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## 'Africa Rising': Exploring Bulging Youth Population as a 'Tickling Time Bomb' or a 'Demographic Dividend'

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### **Abstract:**

*Africa has not really seen the bright side of life. Described as the 'Hopeless Continent' during the chaotic 1990s that was characterized by anemic growth and pervasive poverty; the continent experienced economic turmoil that crashed many economies as it witnessed rising unemployment among the population, the currencies took a free fall and sovereign debt crises ensued, thus, leaving Africa prostrate. However, in the late 2000s, after decades of slow and unimpressive development, a new vista of robust economic growth and improved governance emerged on the horizon, prompting a whole new narrative for the erstwhile gloomy continent. 'Africa Rising' is the cliché that very much captures the glowing phase of growth emerging on the continent. From the ashes of centuries-old balkanization and subjugation, a new Africa, with guided optimism is gradually unfolding. This paper utilizes secondary (including historical) sources of data to show that much as the cliché seems encouraging, the rising number of the youthful population in Africa calls for serious concerns. It concludes that if properly harnessed, the bulging youth population in Africa could turn out to be the ingredient that will concretize Africa's rising profile but if left unmanaged and unstructured, the phenomenon could turn out to be a major challenge to sustainable peace, economic growth and development.*

**Keywords:** Africa rising, democracy, development, neo-colonialism, youth

### **1. Introduction**

Africa is already being described as the world's youngest continent in terms of the average age of its population. By 2030, it is predicted that Africa will have the lowest dependency ratio of any region – in other words, the largest ratio of working-age population to the total (UNDESA, 2015). By 2040, Africa will have more than 1.4 billion people of working age – far surpassing China and India (ibid). This position has been corroborated by the United Nations World Population Prospects that by 2035, the number of Africans reaching working age (15-64) will exceed that of the rest of the world combined.

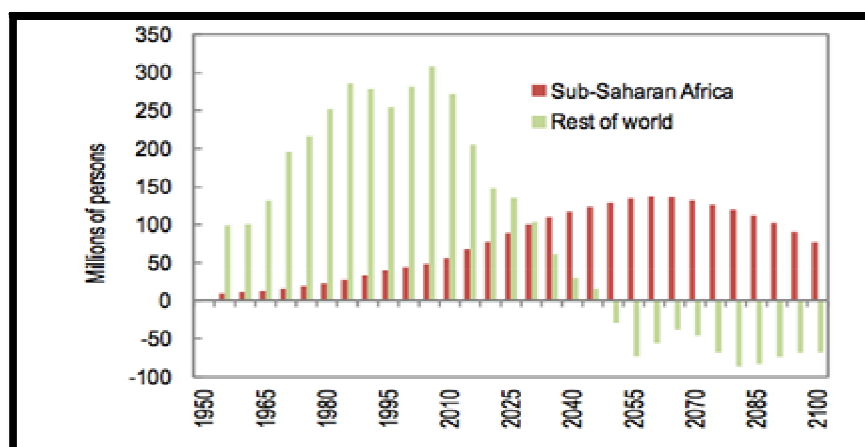


Figure 1: Change in Working Age Population (Ages 15 – 64)

Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects, 2012; and IMF Staff Calculation

It is therefore imperative for Africa to leverage on its greatest strength, its future asset: the size and quality of youths across the continent. Failure to tap into the opportunities of this growing youth population would be detrimental to the future of Africa's peace, growth and development.

This paper derives from a concern with contemporary African situation. It delves into the past because without doing so, it would be impossible to understand how the present came into being and what the trends are for the future.

## 2. The African Situation

In the long march of man from the cave to the computer, the international system had always been an unequal system. The sphere within which states operate is a theatre of inequality per excellence (Olu-Adeyemi, 2005:78). Africa's contact and interaction with the developed world has been skewed and not quite beneficial to the continent. The Managing Director of IMF, Christine Lagarde's assertion at the 2014 Africa Arising Conference in Maputo that "when everybody benefits, growth is more desirable" aptly resonates the wise saying of the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria that 'ajoje o dun, benikan o ni'. The above expressly captures the precarious situation of Africa in the global economy.

Africa's contact with the rest of the world has remained at the expense of the continent in many ways. The two most important fallout, being the transatlantic slave trade and subsequently, colonization. Africa's dilemma during and as a result of the slave trade has become part of history but one of its permanent legacies is of course, the African Diaspora, which has had ramifications for the development of the world in Europe and the Americas. Strictly speaking, the African only became a slave when he reached a society where he worked as a slave. Before that, he was first a free man and then a captive. On the whole, the procedure by which captives were obtained on the African soil was not only debasing but up mostly demeaning. It was through warfare, trickery, banditry and kidnapping. As captured by Rodney (1980:104):

when one tries to measure the effect of European Slave trade on the African continent, it is very essential to realize that one is measuring the effect of social violence rather than trade in any normal sense of the word.

