and of the nations within it. This approach vindicates, even more, the gradualist/functionalist approach to integration.

There are three major benefits to be expected from this piecemeal, functionalist approach to integration. Firstly, economic cooperation between African nations will greatly expand the scope of operations of many businesses across the continent, which will simultaneously result in larger scopes of efficient services (which means more benefit to the lives of people) and higher gross domestic product contributing to the economics of scale. Upon the discovery of the prospects of larger scopes of operation, wider and unhindered market horizons, wider areas for pooling ideas, new and untapped areas of resources, wider profit

(and, of course, more benefits to society), it will be in businesses' interest to support political integration. Thus, what might begin as a political proposal will predictably receive backing from entrepreneurs across the continent who will, predictably, not let it fail without a fight. Business expansionism is *good* for economies. Recall the findings of the economists Wittman and Alesina: It may be myopic to assume that the economics of scale benefits only entrepreneurs; it benefits the economy.

Secondly, increased transnational economic and socio-political activities will facilitate the emergence of supra-national persons, associations, businesses, and experts whose careers (and interests) will become increasingly incapable of being confined to the traditional national boundaries, and whose expectations will become increasingly dependent upon further expansion of integrative tasks/frontiers.

Thirdly, gradual integration through economic cooperation will facilitate the rise of a new generation of pragmatic politicians. Being younger and having the potential to drive expansion and continent-wide scopes of entrepreneurship, these young leaders will be less bound by local ethnocentrism, past experience, and habits. They will also break from the old ways of politicians in that they will have risen through economic productivity (on an expanded level) or through proven academic contribution, rather than by using the state as vehicle for upwards social mobility, as we see in post-colonial and post-military politicians. This crop of young, experienced, and visionary politicians will be especially versed in the superiority of grassroots bottom-up, rather than idealist top-down, approaches to social reform. They will likely be more able to connect with the masses at the pragmatic level. In doing this, they will create expectations of a new, common, and better life. Such expectations are likely to create some sort of unity psychology, and such feelings of unity will be bolstered by external continental challenges which demand united response.

Conclusion

To reiterate my position, I argue for economic cooperation before political integration at the regional levels, and then wish this process to be repeated at the continental level. This gradualist and functionalist approach to continental political integration respects the idea of gently but increasingly applying (and mastering) cultural stressors. To be sure, this process could be met with initial backlashes of ethnic incongruence. An example of such an early hiccup can be seen in the immediate post-colonial experiences of most multi-ethnic African countries. The first half-century of ethnic cohabitation did in fact produce so much socio-economic dysfunction that Easterly and Levine (1997: 1207) charge that this ethnic dysfunction accounted for about 28 percent of the growth differential between the countries of Africa and East Asia. But half a century down the line, it seems to me that this experiment in multiculturalism is beginning to weather the ethnic storm, since statistics show that many African nations currently record the highest GDP growth rate in the world,[21] and many of these are the most ethnically diverse.[22] What is responsible for this amazing turnaround? My answer is the concept of antifragility: these countries are gradually showing signs of finally overcoming the stressors of cultural diversity and are beginning to reap the benefits of cultural diversity.

There is no reason why the above two-step experience with multi-ethnic political and socio-economic development (initial seizure and then accelerated growth) cannot be

repeated at regional and continental levels, and this project should derive confidence from the fact that ethnicity is not as biological as it seems. Scholars have shown that generations of movements of peoples from place to place in the wake of wars, conflict, conquests, commercial intercourse, and the search for better economic lives have led to generations of ethnic interpenetrations resulting from inter-marriages and cohabitation, thus establishing that the concept of ethnicity, understood as grouping by common ancestry or genealogy, is a myth.[23] But this myth has for many decades been fanned into consuming flames by many politicians who, for want of integrity, succumb to playing cheap ethnic cards when doing so works in their favor (Ani, 2013: 14). The average African is increasingly discovering that she has diverse parentage, and can trace her genealogy across generations to a multiplicity of ethnic groups. Given the right prodding, the concept of ethnicity in most parts of Africa can gradually lose much of its connotation of ethnic purity, and a more confident case can be made that this is a largely invented concept.

