

## **Africa – Europe: Neighbours and Partners in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**by John E. Aggrey and Dr. Claas Dieter Knoop**

### **Preliminary Remarks**

The idea to launch a forum for dialogue and discussion on a variety of subjects which are of mutual interest for Africa and Europe was born on the occasions of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the signing of the Treaties of Rome and the independence of Ghana.

The objective of the forum is to stimulate discussion and dialogue, creating and enhancing awareness on topics relevant to the relationship between the neighbouring continents. After the AU and EU summits in July and June 2007, it is fitting to start the forum with presentations on “vision and realities”, with regard to the integration processes in Africa and Europe.

The presenters in Addis Ababa on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007 were H.E. Ambassador John E. Aggrey (Ghana) and H.E. Ambassador Dr. Claas Dieter Knoop (Germany). The discussion had been moderated by the director of the Institute for Security Studies, Mr. Kenneth Mpysi.

### **The United States of Africa – Vision and Realities**

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

About two months ago, when the Ambassadors of Germany, Portugal and myself met under the auspices of the Goethe Institute to plan a Forum for Dialogue and Discussion under the Motto: Africa-Europe: Neighbours and partners in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, little did I know that we will meet so soon for this inaugural presentation on the topic “The United States of Africa – The United States of Europe: Visions and Realities”.

This idea has been inspired in part by the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the independence of Ghana, which catalysed the call for the total liberation of the African continent from colonial bondage and for unity and solidarity to confront its development challenges and which incidentally coincides with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the European Union.

It is in this respect that I feel honoured to be invited to deliver one of the presentations on the twin topic chosen for this inaugural session, namely “The United States of Africa ”Visions

and Realities”. What is interesting about this topic is that it is currently the hottest issue on the minds of not only the leaders of Africa but also of most concerned Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora.

I cannot lay claim to be the Spokesperson of all these stakeholders, but as a citizen of Africa, I feel privileged to be asked to express my own personal views on the issue. In this short presentation, I will endeavour to trace the genesis of the idea of the United States of Africa to date and seek to offer some insights into the realities of the matter in our time.

## **The Vision of the United States of Africa**

The idea of the United States of Africa is rooted in the Pan-Africanist Movement which predates the liberation of Africa from colonial tutelage. It was essentially spearheaded by people of African descent in the Caribbean and the United States of America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The main objective was the struggle for political and social equality and freedom from economic exploitation and racial discrimination. As can be inferred, it was a direct reaction to the suffering of Africans in the diaspora, born out of slavery and exposed to oppression, marginalization and alienation. These activists began to organize congresses in Europe and the United States of America to sensitize all Africans on the matter.

Their ideas were soon adopted by African students in Europe and the United States of America, among them, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya. Inspired, these students returned to their countries in Africa and led the struggle to liberate their countries from colonialism and neo-colonialism. But as they achieved independence in their countries, they quickly realized that national independence alone would be meaningless unless it was linked to the total liberation of the African Continent if they were to realize the great Pan-Africanist dream.

It is to be noted that since the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, Africa and its adjoining islands had been carved up into estates of European powers, mostly Great Britain, France, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Spain and Belgium. They not only ruled the inhabitants of those territories without their consent, but they also brutally exploited their human and natural resources for their own benefit. While the artificial division and balkanization of the Continent served the intrinsic interest of those European powers, it was found inimical to the aspirations of the people of the continent in the quest for freedom, development and prosperity.

This was the motivating factor which propelled them to form the Organisation of African Unity in 1963. However, the coming together of states, each bent on safeguarding its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, fell far short of the vision of leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Emperor Haile Selessie of Ethiopia to form a Continental Union Government or the United States of Africa as a counterpoise to Europe and the United States of America. In reality, the OAU was only a declaration of intentions to unite and there was no appreciation of the sense of urgency required at the time to achieve total unity and exercise real power and influence in the world, which could only be attained on the tower of real unity, solidarity, oneness of purpose and a desire to compete as Africans.

The efforts of these early independent leaders to form the Organisation of African Unity to speed up the decolonization of the Continent and lay the foundation for its socio-economic development only had partial success when the whole of Africa was decolonized and apartheid rule ended in South Africa.

As the generation of these independent leaders passed on, the vision of the United States of Africa also dimmed but not completely petered out. Realities of world politics and new economic order which threatened to marginalise Africa, still kept the dream of unity alive.

In the early 80s and 90s, new approaches were pursued through the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty to integrate the continent, using Regional Economic Communities as the building blocks or pillars of Africa's unification.

