

The Role of Geography and Demography in Africa's Development: An Assessment.

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Abstract

Most studies on economic development of Africa have tended to apportion the very slow pace of Africa's development mostly to socio-economic reasons and absence of robust, equitable policies. This paper attempts an assessment of the role of geography in explaining the influence of tropical region and its attendant features as the bane of Africa's rapid economic growth. It relies on secondary data from Ambrose Alli University Library, internet and other archival materials and has as well benefited from work done under several other research programmes. The study assesses the process of tropical development and Africa's problems within a worldwide tropical perspective; the demographic trends in Africa, with emphasis on the low levels of population density and urbanization and the delayed demographic transition compared with other developing regions. It further examines the roles of geography, demography, and policy in Africa's growth experience; and considers future growth strategies, and the urgent need for urban-based export growth in manufacturing and services. The paper concludes that Africa's development requires a shift from the traditional primary products to manufacturing, urbanization and closing the gap of spatial inequalities between urban and rural and between countries and regions in the continent.

Keywords: Assessment, Geography, Infectious Disease, Poverty, Agricultural productivity.

Introduction

The Sub-Saharan Africa remains the poorest and also the most slowly growing region of the World. This has placed it as one of the most obdurate features of the world economy. Geography has a long-standing concern with the evolving spatial organization and the material character of the Earth's surface is of great significance to decision makers in economic, business and government. It could be an issue that concerns the location of a new public facility or the development of a stream restoration project, decision makers must consider significance of the geographic relevance such as location, the relationship between processes at different scales, and the changing character of particular environments and landscapes.

The IMF Africa development (2021) placed Africa's 2020 per capita GDP at \$1,485.5 and Nigeria at \$2,097.1, it notes 'that the outlook for the region has improved since October 2020; the -1.9 percent contraction in 2020 remains the worst performance on record. Sub-Saharan Africa will be the world's slowest growing region in 2021, and the risk of falling further behind as global economy abounds.

According to the terms of the United Nations Development Programme human development index (1997b), the uses of life expectancy and literacy as well as per capita GDP, shows that thirty-two of the forty countries that rank lowest, and nineteen of the bottom twenty, are in sub-Saharan Africa. In most discussions, six sets of factors have frequently been cited as



responsible for Africa's poor economic performance, they are: external conditions: the many years of slave trade and colonial rule, and the manipulation of African politics till date; heavy reliance on a very narrow primary exports, with decline and volatility in terms of trade; internal politics: characterized by authoritarianism, corruption, and political instability; economic policies: protectionism, statism, and fiscal wastefulness; demographic change: specifically, rapid population growth; and social circumstances: profound ethnic divisions, designated by high levels of ethno-linguistic and -religious diversity and low levels of "social capital" (Bloom & Sachs, 1998).

At the very heart of Africa's poverty there is the extreme disadvantageous geography that portrays its societies and the way it interacts with the rest of the world.

The Sub-Saharan Africa remains most tropical in the actual sense of the fact that the highest proportions of land and population in the tropics across world's key regions, and the tropical regions in broad-spectrum pause far behind temperate regions in terms of economic development. Bhattacharyya (2016) observes that "recent economic growth record of developing world has been the subject of many discussions. Indeed, some nations in developing world have been growing at an enviably rapid space. In spite of such dynamism in some developing economies, the gap between the rich and the poor nations of the world is wider than ever". Put differently, its environment is equalled in raising impediments to growth. Bloom and Sachs (1998) asserts that due to its climate, soils, topography, and disease ecology, Africa suffers from persistent low agricultural productivity (food production), high disease burdens, and very low levels of international trade, which is concentrated in a few primary commodities; and estimating burden of diseases attributable to risk and responses (Michael et al, 2003). The tropical region's economic performance is further hindered by its demographic circumstances, which are in consonance with Africa's poor geographic and economic conditions. IFAD (2011) noted that 1.4 billion people are trapped in extreme poverty and reside in developing countries.