Many things remain unclear and uncertain about the slave trade and its consequences for Africa, but the general picture of destructiveness is clear, and the logical consequence of that destructiveness is yet to abate on the fortunes of Africa. One other thing that cannot be glossed over is that the slave trade led to the massive loss of African labour force in a very critical manner because able-bodied young men and women between ages 15 and 35 were the preferred choice of the Europeans thus upholding the contention that the European slave trade was an under developing factor for Africa (M'baye, 2007:613).

Beyond Slave Trade, European colonization after the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 led to the looting of African treasures with impunity, and the establishment of an economic system to help perpetuate exploitation. The resultant effect of this great scramble was the truncation of genuine socio-economic and cultural evolution of the continent which readily manifested in the loss of everything of value to Africa – the economy, the culture, even the African psyche was undermined by this callous takeover. The continent could not develop at its own pace but became a caricature of the colonial overlords. "It is unfortunate that, till this day, Africa is yet to untangle itself from the webs of colonialism' (Pheko, 2012:2).

Colonialism, which has been captured as "transfer of wealth from Africa to overseas countries" (Davidson, 1994:19), was an arrangement to merely perpetuate Africans as producers of primary products that are needed by the developed world. The Arusha Declaration powerfully and simply expressed, one of the deepest truths of the colonial experience in Africa, it stated that:

We have been oppressed a great deal, we have been exploited a great deal, and we have been disregarded a great deal.  
(Rodney, 1980:227).

As long as the colonial system persisted, this dismal scenario was unmitigated hence the strong desire of Africans to shed the yoke of colonialism. Beginning with Ghana in 1957, the African desires and efforts at self-rule culminated in the demise of apartheid in South Africa in 1994. The perceptive questions then are: Were there any real prospects for independent Africa in the world? How far can the self-governing African States rise above poverty and want and catch up with the global community?

Beyond colonialism, Africa was also battered by neo-colonialism. Although African states are today independent of colonialism, they remain heavily dependent and exploited under the effects of internal political failures, neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism. This dependency and exploitation particularly through the activities of Trans National Corporations, adversely affects the living conditions of millions of people in Africa, creating economic hardship and in some cases encouraging political repression. These problems can be linked to the crisis of underdevelopment in Africa and the attendant refugee problem.

The former Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah who described neo-colonialism as the worst form of imperialism and capitalist exploitation could not have been more correct. According to Nkrumah (1965),

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State that is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty.

In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside. Foreign capital is used for exploitation rather than development of less developed countries; investment increases gap between rich and poor. Aid given to neo-colonial state returns to the imperialist country.

Nkrumah's position has been well articulated by Ake (1980) and Falola (eds) (2002) among several other scholars.

The aforementioned issues have hampered African countries and the continent has been unable to show brilliant performance in the management of her developmental efforts. For instance, on the economic scene, the situation has continued to deteriorate as most African States are neck deep in foreign debt, corruption, executive recklessness, and irresponsible economic policies and management. Majority of the African countries are faced with 'debt crises, a situation of irredeemable debt while the resources that ought to make the Continent better off are repeatedly exported to the developed world.

The foregoing raises the following questions:

- To what extent has Africa truly arisen from the crucibles of its chequered past?
- To what extent is the continent positioned to capitalizing on its present advantages of youthful population to create for itself a sustainable future?

### **3. Is Africa Rising? If Yes, What Type of Rising?**

Grieve (2015) expressed concerns on whether Africa is rising or not. The Scholar stated that "In the year 2000, the Economist ran a cover story with the title "Hopeless Africa". Four years later, Robert Guest, who served as the Economist's Africa Editor, published "The Shackled Continent", a book that pretty much concluded that, barring any miracles, Africa's future was bleak. The book was widely praised, not least of all by all-round Africa expert Bob Geldof who said "[it] was written with a passion for Africa and Africans". However, in 2011, the current era of Afro-euphoria signaled its triumphant entrance with the Economist's Africa Rising cover story. In contrast to the Economist's cover story of just a couple of years back, this one declared that there was hope for the hopeless continent. TIME Magazine of November 2012 also agreed with the Economist that Africa is the "world's next economic powerhouse".

There is now wide expectation, undergirded of course by the likes of the Economist, that growth will continue unabated going forward. The "Africa rising" narrative suggests that the continent is now well on its way to self-sustaining growth. There is the belief that Africa's economic performance has signs of improved resilience to shocks and economic challenges. This is the kind of growth that the East Asian "tigers" and the countries known as the West experienced during the times they were rising. The kind of growth that has led to a massive reduction in poverty in China within a generation.

African Development Bank Group's 2015 Tracking Africa's Progress in Figures confirms that African economies have sustained unprecedented rates of growth, driven mainly by strong domestic demand, improved macroeconomic management, a growing middle class, and increased political stability. The Report further shows that Secondary-school enrolment grew by 48% between 2000 and 2008 after many states expanded their education programmes and scrapped school fees. Over the past decade malaria related deaths in some of the worst-affected countries have declined by 30% and HIV infections by up to 74%. Life expectancy across Africa has also increased by about 10%.

Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rose to 4.5% in 2015 and moved to 5% in 2016 after the subdued expansion of 2013 (3.5%) and 2014 (3.9%). The 2014 growth was about one percentage point lower than predicted in the 2015 African Economic Outlook (AEO), as the global economy remained weaker and some African countries saw severe domestic problems of various nature. Despite the current global economic challenge, and if the AEO 2015 predictions are right, Africa will soon be closing in on the impressive growth levels seen before the 2008/09 global economic crisis.

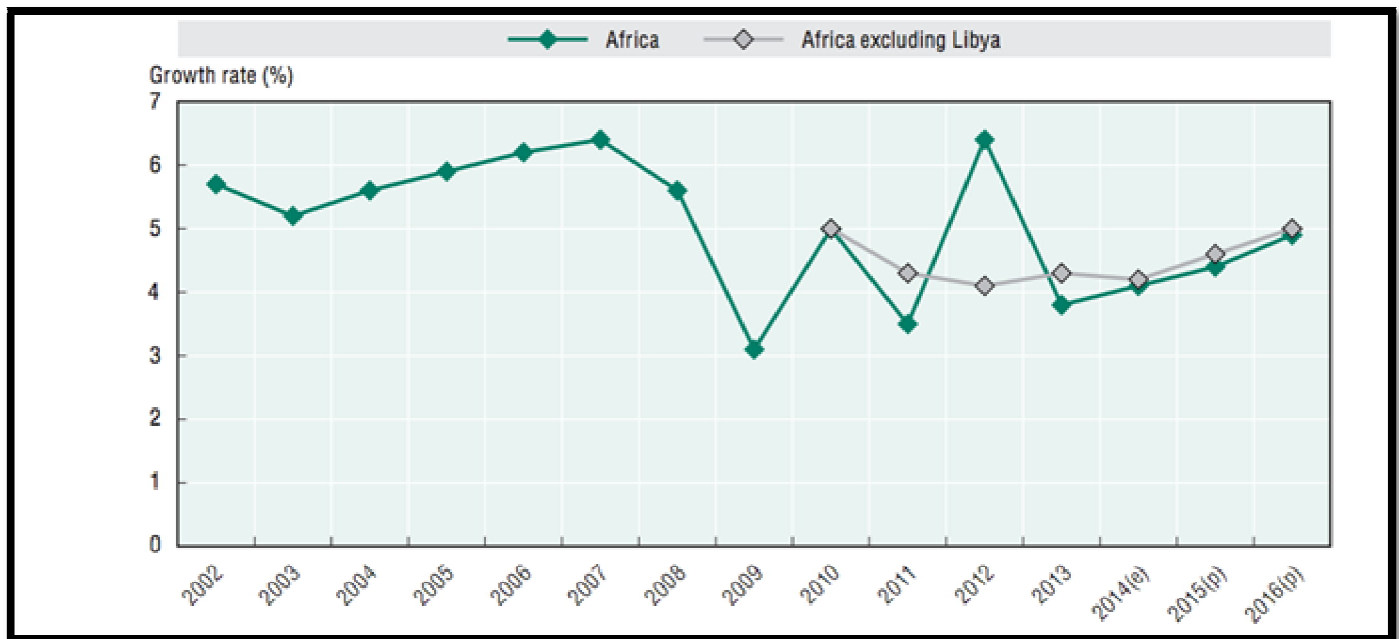


Figure 2: Africa's Economic Growth, 2002 – 2016  
 Note: (e) Estimates; (p) Projections  
 Source: Statistics Department, African Development Bank

Many goods and services that used to be scarce, including telephones, are now widely available. Africa has three mobile phones for every four people, the same as India. By 2018 nearly 30% of households are expected to have a television set, an almost fivefold increase over ten years.

Although statistics in 2014 showed African countries making significant strides in all dimensions of human development, comparable with other regions of the world (17 out of 52 African countries achieved high and medium levels of human development), human development gains are uneven with significant inequality between and within countries.

High human Development (above 0.7)	Medium human Development (between 0.55 and 0.7)	Low human Development		
Algeria Libya Mauritius Seychelles Tunisia	Botswana Cabo Verde Congo Egypt Equatorial Guinea Gabon Ghana Morocco Namibia SaoTome and Principe South Africa Zambia	Angola Benin Burundi Cameroon Central African Republic Chad Comoros Congo, Democratic Republic of the Cote d Ivoire Djibouti Eritrea	Ethiopia Gambia Guinea Guinea- Bissau Kenya Lesotho Liberia Madagascar Malawi Mali Mauritania Mozambique	Niger Nigeria Rwanda Senegal Sierra Leone Sudan Swaziland Tanzania Togo Uganda Zimbabwe

Table 1: Country Classification of Human Development Levels by Low, Medium and High  
 Note: Data Were Unavailable for Somalia and South Sudan

Also, it is interesting to note that at the end of the cold war, only three African countries (out of 53 at the time) had democracies; since then the number has risen to 25, of varying shades, and many more countries hold imperfect but worthwhile elections (22 in 2012 alone). Only four out of now 55 countries—Eritrea, Swaziland, Libya and Somalia—lack a multi-party constitution. Armies mostly stay in their barracks and big-man leaders are becoming rarer, although some authoritarian states still exist.

