Reading Summary: “Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?” by Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning

Nathan Jordan

Professor Katherine Bersch

POL 140

25 October 2018

Article Citation in [APSA style](https://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf): Collier, Paul and Jan Willem Gunning. 1999. “Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 13(3): 3-22.

Three Sentence Summary: While political scientists and economists have historically attributed Africa’s slow economic growth rates to external factors such as being landlocked or overdependent on international aid, Africa’s slow growth rate is probably caused by domestic-destiny and domestic-policy failures. More specifically, domestic-destiny’s effects on Africa include the tropical environment, resistance to a demographic transition away from a high population growth rate, and small domestic economies; domestic policy failures include an unnecessarily high rate of public sector employment, low contract enforcement, overvalued exchange rates, a narrow range of commodities for export, and poor infrastructure. However, Africa could experience a higher growth rate with more industrialization (especially in its coastal cities), an improvement of its infrastructure, and more private investment.

Three questions you have about the article:

1. This article is outdated; has Africa experienced any of the consequential demographic changes as this article predicts will occur?
2. What have been the effects of China’s investments into African infrastructure in order to gain access to natural resources?
3. How could international actors prompt a process of industrialization in Africa, which would increase demographic stability and help with economic growth?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (one being totally easy/readable – 10 being completely incomprehensible), how difficult to read and understand did you find this article?

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