Globally, youth dependency ratios are highest in Africa, as a result of having the world's highest fertility rates and waning levels of infant and child mortality. This high youth dependency ratio has inflicted a substantial burden on African economies by reducing their productive capacity per capita (UNFPA, 2014). With low life expectancies and extremely youth-heavy age distributions, Africa tends to be associated with lower rates of saving and investment, and consequently therefore a slower economic growth. The few countries in the tropics that have recorded significant breakthroughs in economic growth in the last three decades were through the promotion of manufacturing or service sector exports.

What these have explained in these countries imply that technologies in manufactures and services can increase across climatic zones than technologies in agriculture. This could be noticed in success stories of Hong Kong and Singapore that are small island economies with unimportant agricultural sectors with rapid growth in manufacturing and service sector exports (Sheng, 2018). With the solitary exception of Mauritius, there is no African country that has made a similar transition to export-led growth in manufacturing or service sector (UNIDO, 2009). This is to some extent the result of Africa's greater inherent difficulties, and also as a result of the fact that neither African governments nor the IMF or the World Bank have promoted the kinds of institution needed for such advancement. Both IMF and the World Bank were created in 1944 in an International conference with similar goals to establish a framework for economic cooperation and development that would lead to a more stable and prosperous global economy. While this goal remains central to both institutions,



their work is constantly evolving in response to new economic developments and challenges (IMF & World Bank, 2021). There should be no misconception about this issue; and must not be seen as a case of "geographic determinism" by arguing that Africa is fated to be poor because of its geography. Others may see it as a distraction from the important truth that, geographic difficulties or not, African governments have seriously mismanaged economic policy in the past generation (Bloom & Sachs, 1998). It will be proper to clarify this from the on set. Categorically economic policy and econometric results show that to be true (Sachs and Warner, 1977). However, the emphasis here will be on geography for three reasons. First, there is little to be gained from yet another recitation of the damage caused by statism, protectionism, and corruption to African economic performance. Second, most economists are miserably neglectful of the role of forces of nature in shaping economic performance in general, and in Africa in particular. They treat economies as blank slate on to which another region's technologies and economic history may be grafted. A reference could be made to the study of world economic history by David Landes (1998), "The Wealth and Poverty of Nations"; this work assigns geography an extremely prominent role as a determinant of long-term performance. Third, and perhaps most important, good policies must be tailored to geographical realities. If Africa's agricultural productivity is very low due to climatological reasons, conceivably, growth should be led by outward-oriented industry and services, rather than another blind attempt at transplanting "integrated rural development" strategies from other parts of the world without customizing them to Africa's unique conditions (Bloom & Sachs, 1998). As it were, the intensification of scientific research on tropical agriculture in Africa along the lines of that groundwork of the "green revolution" in South and East Asia is defensible, since current technologies are insufficient for dramatic improvements in agriculture.

It is against the above background that this study attempts an assessment of the role of geography and demography in Africa's development. In doing this, it begins with an examination of the problems of Africa's tropical development within the worldwide tropical perspective, Africa's demographic trends and as well suggests future growth strategies including the need for an urban-based export growth in manufacturing and services.

Geography and Economic Development in Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is home to the world's poorest countries and a tropical region par excellence. It has 93 percent of its land area lying between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn (Bloom & Sachs, 1998). The true position of Africa's long-standing economic growth development crisis is its unusual geography. To this end, Fernand Braudel (1995) opines that "In understanding Black Africa, geography is more important than history. The geographical context matters and is most significant". Africa's dismal economic performance is tied to the region's geographical disadvantage with factors as poor institutional quality, low labour productivity and low levels of human capital, often viewed as an important determinant of its growth and development. A country's geography directly affects economic development through its effect on disease burden, agricultural productivity, the availability of natural resources, or its accessibility (see Gallup et al., 1999; Collier and Gunning, 1999; Ndulu, 2007; Nunn and Puga, 2011).

Thomas Sowell (1998) copiously referred to the work of Braudel, (1995) for the inclusive and enlightening handling of long-term linkages among geography, health, and economic



development. He further “emphasizes geography, especially its role in making cultural interaction more difficult both between Africa and the rest of the world and within Africa economic performance. Second, most economists are woefully neglectful of the role of forces of nature in shaping economic performance in general, and in Africa in particular”. He further noted that they “treat economies as blank slates onto which another region's technologies and economic history may be grafted. A strong counterexample is the study conducted by David Landes (1998), on world economic history which assigns geography prominent role in its first chapter as an extreme determinant of long-term performance.