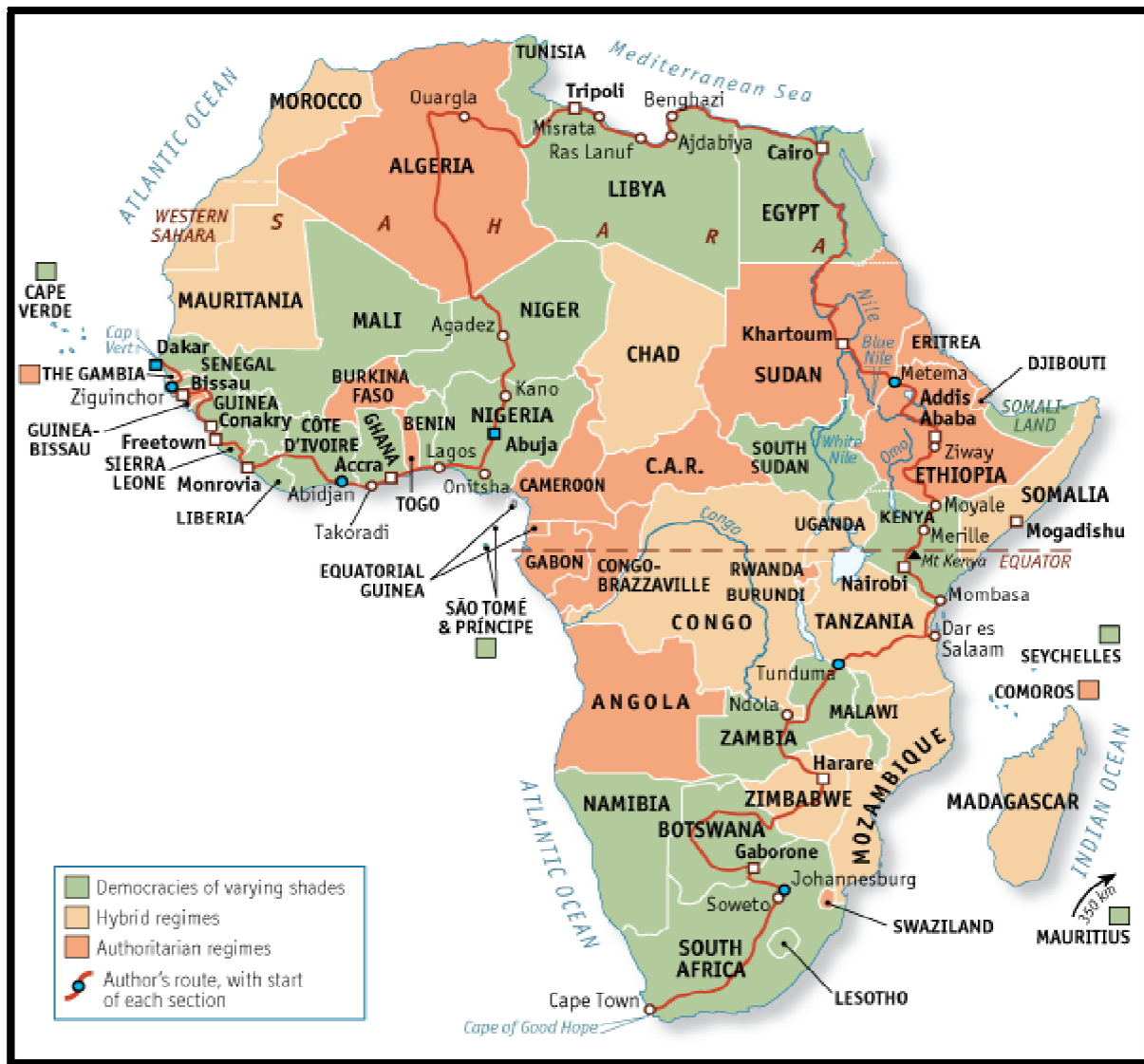


Figure 3

Despite all said and done, Africa should not allow the rhetoric of “Africa Rising” to give a false sense of comfort thereby distracting it from the real work that is needed to be done.

#### 4. Leveraging the Power of Africa’s Younger Generation

In 2015, The United Nations pronounced that demographically, Africa is a continent with up to forty percent of its population aged between fifteen and twenty-four and more than two thirds below thirty years (UNDESA, 2015). The United Nations stated that the youth population in Africa is large (about 200 million, which is 20 percent of its population of more than 1 billion). According to the United Nations (2013), Africa’s 2011 population was estimated at 1.05 billion and is expected to double by 2050.