If the unity represented by the OAU was too fragile to support radical plans for Africa's political and economic integration, and the route adopted by the Abuja treaty appeared too long, slow and uncertain, Libyan Leader, Col. Gaddafi's new impetus launched through the Sirte Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on 9.9.99 appeared to have provided the new platform to fast-tracking the achievement of the United States of Africa, as he called once again for a union of states under a single federal government, with one President, common economic, political and defence policies and speaking with one voice.

However, the resultant Constitutive Act which was negotiated and accepted on the basis of a compromise between leaders with different visions of continental unity again stopped short of pooling the sovereignty of the African States together, if not on the model of the United States of America, but even on the model adopted by the European Union. This time around, the Brother Leader managed to keep the idea on the front burner of the preoccupations of the African leaders and their people as well as the Africans in the diaspora, and that is how come the recent Summit of Africa's leaders in Accra devoted its agenda solely to the "Grand Debate on Union Government".

The outcome of the Grand Debate in Accra in July 2007 as captured by the Accra Declaration, was a call for an audit of the Organs and institutions of the African Union and the establishment of a Ministerial Committee to examine the following:

- i) Identification of the contents of the Union Government concept and its relations with national governments;
- ii) Identification of domains of competence and the impact of the establishment of the Union Government on the sovereignty of member states;
- iii) Definition of the relationship between the Union Government and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs);
- iv) Elaboration of the road map, together with timeframes for establishing the Union Government; and
- v) Identification of additional sources of financing the activities of the Union.

A report is expected to be submitted to the Executive Council to make appropriate recommendations to the next Ordinary Session of the Assembly in January 2008. This means that we are yet to hear the last word on the idea of the United States of Africa.

### **The Realities of the United States of Africa**

In the interest of time, I will devote this part of my presentation to providing my own appreciation of the realities of Africa's quest for a United States of Africa.

The quest for a United States of Africa is desirable and can be realized, but every effort needs to be made to close the gap between the vision and the reality.

That most Africans on the continent and in the diaspora feel that Africa should strengthen its unity in order to freely take full charge of its future in the face of challenges posed by globalization and increase its influence in the international arena cannot be overlooked. The first generation of African leaders pursuing the Pan-Africanist dream, had felt that this would really meld seamlessly into the immediate establishment of a continental union government, but alas! the reality turned out to be different.

There continues to be different schools of thought and approaches to the achievement of the United States of Africa, some of which have been clearly highlighted in the mandate given to the Ministerial Committee. Issues of the surrender, partial or total, of sovereignty, the representative character of the continental government, its base at national, regional and continental level, are yet to be defined.

Though African States have been pursuing the idea of unity since 1963, they still do not share the same values, mostly commitment to the fight against poverty and underdevelopment, pursuit of peace and security, democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, transparency in public affairs, adherence to the standards set out in various legal instruments and decisions of the Union and a lack of a mechanism for coordination and harmonization of policies at the continental level.

In some parts of the world and in the history of integration where there were no common values as indicated above or common culture, language, legal system or history as in the case of Africa, force and conquest had been used to achieve integration and unity, but the reality is that Africa cannot pursue that agenda, and there is no possibility today that it can even be contemplated as a viable option.

While the EU model clearly emphasizes a gradualist, step-by-step approach to the question of integration of sovereign states for common purposes, Africa may have to devise its own model, at least a model that will be acceptable to all, and there is no want of effort in that direction.

When the OAU was transformed into the African Union, the latter adopted the old structures of the former, namely the Assembly of Heads of State, the Council of Ministers which became the Executive Council and the Secretariat which became the Commission.

While the Assembly remained the Supreme Organ, the same cannot be said of the Executive Council, because in reality the Council executed nothing. So where was the executive power located?

In a typical structure of a state, power was shared by the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.

Can it be said that the Executive power resided in the Commission? This may not be the case because the Commission as currently constituted lacked the structure, mandate, capacity and financial resources to act as the executive. Until this is done, the reality slips away.

What about the legislative and judicial organs? It can be asserted that the Pan-African Parliament serves as the legislature. But as currently established it is only advisory. Where is its legislative power? And how can it even legislate when the members are not elected through popular means to do so, thus denting its legitimacy.

Though efforts are being made to establish the Court of Justice as the judiciary, it is difficult to know what it will adjudicate over when the Assembly remains supreme and the Union still has not established any domains of competence.

In addition to the Pan-African Parliament and the Court of Justice, the AU also envisages organs like the Financial Institutions and the Specialized Technical Committees, which are yet to be established. All these are integrative bodies under the Abuja Treaty and were expected to come into being towards the last stages of the African Economic Community when a large degree of integration had been achieved. But where are we with the various stage of the integration? Almost zero in some regions of Africa, so these bodies, even if we succeed in establishing them, as we are doing currently, will operate in a vacuum and will in no way bring us nearer to the United States of Africa, at least for now.