Recently, a number of scholars share this view in their new economic geography (NEG) literature (Krugman, 1991; Fujita 1999; World Bank 2008) and have highlighted another mechanism through which geography affects a country's prosperity. Their key observation was that a country's location does not only determine its physical geography; it also pins down its position on the globe vis-a-vis all other countries (its relative geography). The NEG literature meticulously laid emphasizes on the important role of relative geography in the determination of a country's access to international markets. It foresees that the better the market access, the higher a countries' expected level of income.

Redding and Venables (2004) established empirically that market access indeed matters for economic development. Based on their estimation, the results for a worldwide sample of 101 countries, they discovered for example that if Zimbabwe were located in central Europe, the resulting improvement in its market access would everything being equal increase her per capita income by almost 80 percent. Furthermore, several other studies established the positive effect of market access on economic development (Breinlich 2006; Knaap 2006).

The Convergence Theory

This theory was formulated by Professor Clark Kerr of the University of California in the 1960s. The theory asserts that society move toward similarity over time as their economy develop. It explains that with the growth of a countries economy, the society's organisation will begin to change towards an industrial society. This theory proposes that ‘crowd behaviour is a composite of people who join and people join a crowd because of their underlying tendencies which can become enabled because of the power of the group. Not too long ago has the literature seen the first attempts still, outside the field of regional research to link the incidence of regional convergence to specific regional and especially relational, characteristics (e.g. geographical and economic distance between pairs of regions(Holmes et al., 2011, 2014). Though there is scanty literature, this theory looks at the drivers of convergence, focusing specifically on the influence exerted by economic geography. This study is interested in two aspects: one concerning various location and physical characteristics (first nature geography); and one concerning structural-economic characteristics linked to industrial structure, agglomeration and economic potential (second-nature geography). The third-nature geography relates to features of an area that are concerned with prior human involvement, such as the adoption of new technology, which implies that a certain level of human skills is available (Loanides and Overman, 2000).

The first nature geography entails the inherent features of an area that are independent of human activity. It includes topography, latitude, and incidence of natural resources endowments as well as agricultural potential such as soil quality and rainfall, and tropical climate. Africa's first nature geography affects its development negatively through isolation.



For instance, the Sahara Desert has long been a barrier to overland trade with Europe (Sachs et al., 2004). The continent suffers from lack of large, navigable rivers, alluvial plains, high evaporation rate and resource curse (Sachs and Warner, 2001). Young (2003) noted that these resources have been misused by the elite for personal enrichment or led to conflicts or civil strife over control. This has continued because of lack of appropriate institution.

The second-nature of geography constitutes features that depend on the spatial interaction between people in an area but are not necessarily inherited. This second aspect is important in explaining why areas with similar first-nature geography may end up at different levels of productivity and income. This includes population densities, population location and composition. It is on record that over time, Africa has the largest number of landlocked countries of any continent. Being landlocked was an ante fact of how those who scrambled in the 19th century drew up the borders. This further amplified the effect of demarcation. These landlocked nations face three-fold proximity gap of sizeable distance to international trade markets and the essence of crossing many borders. Typical African countries can have four neighbouring countries (Ndulu, et al., 2007a). The second proximity gap is the small size of these countries which were fragmented into 48 small economies with a medium GDP of US\$3 billion. For this reason, the small internal market is confronted with difficulties in making gains from specialization, compounded by low population densities, low urbanization, and weak internal transport links (Naude, 2007). Studies have discovered this to exhibit major impact on Africa's growth (Easterly and Levine, 1997). Bloom, Canning and Sevilla (2003) conclude that once first-nature geography is controlled, ethno-linguistic fragmentation becomes insignificant.

Here the pattern of city formation in Africa is important. Existing city agglomeration offer greater scope for new sustainable activities as a result of the fact that human capital accumulates faster in urban areas. What all these tend to establish is that the second and third-nature geography are often given initial impetus by first-nature geography. According to Wanner (2002) geography exert important effects on agglomeration; that is cities are more likely to be established and develop in favourable geographic areas. Therefore, first geography is an important factor affecting urbanization and city growth in Africa, the continent with the least mega-cities.