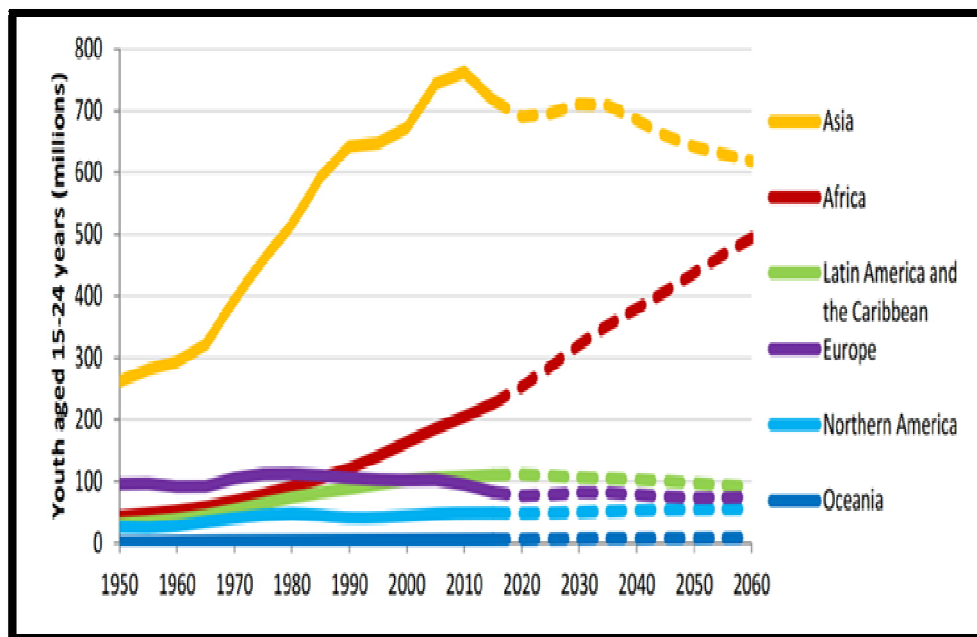


Figure 4: Youth aged 15-24 years, by Region, 1950-2060

Data source United Nations (2013) World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision

Turning this huge demographic dividend into a development advantage for Africans is the herculean challenge facing government and policy makers in Africa. Africa is on a different developmental path from the rest of the world. The challenges are vastly different and the way it is approached will define the trajectory, and ultimately the destiny of the continent.

Africa as a continent should provide the opportunity for a unique type of leadership – the one that recognizes the inherent potentials of the continent's youthfulness. The type of leadership that recognizes the fact that the continent does not exist in a bubble; but that technology and internet connectivity are opening some new gateways of incredible opportunities. Youths are being exposed to the outside world more and more and are learning about other cultures other than their own, in and outside the continent. This new knowledge is shaping the way Africans think about the world and their responsibility to the continent.

The ensuing scenario calls for very sound leadership that will help the continent to redefine its priority and help give a clear sense of identity to its young persons. Africa cannot afford to have youth second guessing themselves and their position in the world as people. The African leader has the unique challenge of keeping the African agenda a top priority in the minds of African youths. African leaders should therefore utilize mass orientation as a vital force to spearhead this change of heart within Africa and inspire the youth to believe in themselves.

A key obstacle to Africa's long-term prosperity, productivity and stability is the crisis facing the continent's youth. Young people in Africa are economically, socially and politically marginalized. This failure to deliver for a growing and restless youth is the soft underbelly of the "Africa rising" narrative. In broad terms, the lack of opportunity for many of Africa's youth is manifested in three ways:

#### 4.1. Unemployment

Data from ILO (2017) shows that in sub-Saharan Africa, the youth unemployment rate hovers between 12 and 14%. Almost half of the 10 million graduates churned out of the over 688 Universities in Africa yearly do not get job (Balogun, 2015:17). Africa's transformative agenda is threatened by high level of unemployment, particularly among the youth. The situation is compounded by an increasing mismatch between the skills workers offer and those demanded by the labour market. This points to the fast pace of technological progress causing disruptions in the labour market, but also to education systems that produce unemployable graduates.

#### 4.2. Migration

The recent horrifying incidents of mass drowning of young Africans in the Mediterranean Sea is a vivid testimony of their loss of confidence in the ability of the continent to deliver for them. In 2017, about 13% of international migrants, 36 million people, originated from Africa. In 2017, the numbers had increased by more than 60% to 16.2% and 37.5 million people according to the United Nations Migration Report (2017). The main reason for migrating out of Africa is the search for opportunities and a brighter future.