One more problem stands out regarding integration, though. This is the question of language diversities. Statistics of ethnic diversities in Africa are really also statistics of language diversities, which means that there are almost as many languages as there are ethnic groups, and in any case, language is the most visible criterion for determining ethnic identity. So one may ask: How do we eventually attempt political integration in a continent that accommodates more than 3,000 native languages? One may see the beginnings of a solution by answering another question: How is it that a country as diverse as Nigeria, with more than 20 percent of Africa's language diversity,[24] and in spite of its record of ethno-linguistic dysfunction, is currently recording an economic growth of 6.72 percent? The answer is that these ethno-linguistic groups have largely learned to cooperate under the *lingua franca* of the colonial language as the most pragmatic solution to communication. Use of the three major languages (Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo) is somewhat encouraged, although the effect of this on national cohesion is doubtful. An attempt to the contrary will make this clear: Which native language is to be elevated to become a *lingua franca*? It seems to me that dissent will more likely be avoided by using something foreign and neutral, rather than by sending messages of internal superiority through elevating some native language above another. This decision may not look sentimentally patriotic, but it *is* the most *pragmatically* patriotic option there is. In the same vein, the decision to legislate the most common colonial languages (English, French, and German) as the continent's official languages will raise *much less* dissent compared to the decision to legislate some native languages to the neglect of others. Anything contrary to this is, to my mind, just impulsive nationalism. Thus, if we are to attend to this issue with the dispassionate approach that it deserves, I do not see language diversity as an obstacle to political integration.

In the end, I must reiterate that when it comes to choosing between Nkrumah's continentalism and the opposition of the regionalists, I find myself endorsing some parts of both. To begin with, I am compelled to endorse Nkrumah's vision, but not his method, which is the top-down approach. On the other hand, I have to endorse the functional preoccupation of the regionalists, which is regional economic cooperation as the only reasonable project that we can embark upon for the time being. But I am not convinced that they truly believe in continental political integration. My conclusion is that continental political integration is possible in Africa, but this must come on the heels of the ability to weather the storm of ethnic diversity at narrower scopes (or lower levels) of socio-political organization.

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Notes

1. Nkrumah gives an example with his discovery that "Railways were deliberately constructed for [only] taking goods to ports that were planned and equipped for on-board ship-loading rather

than for loading and unloading [and were] designed by the colonial powers to link mining areas or to carry cash crops and raw materials from collection points to the ports for export" (1998: 154–55).