The above further support the fact that most features of Africa's underdevelopment have direct geographical basis, besides Africa is a conflict prone continent, whose geographical basis of the civil strife and their persistence remained difficult to fathom but what is common and known is that conflict do take place over scarce resources such as in Somalia; and Angola over control in resource-abundant region, civil wars in most African nations have discernible spatial dimension. This is evident in Angola, Uganda, Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan conflicts that follow a north- south pattern.

Tropical versus Temperate Development.

Since the Industrial Revolution began in England around the middle of the eighteenth century, a continually increasing number of countries have been caught up in the process called economic development. Development involves different sets of forces, and there is no simple model that can best explain how and why this process has operated or has failed to



operate in different countries. Based on that, this work advances the hypothesis that one of the most important reasons why a large number of countries have slowed in this process arises from their location in the tropics.

Since many countries are on both sides of the tropics, for this point of discussion, 'a tropical country is defined as one in which half or more of the land area lies between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn'. There are seventy-two such tropical countries, out of which forty-one are in Africa, including all sub-Saharan African countries except South Africa and Lesotho.

In 1820, the GNP per capita in tropical regions was 70 percent of GNP of temperate region. Further, the GNP per capita in the tropical regions was 25 percent of that in the temperate regions in 1992 (NBER, 2001),

In 1995, the tropical countries have a combined population of 2.3 billion, or 41 percent of the total countries in the universe, a combined land area of 45 million square kilometres (km²), out of a total of 129 million km² in the universe, or 35 Percent

Generally, there is the argument that compared to the Temperate Zones, there are certain effects of the tropical climate that, up to the present, hinder agriculture; handicap mineral exploration; and make the population less vigorous through disease and, possibly, through the direct physiological impact of temperature and humidity which are all geographic.

While the effects of tropical climate are not complete obstacles to economic development, but can render many of the problems of economic development in the Tropics sufficiently different from those in the Temperate Zone countries such that an extra obstacle has to be conquered and, as a result, all other relevant factors being equal, makes the pace of development in tropical countries to be slower.

The popular contrast drawn between the so-called North (rich) countries and the South (poor) countries in the world is wrong. The appropriate distinction is between the rich Temperate Zones and the poor Tropics. At the commencement of the Second Development Decade, January 1, 1971, most of the countries in the North and South Temperate Zones of the world had succeeded in becoming either "rich" countries, having a per capita gross national product (GNP) of more than \$1,000, or "middle-income" countries, having a \$375 to \$1,000 per capita GNP. Comparatively, most of the countries with tropical climate were "poor" with a GNP per capita of \$100 to \$375-or "very poor" with a GNP per capita under \$100. As John-Kenneth Galbraith (1951) noted, "If one marks off a belt a couple of thousand miles in width encircling the earth at the equator one finds within it no developed countries". The standard of living is low across Africa and the span of human life is short. The concern is that recent literature on development has paid little or no attention to any probable climate influence. The econometrics and mathematical growth models failed to provide for climatic parameters or variables. There is reference to climate among the combined list of "characteristics of drivers of backward economies" as also observed by Harvey Leibenstein (1963) from various leading economic writers whom he surveyed for same purpose.

The Tropical Environment and Agricultural Productivity

The low levels of income in the tropics mirror three forces: the very shape of the continent in terms of the north-south orientation has traditionally made technological transfer, especially in agriculture, between diverse climatic zones more difficult than as exist in Asia and Europe (diamond, 1997); endogenous technical change tilt toward the large temperate zone markets, the intrinsic difficulties of the diffusion of technology across ecological zones, and natural liabilities of the tropics in agriculture and health.



A look at the problems of agriculture; over time, has proved that agricultural technologies do not easily diffuse from temperate zones to the tropics and as result, the tropics are inherently disadvantaged in food production. Let us take Africa's peculiarity on health issues in this regard. While the tropics include broad sections of climatic and ecological zones, there are several important common features. A uniformly high temperature at sea level throughout the year; the major temperature gradients are linked to altitude, a decline of approximately 0.4C to 0.5C for every 100 m of height-and land mass-higher temperatures in the interior of continents, then lower temperatures were moderated by the sea or monsoon rainfall.