#### 4.3. Radicalization

Religion-inspired extremism has claimed the lives of more than 25,000 Africans in the last 4 years alone, according to the Global Terrorism Database (2017). A recent report by a UN Panel of Experts (2017) stated that worldwide recruitment to extremism increased by 76% between January 2016 and March 2017 alone. The lack of opportunity among the youth is a key driver of radicalization that leads to violent extremism.

Migration and radicalization in Africa, for example, have a common socio-economic and political root with marginalization of youths being the common denominator. It is therefore imperative for African leaders to proactively take urgent steps to curtail the manifestations of youth marginalization while also dealing with its root causes.

According to the key postulations of the African Youth Charter (2018), Africa's comparative advantage lies in its youthful population, and only through its youths can the continent surmount the difficulties that lie ahead. However, realizing this demographic dividend will require a holistic structural, economic, social and political transformation approach, especially if Africa must remain sustainably competitive and if it must put a stop to the myriad of socio-economic malaises that have plagued it.

Politically, it is expedient to widen political and economic space for African youths. Young people have largely been left out of the recent economic growth in Africa, and they are not faring better in the political sphere. The average age of an African citizen is 30 years while the average age of an African head of state is 70 years. This constitutes the largest age gap between those who rule and those they rule over worldwide. Exploring critical opportunities for young people is perhaps, the most pressing challenge for Africa. Having a lot of young adults is good for any country or continent if its economy is thriving, but if jobs are in short supply it can lead to frustration and violence. Whether Africa's demography brings a dividend or disaster is largely up to its leaders. With no obvious signs of population decline, Africa can tap into the immense talent and energy of its youths to create wholesome development and prosperity. The great potentials, dynamism, resourcefulness, resilience, and aspirations of the youths are invaluable social capitals that the continent must not only harness but which it must invest in and channel towards a more sustainable future for Africa, by refocusing efforts in cultural renaissance, education, Agribusiness, ICT, health, provision of capital for young African entrepreneurs etc.

#### 4.4. Renaissance

Culture is the way of life of a people. A nation that promotes and lives its culture is more likely to breed youths that are creative and that can readily proffer solutions to the multifaceted problems plaguing the society. Colonialism has eroded the African culture; and this has put the average African in a double-bind. They are largely detached from the African culture compared to youths in Asia and Latin America. Re-orienting the general psyche of Africa's young people towards embracing the values of the African culture, indigenous languages, music, and literature will invariably help to foster originality in creative thinking thereby improving the fortunes of Africa as a whole.

#### 4.5. Education

It is an accepted reality that investments in human capital are the most effective panacea for poverty alleviation of the individual and a catalyst for long term socio-economic development. The East and South-east Asian economies, for example adopted this template with remarkable success. Levels of education in Africa are comparatively low creating a considerable skills gap among youth at working age. According to the African Development Bank, 25% of African youths are still illiterate and despite a rise in primary school enrolment from 60% in 2000 to 77% in 2011, the issue of low skills levels in the workforce continue to be a problem. It is also a paradox that young people today are better educated than their parents, but this has not lifted their prospects of finding a job. Youths remain almost twice as likely to be unemployed than their elders. This is partly because of a mismatch between their skills and what is required for available employment opportunities.

It is imperative therefore that Education in Africa must be functional; and first step towards achieving this is a Skill-Knowledge-Ability Analysis (SKA Analysis) to identify the fundamental competencies for development. Thereafter, African leaders must redesign technical and non-technical education curricula to inculcate these competencies in the youths. Certainly, these will attenuate the mismatch between skills and demands of the employment markets; catalyze job opportunities as well as equip the African youth with requisite skills, knowledge and abilities to transform natural endowments to finished products thereby reducing import dependence.

#### 4.6. Information Communication Technology

The positive economic impact of the internet is well known. Mobile and internet platforms have increased access to improved agriculture, education, health, and governance services. Beyond these, Information Communication Technology (ICT) can also generate transformative growth that creates sustainable pathways to African youths. All over Africa, there is a growing recognition that the digital economy can have net positive impact on jobs and income generation for young people. Access to these opportunities can be a lifeline to many of the disadvantaged youths in the continent. However, like other sectors of the African economy, the digital economy too faces the same critical skills gap between supply and demand that defines the broader labour market. The current reality is that there are higher potential youths entering the workforce each year than there are new digital jobs being created.

The big challenge for Africa is to seek creative ways to maximise the opportunities in digital jobs by focusing investment to grow the digital market and develop skills in order to create more job opportunities for young people. Already, the social media has opened up a plethora of opportunities for the younger generation, who have embraced it wholeheartedly, using social media to have their voice heard and their products seen globally. Africa must not hinder such opportunities through bills such as the Social Media Bill being proposed in Nigeria. Africa risks alienating a significant part of its population by stifling their rights to express their views and challenge conventional wisdom. Rather, focus should be on supporting the vibrant social media and empower the youth to use the social media in the most effective and responsible manner.