2. This is just a rough adaptation of Diamond's general argument regarding the advantages of population, landmass, and accessibility within the landmass to material development. See Diamond (2005: 176–91).
3. Matthew 7: 3-5, in Collins Bible Society, Good News Bible (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).
4. See M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons, and Charles Fennig (eds.), *Ethnologue*, *Languages of the World*, 17th edition, "Nigeria" (Dallas: SIL International, 2014), available online at: http://www.ethnologue.com/country/ng; G. J. Dimmendaal, "Language Ecology and Linguistic Diversity on the African Continent," in *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2.5 (2008), 840–58.
5. A *stressor* is an agent, condition, or event that causes stress to an organism. The word "stress" is from *estrecier*, to tighten.
6. See J. J. Ray, "Ethnocentrism – Attitudes and Behaviour," *The Australian Quarterly* vol. 43, no. 2 (June 1971): 89.
7. See Columbia University Press, *The Columbia Encyclopaedia*, 6th edition (Gale Group, 2000), 12933.
8. See, for instance, Kolden et al., "A Pilot Study of Group Exercise Training (get) for Women with Primary Breast Cancer: Feasibility and Health Benefits," *Psycho-Oncology* 11 (2002): 447–56.
9. See Taleb, *Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder* (New York: Random House, 2012), 290–300.
10. He calls these major shocks "Black Swan" events. Taleb, *The Black Swan: Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2010), xxi-xxii.
11. See, for instance, Taleb's arguments in Taleb (2012), at 105–7.
12. See J. D. Fearon, "Ethnic and cultural diversity by country*" *Journal of Economic Growth* 8.2 (2003): 215–19.
13. See M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons, and Charles Fennig (eds.), *Ethnologue*, *Languages of the World*, 17th edition, "Nigeria" (Dallas: SIL International, 2014), available online at: http://www.ethnologue.com/country/ng; G. J. Dimmendaal, "Language Ecology and Linguistic Diversity on the African Continent," in *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2.5 (2008), 840–58.
14. See D. Barrett, *Number of Ethnic Groups in Africa* (2013), available online at http://www.numberof.net/number-of-ethnic-groups-in-africa/.
15. Also see M. Fisher's *A Revealing Map of the World's Most and Least Ethnically Diverse Countries*, available online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/05/16/a-revealing-map-of-the-worlds-most-and-least-ethnically-diverse-countries/.
16. Alberto Alesina, in "The Size of Countries: Does It Matter?" *Journal of the European Economic Association* vol. 1, no. 2/3 (2003): 302, comments that a typical European citizen is governed by a series of up to six levels of governments, from a city council to the European Union, and one could view the national government as just one of them.
17. See the following report: Alan Matthews, *Regional Integration and Food Security in Developing Countries* (United Nations and Food and Agricultural Organization, 2003), available online at http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/y4793e/y4793e0a.ht.

18. See the following: World Trade Organization, *Africa Should Trade More with Africa to Secure Future Growth—DDG Rugwabiza*, "I. Current Situation of African Countries in World Trade" (April 12, 2012), available online at http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news12_e/ddg_12apr12_e.htm; S. E. Kasule, *Regionalism in Africa: A Case of the East African Community* (Saarbrucken: VDM Verlag, 2009), 1–144.
19. Making a similar point, Mitrany, the chief proponent of functionalism, argues that the basic rationale for the existence of any given political community is welfare and security, and that once a "moderate sufficiency of what people want and ought to have is given to them, they will keep peace." D. Mitrany, "The Prospects of Integration: Federal or Functional, " in A. J. R. Groom and T. Paul (eds.), *Functionalism: Theory and Practice in International Relations* (London: University Of London Press, 1975), 51.
20. Neo-functionalist integrationists make the mistake of thinking that functional cooperation can automatically lead to political integration, and they therefore assume a deterministic progression from cooperation to integration. But I see no merit in this assumption. I think that political integration must be consciously and deliberately proposed at a point, even in the event of successful cooperation. In other words, no step should be taken for granted.
21. See Lucas Kawa, "The 20 Fastest-Growing Economies in the World," *Business Insider* (Jan. 29, 2013), available online at http://www.businessinsider.com/fastest-growing-economies-through-2015-2013-1?op=1; Trading Economics, "GDP Annual Growth Rate—Countries—List," available online at http://www.tradingeconomics.com/country-list/gdp-annual-growth-rate. Importantly, see the World Bank, "Despite Global Slowdown, African Economies Growing Strongly New Oil, Gas, and Mineral Wealth an Opportunity for Inclusive Development" (Oct. 4, 2012) (press release discussing World Bank report), available online at http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2012/10/04/despite-global-slowdown-african-economies-growing-strongly-world-bank-urges-countries-spend-new-oil-gas-mineral-wealth-wisely.
22. As can be seen from the map by Kawa cited in footnote 21, above.
23. Confer Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997,) 96–101.
24. See the Introduction to E. Aito, "National and Official Languages in Nigeria: Reflections on Linguistic Interference and the Impact of Language Policy and Politics on Minority Languages," Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism, ed. James Cohen et al. (Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, 2005), 18, available online at http://www.lingref.com/isb/4/002ISB4.PDF.

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