Secondly, isolation is generally high year round, except where it is limited by cloud cover, as it is over the equator. Thirdly, freezing is only experienced at very high altitudes, such as in the tropical Andes region, or the highest mountains of East Africa.

Fourthly, there is approximately equal length of day and night throughout the year. At the equator, all days are twelve hours in length, not including diffuse sunlight at dusk and dawn. However, at the tropical boundaries, the shortest day (on the winter solstice) is approximately eleven hours, and the longest day (on the summer solstice) is approximately thirteen hours. Surrounded by these common parameters, tropical climates vary greatly due to latitude, altitude, ocean currents, the size and configuration of land masses, location within continents (east coast climates, for example, are markedly different from west coast climates), relation to mountain ranges, and other factors.

This analysis of climatic variation within tropical Africa is based strongly on Koppen-Geiger classification system which recognized that vegetation and climate are intricately linked. So, vegetation that grows in a region is independent on the temperature and the precipitation, which are important factors of climate. The enhanced Koppen classification system divided the World into five remarkable climate zones, typically temperature, allows for different vegetation growth. As a result, Koppen's map used different colours and shades to represent the different climatic zones of the World. Certain zones are organized based on the nature of temperature in the region; another could focus on aridity of the region.

Around the equator in Africa, just as in most of the tropics around the world, there lies a zone of intense year-round rainfall and high temperature, which produces the great equatorial rain forests of West Africa, the Amazon Basin, and Southeast Asia.

Within Africa, this band is concentrated within latitudes 5⁰ S to 5⁰ N, but in West Africa (Liberia and Sierra Leone) it also exists around 10⁰ N. In the latitude bands of approximately 5⁰ to 20⁰ both north and south of the equator, the climate is generally characterized by a wet summer season and dry winter season. These kind of alternating seasons with high temperatures around the year create the vast savannas (grasslands) that cover roughly 60 percent of the African continent.

Inside these bands, and away from the equator, the longer is the dry season. Closer to the equator, the climate supports grassy woodlands; the far edges of the bands are extremely dry and support only open grassland, as in the Sahel region just south of the Sahara Desert. Past 20⁰ latitude, the arid zone tends toward desert. In the northern hemisphere in Africa, such deserts include the Sahara and parts of the Horn of Africa.

In the southern hemisphere, there is the Namib and the Kalihari. Much of East and southern Africa rests on a high plateau that is at least 1,000 m above sea level, with a range of much



higher mountains. The high plateau mitigates the intense heat of the tropics which generally enables it to receive more precipitation than land at sea level.

Partly this is an orographic effect, in which the mountains cause moist tropical easterly trade winds brought from the Indian Ocean to rise, resulting in condensation. Consequently, coast of East Africa is extremely hot and generally arid; the eastern highlands are cooler and much wetter. The results are profound as most of the populations of East Africa live up in the highlands and therefore far from the sea. What is gained in agriculture is greatly lost in transport costs.

The climate in tropical Africa differs from other parts of the tropical world, a number of factors account for the climate patterns. Africa has a large land mass; who's vast interior turn out to be extremely hot, as the temperature is not moderated by proximity to the sea. By contrast, in the island economies of Southeast Asia, temperatures at similar latitudes and altitude are affected (Weiss, 2009). Africa does not receive the great monsoon rainfalls that provide vital seasonal precipitation to South and East Asia. A lesser monsoon phenomenon occurs in part of West Africa, centered on Nigeria, but there is no equivalent in East Africa (Olaniyan, 2018, UNFCCC, 2020). There are factors that influence the climate of Africa; it's experiential that most of the continent that extends from 35⁰ S to about 37⁰ N latitude lies within the tropics. Secondly, the near bisection of the continent by the equator results in a fundamental symmetrical arrangement of climatic zones on both sides. It could be said that this symmetry is imperfect following this third factor (Dickson, no date) – that is the great east-west extent of the continent north of the equator, as compared to its narrow width to the south. As a result, the influence of the sea extends farther inland in Southern Africa. A quasi-permanent sub-tropical high pressure cell –the Saharan anticyclone develops in the heart of northern Africa, while the southern Africa belt of high pressure on land weaken during the time of high sun (the season when the sun is overhead in December and January in the South).