#### *4.7. Gender Equity*

It is a known fact that women represent 50% of Africa's population and must be given serious attention. This constitutes about 40-50% workforce in Africa and they are needed to bring Africa out of the woods. Across Africa, women face an array of barriers to achieving their full potentials from restrictive cultural practices to discriminatory laws and highly segmented labour market. Eliminating gender inequalities and empowering women could raise the productive potential of one billion Africans delivering a huge boost to the continental development potentials.

#### *4.8. Agriculture and Wealth Creation*

In the last two decades, African economies have recorded phenomenally positive structural transformation as a result of improved macroeconomic management, a growing middle class, rapidly changing food system, and increased domestic demand. Its agricultural commodities, coupled with natural resources have accounted for about 40% of the growth since 2010 (Africa Economic Outlook, 2016). It is a paradox that with these positive indices, Africa is still plagued with high levels of poverty, food insecurity and inequalities which have continued to hamper continental growth.

40% of globally arable land is located in Africa, yet less than 10% is cultivated. No priority is therefore, more important for African Government than utilizing agribusiness incubation programmes to create economic opportunities and alleviate poverty among young men and women. Agribusiness incubation programmes could contribute to creating economic opportunities – jobs and poverty alleviation – among young men and women at the local and regional levels in Africa. Giving the right social and policy environment, Agribusiness incubation can be a critical tool for creating wealth among the teeming youth and women population in Africa. At least 30% of youth can be readily absorbed in the agricultural value chains (production, marketing and processing for consumption and export). According to World Bank (2013) "Growing Africa Unlocking the Potential of Agribusiness", Sub-Saharan Africa is reported to have earned US\$313 billion in 2010 from agriculture and agribusiness. If matched with more electricity and irrigation, smart business and trade policies and a dynamic private agribusiness sector in an increasingly urbanized Africa, the World Bank estimates that agriculture and agribusiness together are projected to become a US\$ 1 trillion industry in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) by 2030.

#### *4.9. Access to Capital*

A major challenge in the empowerment of African youths for entrepreneurship development is lack of access to small and medium business financing. Research by the International Finance Corporation (2017) estimated that up to 84% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Africa are either un-served or underserved, representing a value gap in credit financing of US\$140- to \$170 billion. Capital in Africa is still a serious concern and majority of the entrepreneurs (76%) source of financing is personal and banks are not willing to provide loans simply because their loans are not tailored for business start-ups. This poses a herculean challenge to African leaders. A veritable way of leveraging the dynamism of African young population is to create opportunities for them to be job creators as against job seekers. Economic policies must be recalibrated to provide a pool of investible funds for young entrepreneurs with fundable plans. This will necessitate the removal of barriers created by financial institutions: barriers such as high interest rates; stringent requirements for cash-backed or fixed asset-based collaterals. Additionally, African leaders should consider the setting-up of "Special Fund for Entrepreneurship Development & SMEs" with the objective of catalysing the productive capacity of African youths and consequently enhancing their livelihoods.

#### *4.10. Creative Industry*

The fact that Nigeria now produces more movies than America does is incontrovertible. Nollywood has become a N3 Billion-dollar industry, bigger than Hollywood by volume and also Nigeria's largest employer of labour after Agriculture. The youth-dominated film-makers, novelists, designers, musicians and artists now thrive in a new climate of hope. African Youths have taken the centre stage in Film, Fashion and Fun! Nollywood generates an impressive \$590 million dollars annually and have more than 1 million people, especially the youth. Young Africans have used their entrepreneurial and acute sense of creativity to put African music, film and arts culture on a global scale. Government must invest directly in the creative industry, create an enabling environment and invest in security measures and innovative technologies to banish piracy. Ultimately, Africa must invest and encourage intra-African Tourism to promote the people, their unique creativity and the economy. This is imperative considering the World Tourism Organisation statistics that "global tourism amounts to \$3 Billion per day out of which Africa has just 5.2%". (UNCTAD, 2015)



#### 4.11. Industrialization

The fact that Africa is industrially backward is incontestable. While it keeps expecting technology transfer from the North, the simple fact is that the technologically advanced countries are racing, unperturbed. Africa must invest in her youths in the realm of technology especially computer technology and communications. Concerted intra-African collaborative efforts must be made on Infrastructure, Power, Rail and access to capital. A clear industrial policy is long overdue for Africa. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond will definitely bring about great challenges that might transcend human comprehension. It is therefore imperative for African Youths to be the focal point of technological and industrial investment.

#### 4.12. Sports

Sport has an important contribution to make in creating a prosperous continental economy. Sport can contribute to the economy by providing direct employment and contributing to economic output and incomes through sport businesses and services and the manufacture of sport goods and equipment; by acting as a catalyst for investment and regeneration; by assisting in developing a positive image and improving attractiveness of an area for business investment, and as a place to live, work and visit; improve the skills and qualifications of the workforce both for employment in the sport and cultural sector and in other industries; and help to reduce the cost to the economy of workforce absence due to ill health arising from non-participation in sports and fitness activities; and by strengthening communities and improving the natural and built environment thus leading to safe, strong and sustainable communities.