In conclusion, I wish to state that the search for a United States of Africa is ongoing and will continue to gain momentum until an acceptable model is found, whether it will be a federal, confederal, or unitary form of government. But until then, I can only state that the vision is laudable, the reality is desirable and everything possible should be done to overcome the obstacles and challenges of achieving full integration.

Thank you.

## **The United States of Europe – Visions and Realities**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all let me say how delighted I am that this forum of dialogue and discussion about issues of mutual interest to Europe and Africa has finally got off the ground! My hope and expectation is, that this forum will really create an added value to the already existing and probably more formal venues of discussions between Africa and Europe.

I feel also very honoured that I have been asked to deliver one of the presentations on this inaugural occasion.

For the sake of good order, I would like to stress that all I am going to say is my personal opinion – so I am indeed speaking to you not as the official representative of Germany to Ethiopia and the African Union.

My presentation will focus on the European side of our subject – whereas Ambassador Aggrey takes the African part. We hope that our presentation will give enough food for thought and stimulate the subsequent discussion with the audience.

### **1. Visions**

Let me start with the visions on the United States of Europe and then turn to the realities of our days on the subject.

Well, there have indeed been many attempts in the European history to create a United Europe, not necessarily the “United States of Europe”, which in terms of political science and also in legal terms is a different story altogether.

Until 1945 all attempts to create a United Europe have two things in common: First, they were all carried out with – and I have to say this very clearly – brutal force and with the intention to dominate the weaker. Second, all these attempts have failed (I might add: fortunately!).

We can go back as far as Emperor Karolos Magnus to find many proofs for the bloody traces which the dream of a united Europe under the hegemony of one political leader, one religion or one ideology has left in European history.

The 30 years war from 1518 – 1548, which devastated almost all of Europe and left millions of people dead, Napoleon, Stalin, Hitler – these events and names in European history stand for this concept of changing the political map of Europe by force. It is important to remember this past, because the present concept of European integration and cooperation has a lot to do with these traumatic experiences of Europeans.

Parallel to the attempts to create a United Europe by sheer and brutal force, there have been numerous European philosophers, politicians and even poets who called for a United Europe on the basis of a voluntary and peaceful process involving not only governments but also the citizens of Europe.

I shall give but a few examples for these ideas which have left their mark until today – and indeed, the recent discussion in Europe about a constitutional treaty would not have been possible without these previous ideas and concepts.

In his essay about the “eternal peace” e.g. the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant suggested in 1795 the creation of a special federation of states which he called “Friedensbund” – Federation of Peace or “foedus pacificum” on the basis of a treaty to be concluded between the European powers.

Another famous example is the well-known French poet Victor Hugo, who – in a speech delivered at a congress in Paris in 1849 – said: “a day will come, where we shall see how the vast groups of peoples – the United States of America and the United States of Europe (!) will look at each other face to face and reach out across the ocean ..... to combine their endless powers for the mutual benefits of their peoples..... Frenchmen, Englishmen, Belgians, Germans, Russians, Slavic peoples, Americans, what do we need to do to reach this great day soon? To love each other!!!.....”

Picking up on this was another famous Frenchman, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who died 1955. Teilhard, drawing on his explorations as a paleontologist and anthropologist suggested that there is a kind of natural law which drives smaller entities to join and form a synthesis which will benefit the whole. “E pluribus unum” – from diversity to unity that was his motto which he thought could also be applied to political entities. E pluribus unum – by the way has become the motto for the United States of America and – if I am not mistaken – it is in the official coat of arms of the USA! Interesting enough you can also find this motto in the preamble of the draft constitutional treaty for Europe which I would like to quote:

“.....convinced that while remaining proud of their own national identity and history, the peoples of Europe are determined to transcend their former divisions and, united ever more closely, to forge a common destiny, convinced that, thus “United in Diversity” Europe offers them the best chance of pursuing ..... the great venture which makes of it a special area of human hope.....”

In the post world war I period it was the Austrian Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, who in 1923 gave a new push to the concept of uniting Europe in a peaceful way. Coudenhove-Kalergi is the founder of the so-called Pan-European Movement, whose objective was to create a Confederation of European States.

However, as history shows, unfortunately it took another devastating world war before new ideas about European integration came to the surface. In a famous speech held in Zurich in 1946, Winston Churchill called for the United States of Europe – meaning basically the merger of France and Germany. This merger, according to Churchill, could be facilitated and protected by the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth the “mighty America” and perhaps even by the USSR!