The fourth factor is made up of the cool ocean current, that chill the winds which blow over them, thereby create an influence over the climate of adjacent shores. The fifth factor arose from the extensive plateau surfaces of the continent and the lack of high mountain ranges, such as the Andes in South America or the Himalayas in Asia, the climatic zones in Africa kind of shade into one another rather than change abruptly from place to place. Lastly, these mountains have their climatic zones that vary with altitude. On the whole, there are numerous other local variations from place to place within the same climatic zones, as could be observed between urban centres and countryside.

Thus generally in Africa, either it rains all year round, as near the equator, or seasonal rainfalls are much less than in South and East Asia. Higher precipitation occurs in the East African highlands, due to orographic effects. As a result of lower rainfall and higher mean temperatures, much of Africa's soil water balance (measured as precipitation minus potential evapotranspiration) is highly unfavourable, much less favourable than in many other tropical regions. Much part of Africa suffers from serious aridity and a constant risk of drought.

Further increasing the risk of drought, rainfall variability (measured as absolute average percentage departure from the mean) is much higher in Africa than in tropical America or Asia. World Bank drought indicators illustrate that twenty- nine African countries experienced at least one year of drought during 1983-95. These countries include 50.9 percent of the African population. Twenty-four countries (with 46.7 percent of the



population) experienced at least two years of drought, and fourteen countries (with 28 percent of the population) experienced three or more years. Tropical climates pose serious difficulties for agricultural productivity, especially for many food staples (FAO, 2017). Chang (1968) argues, that "the rational choices are fewer and less appealing in the humid tropics than in most other climatic regions of the world." He went further to add that the obvious factors such as temperature and rainfall, and other several biological phenomena that distinguish the growth of plant in the tropics from temperate zones.

First, plants often use the duration of sunlight as a stimulus to flower (photoperiodism). Since there is slight variation in the length of the day in the tropics, many temperate zone plant species would not be induced to flower, whereas several tropical species are used to the twelve-hour sunlight in the growing season, as "short-day" plants.

Second, many plants need a period of cold temperatures in order to flower and develop (vernalization). Third, a number of plants require variation in radiation to develop properly. A fourth problem, specific to the humid tropics, is the lack of a dry season, since many plants can only bloom during the dry period of the growing season. The key economic plant species are common to the tropics for their survival (National Geographic, 2017).

Infectious Disease and Africa Development

It is an established fact that the long-term good health of global population depends on the continued steadiness and functioning of the biosphere's ecological and physical systems, often referred to as life-support systems. We can only ignore this long-established historical truth at our peril; yet it is all too easy to fail to see this dependence, particularly at a time when the human species is becoming more and more urbanized and distanced from these natural systems. The world's climate system is an integral part of this complex of life-supporting processes, one of many large natural systems that are now coming under pressure from the increasing weight of human numbers and economic activities (McMichael, Campbell-Lendrum, Ebi, Githeko, Scheraga, & Woodward, 2003).

Infectious diseases continue to be the major causes of mortality in Africa. Some of the well-known existing, emerging and re-emerging diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, cholera, meningitis, hepatitis, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, sleeping sickness, Ebola, SARS and others are causing suffering and mortality to a wide population in developing countries in general, and in Africa in particular (WHO, 2003a).

Further than mortality related statistics, a number of other methods can be considered to enumerate the weight of disease expressed in terms of socio-economic implications such as losses in productivity, care and treatment, hospitalization and handicap. In order to surmount the specific problems of each country, commonly used method is that which measures the global burden of disease in terms of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) which is a combination of Years of Life Lost (YLL) through premature death, and Years Lived with Disability (YLD), hence DALY is thought of as one lost year of healthy life (Mathers et al., 2007).

According to the WHO (2021) "DALYs due to communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and diarrhoeal diseases have dropped by 50% since 2000, Whereas DALY for diabetes increases by more than 80% between 2000 and 2019; and DALYs from Alzheimer's disease have more than doubled between 2000 and 2019.