According to Ojameruay (2006)

the sport sector and its supporting industries are significant contributors to modern economies, especially in developed countries. In England, over 400,000 people are estimated to be employed in sports-related activities. This represents about 2% of total employment in the economy.

Sport-related activities also account for more than £9.8 billion in value added (i.e. 1.5% of total gross value added or GDP) and \$5.8 billion (or about 1%) of total household disposable income.

In the United States, a recent study by the Outdoor Foundation (2017) shows the important role the active-outdoor-recreation industry plays in the nation's economy. Figures from the study indicate the industry (i.e. bicycling, camping, fishing, hunting, paddling, snow sports, trail and wildlife viewing) pumps an astonishing \$730 billion into the U.S. economy annually; generates \$289 billion annually just in retail sales and services across the U.S; supports nearly 6.5 million jobs across the U.S. (i.e. one in every 20 Americans); generates \$88 billion in annual state and national tax revenue and touches over 8 percent of America's personal consumption expenditures which equals more than \$1 in every \$12 circulating in the economy.

The fact remains that in New York City, one of the sports capitals of the world, the sports industry is worth as much as the entire construction industry. Africa therefore has much to harness in the sports arena by leveraging on the capacity of the youths.

#### 4.13. Land Reforms

Africa must intensify efforts to change the laws, regulations or customs regarding land ownership. This may be government-initiated or government-backed, especially agricultural land. Aggressive Land Reforms is the best option in Africa as this will create access to credit, expand the means of doing business and encourage formalization of the informal sector so as to protect and to enforce land holder's rights and land tenure security for all citizens without any discrimination. African leaders owe the people a duty to encourage value addition to land resources and they must guard against aggressive 'land grabbing' by people from the developed world.

### 5. The Way Forward

It is evident that the vision of African Renaissance can only be fully realized if practical steps are taken at leveraging Africa's demographic advantage - large population of youth. In other words, African youths must be mobilized and equipped to help drive Africa's integration, peace and development agenda. The youths belong to a key segment of the population and are an essential pillar without which no meaningful development can be achieved. Their great potentials, dynamism, resourcefulness, resilience, and aspirations are invaluable social capital that the continent must not only harness but which must be invested in and channeled towards a more sustainable future for Africa.

The way to go for Africa to rise from the development back waters is to leverage on the capacity and potentials of the youth for breakthrough. This option must be aggressively pursued to salvage the continent from growth and development reversal. Africa has a peripheral economy having been heavily dependent on the North for survival. The continent is thereby controlled by the core capitalists especially in the areas of needs and raw materials. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond will witness an even more aggressive scramble than hitherto for the domination of international trade by the developed world through the transnational conglomerates.

The resource flow from the poor countries of the South, Africa inclusive, to the developed countries of the North is not likely going to abate, at least, not very soon. Regrettably, the current global economic challenge is already reducing the quantum of Foreign Direct Investment while some currencies like the Naira is falling steeply with no solution in sight. Africa therefore needs serious thinking on what it wants to do with her economy not only in the long run but most importantly, in the short run.

Africa must set priorities. Despite the present unfavourable economic climate, African Countries must do everything possible to build infrastructures that would ultimately serve as the foundations for whatever exploits the youths will perform. Africa needs to industrialize for it to really rise and all the associated industrial infrastructure viz energy, roads, communications, transportation must be made strong and durable.

Also, democratic and governance institutions must be strengthened to checkmate possible democratic reversals across the Continent. Despite the fact that most African states practices governmental models that are far from being truly democratic in content and character, the future of the youths are still better safeguarded within the ambits of the Ballot Box. Every hand must therefore be on deck to ensure that transparency and accountability reign supreme in Africa. Much as we Africa needs strong institutions, it cannot rule out intellectually strong men to drive Africa out of the woods.

Africa must as a matter of urgency, re-jig its development trajectory towards industrialization; encourage intra-African trade; share technology; protect intellectual property and have a common position on World trade Organisation (WTO) agreements. Every African leader must appreciate that conflict has been built into our geography by the colonialists so we must avoid what Collier and Sambanis (2012:4) has famously referred to as "conflict trap".

## 6. Conclusion

The rising number of the youthful population in Africa calls for serious concerns as demonstrated in this paper. If properly harnessed, the bulging youth population could turn out to be the ingredient that will concretize Africa's rising profile but if left unmanaged and unstructured, the phenomenon could turn out to be a major challenge to sustainable peace, economic growth and development. African Countries must in their own interests build the people, especially the youths. Africa's greatest potential is its people. They are the tools needed by the continent to grow and develop. The mistakes of the past must be corrected. This era is rooted in a powerful truth, Africa's most valuable resource is not its soil, its diamonds nor its oil; it is the talent and creativity of its people. Africa must leverage on the powers of the younger generation to rise.

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