The next – and if I might say so – politically most relevant push came in 1950 when the French foreign minister Robert Schumann submitted the famous Schumann-Plan which formed the basis for the creation of the first European Community – the European Community for Steel and Coal.

Five years later one of the architects of the Schumann-Plan, again a Frenchman – Jean Monnet – founded the Action Committee for the United States of Europe. Many leading members of European political parties and also of Trade Unions joined this action committee. In those days there was a clear political will to develop the European Communities (since 1957 we had three of them) into a Political Union, ultimately into something which might rightly be called the United States of Europe.

In the election platform for the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, the European Peoples’ Party EPP (the group of conservative parties in the European Parliament) called for the creation of a European Federation or a European Federal State of its own kind. This was in 1978. 30 years later you will not find a trace of this political objective in any programme of relevant political parties in the member countries of the European Union!

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, what has happened to the visions?

## **2. Realities**

In the second part of my presentation I shall give you my interpretation of the realities in Europe – and I deliberately use the plural – because I have the distinct impression that we are dealing with different realities in present day Europe or at least with different perceptions of what the reality might be!

From the start of the post second world war integration process in Europe one striking reality is that the relationship between the concept of the nation-state and the concept of an ever closer union between the member-countries of the EU has always been a relationship of tensions between those who are advocating a sort of federal structure of the European Union and those who want to maintain a decisive role of member countries in the decision making process of the Union.

The two conflicting philosophies became clear already at an early stage: in 1964 the then president of the EU-Commission, Walter Hallstein (a German) said in a lecture at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London: “It may be that only states can act politically. So be it and let us create a European state”. Later, in a book, Hallstein used the term “unfinished federal state” with reference to the EC.

The counter-argument to this concept was best represented by Charles de Gaulle, who said in a press conference in 1966: “I would like to elaborate on the term “integration”. This is presented to us in a way that supporters of this concept argue – let us merge the six member countries to a supra-national entity! Then everything will become very easy and very practical. But it is impossible to find such an entity, because there is no federator in Europe today who – in a sufficient manner – commands the power, the credit and the capability to do it.....”

The conflict between the two sides went on for decades and became clearly visible in the drafting procedure for the European Constitutional Treaty. The very fact that this draft treaty was rejected in referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005 made it clear once and for all who is the winner of this struggle: for some member countries the label “constitution” and what this label implied, was simply too much to accept. The amended draft treaty which was recently agreed in a summit meeting in Lisbon bears only the modest label of a “reform treaty”. In other words: reality is that on the basis of a reform treaty (provided it will be ratified by all 27 member countries), the United States of Europe is no longer a political option for the foreseeable future. I have no doubt that in some political quarters in Europe people are disappointed about the outcome of the struggle which has gone on for decades. But for the time being it seems clear that Charles de Gaulle was right: there is no federator in Europe.

Is this a fact which should be deplored?

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I don’t think so and let me give you two arguments for that:

1. The existence of the nation states in Europe is a reality. They will not disappear because the people living in member countries of the European Union don’t want them to disappear! It is as simple as that. The nation state is the focal point of identity of the peoples of Europe and they want to maintain this identity. But let me also say: to feel as a German, Frenchman or whatever, does not exclude that you can also feel being a European. Identity has always different layers! So, this is another reality.
2. The EU in its present shape and structure has become an important player on the world stage in her own right, despite the fact that she is not a state in the classic sense of political science.

The EU is one of the leading economic powers in our globalised world, nobody will doubt that. In many other policy areas, such as climate and environmental issues, research, development policy and, indeed, also in the field of foreign, security and defense policy, the EU has become a strong partner in world politics, whose voice is not to be neglected.

In the past decades unique structures, mechanisms and rules for decision making, competences, checks and balances including a court of justice and a directly elected parliament have been developed. One of the most important cornerstones of the overwhelming success of this development in Europe was and still is the fact that sovereign nation states are ready to give up bits and peaces of their sovereignty for the benefit of the whole. By doing this over the past 50 years on a voluntary basis, they have created an added



value for the security, prosperity and well-being of their own citizens, which is an every day reality in the member countries of the EU.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion:

Although we Europeans have not achieved the United States of Europe in the classical sense of the definition of political science, we have been very successful to develop something very unique which in many aspects comes very close to that. I would be very happy if our African partners draw some lessons from this unique success story of European integration for the benefit of all Africans.

Thank you for your attention.

Remarks:

Opinions expressed in these contributions are those of the authors.