The Global World has divided the nations and has economically classified them into two groups as developed and developing countries in relation to their level of development. Again, a third group is specified as least developed countries. Adopting the per capita income, the World Bank has introduced four levels of income, namely: high-income, higher-middle-income, lower-middle-income and lower income (World Bank,2003). If a broader definition of development that consider supplement income by other components such as the levels of health and education, the United Nations have put in place five main composite indices that can measure the average achievements in basic human development (human development index (HDI)), gender-related development index (GDI), human poverty indices (HPI-1 and HPI-2) and the gender empowerment measure (GEM). UNDP placed Sub-Saharan Africa on a score of 0.55 in HDI in 2019. This represents a low level of HDI. Throughout the periods 2000 – 2019 the Sub-Region remained within the index score of 0.42 and 0.55, which is an indicator of low human development (Sasu, D.D., 2021).

Demography in Africa between 1950 and 1995,

For Sub-Saharan Africa, the Berlin conference was just the last in a long list of what geographers considered “formative disasters,” unfavourably altering the human, physical, and political geography of the continent, creating continent wide problems of low density, long distances, and divided countries (Henry et al, 2010)

Different scholars in their works have emphasized the relative poor economic performance of SSA which portrays that Africa’s population weighted annual growth rate per capita was a mere 0.1 per cent over 1960 – 2000; which diverged it from the rest of the world at an average annual rate of 5 per cent between 1980 and 2000 (Collier and O’Connel, 2007). As a result, 35 of Africa’s countries are home to 87 per cent to all Africans, are still classified as low –income countries (Ndulu et al. 2007a).

Africa's population grew at an average annual rate of 2.6 percent and more than trebled, reaching 561 million. This rate of increase is historically unprecedented among major regions of the world over comparable lengths of time. Asia and Latin America, the other main developing regions, have also experienced rapid population growth during the past half century, but at the lower rates of 2.0 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively. Africa's share of world population was fairly constant and below 5 percent from 1820 until around 1915 but has increased steadily since, reaching over 8 percent in the early 1990s

A rising share of world population coupled with a relatively constant share of world income is one of the most important stylized facts of Africa's post-independence experience. The low average density is a reflection of the biased grouping of vast expanses of almost empty desert (Chad has five people per square kilometre), the large area of sparsely populated savannahs with weak agricultural potential, and few areas of relatively dense population. Regions of comparatively high population density are mainly in the East African highlands around the Great Lakes in particular, Burundi and Rwanda, and also the section of coast extending from southern Cote d'Ivoire to Nigeria, and the Indian Ocean island economies, such as, Reunion and Mauritius.

Zulu, Eliya of African Institute for Development Policy in Kenya observes the impending demographic hurdles facing African leaders, that “between now and 2100, three out every four people added to world population will live in Sub-Saharan Africa”, Nigeria leads the Sub-Saharan growth, though other countries will grow by major multiple; Tanzania and



Somalia, are expected to be 7 times larger; Malawi 8 times, and Niger will grow to more than 10 times its current population (Null, 2019). If the growth in Sub-Saharan Africa follows these projections, it will likely have important geopolitical repercussions. As it stands now, the region is home to more than 877 million people or about 12 in every 100 people on earth. In 2100, a projection of the medium variant for Sub-Saharan population is 3.36 billion people or one in every 3 people in the planet (L'Olmetto, 2021).

Overcoming Africa's Structural Barriers to Growth

A major concern has been that African economies typified by gloomy low levels of income, with high magnitude of the population engaged in agriculture, while the urban areas remain as political administrative centres instead of playing a pivotal role as exporting regions, with an inadequate international trade that concentrate in a narrow range of primary commodities. Given these realities, and the geographic and demographic factors that underlie them, the question is what kinds of growth strategies might be effective? Just as we started our analysis by placing Africa within the general development context of tropical economies, one can also examine the success stories of growth among tropical economies for lessons they may hold for Africa. To be sure, there have been precious few successes.

Within tropical Africa, only two unambiguous long-term candidates of Botswana and Mauritius could be seen. The case of Botswana is not generally replicable, because its success has depended on a very small desert population enjoying the benefits of large and well-managed discoveries of diamonds resources which were used effectively (Barclay, 2009); with an open trade policy, vigorous democracy and stable, and fiscal policy that is being carefully managed.

The case of Mauritius is different, as a typical tropical agricultural exporter of sugar cane, she has succeeded in export-led growth in manufactures and services. Outside the African region, the only tropical developing countries that averaged more than 3.0 percent per year in per capita GDP growth during 1965-96 are in Asia, Hong Kong (5.6 percent), Indonesia (4.6 percent), Malaysia (4.1 percent), Sri Lanka (3.1 percent), Singapore (6.3 percent), and Thailand (5.0 percent) (Briones, 2013). Much has been written about these economies—especially since they are also currently embroiled in financial upheaval; it is therefore possible to identify some of the key factors of their success that might be relevant to a strategy for renewed African growth strategy (Brainard, et al, 1999). Most important, the core of the Asian countries' growth strategy is an industrial policy that aimed to promote manufacturing, and increasingly service sector, export-led industrialization that enabled the people to move out of agriculture to industrial manufacturing and diversification (Felipe, 2018).

These countries not only aimed to increase export growth, but to move away from their traditional dependence on tropical commodities in order to benefit from the much more rapid growth in world trade in manufactures and services.

They recognised that agricultural exports would lack dynamism, not only because of limits to the growth of world demand but also due to technological limits to the expansion of production (FAO/UN, 2015). As many observers have noted, success in manufacturing export led growth was not just a function of market forces. It also required the introduction of key institutions, designed to link domestic labour-intensive manufacturing production with world markets. Thus Southeast Asian countries introduced new institutional arrangements with multinational firms to simplify the outsourcing of labour-intensive operations to the growth of local economies. Alesina, Sach & Bloom (1998) note that such arrangements



included export processing zones, in which infrastructure and customs administration were set up to reduce transactions costs for multinational enterprises and industrial parks were established for export-oriented production; duty drawbacks on tariffs on raw materials and capital goods imported for export production; generous tax holidays for export-oriented foreign investors; and flexibility in labour markets.

The strategy was essentially passed on from one location to the next. Hong Kong was first to adopt the approach, in the 1950s, and was emulated by Korea and Taiwan in the early to mid-1960s. Singapore adopted the export-led manufacturing model around 1967.

Summary and Conclusions

The position of geography in explaining sub-Saharan Africa's poor economic performance is time and again confined to its physical geography, looking at, for example, its hostile disease environment or poor climate. This paper assesses different roles of geography and establishes the importance of relative or economic geography as central to Africa's poor economic performance. While efforts at policy improvement in market access have been initiated through integrations, the very remote nature of the countries in SSA continues to remain an important impediment for its economic development. The proximity condition which is the increasing outcome of long distances to markets, being landlocked, the health pattern of tropical diseases and adverse climatic and soil conditions among others are some of the factors affecting Africa's economic development. Nearness to markets, customers, suppliers, competitors, supporting industries and the governments are among the factors that affects African productivity, which have remained low due to insufficient proximity between economic agents.

The proximity syndromes have two dimensions: (i) the proximity between African countries and international markets, and (ii) the proximity between economic agents within Africa, as a result of inadequate agglomeration of economic activity. Africa's development will only manifest if efforts are geared towards two interdependent directions: industrialization of the continent to shift from the dependence on primary commodities, and deliberate support for urbanization. Africa need integration into the world economy and this will require industries to concentrate on export in labour-intensive manufactured goods. As it stands now, both are hindered by absence of proximity. Africa need a deliberate regional cooperation support from the international community in form of aid, by ensuring the implementation and total adherence to international law on the rights of landlocked countries to have access to the sea, through extension of trade preferences to African regions and though ensuring greater consistency of international agreements and trade preferences with current regional integration agreements (Naude, 2007).

Conclusively, Africa's action to overcome the proximity gap should go beyond greater levels of urbanization, agglomeration, industrialization, and increase in per capita incomes, simply to start with an improvement on spatial inequalities within Africa, between cities and rural areas, and between countries and regions. Spatial inequalities will be achieved through improvement in economies of scale and specialization in manufacturing, and the payback of localization and urbanized economies in growing cities. Population migrations to denser, richer areas are among approaches to closing the global spatial disparities between Africa and the rest of the world, and could be a precondition for industrial success in Africa.

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BIO DATA

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