10

African Economic Development
Growth, Reversals, and Deep Transitions

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Introduction

Africa, and in particular sub-Saharan Africa – the focus area of this chapter – is the poorest region of the world at present.[1] Average GDP per capita levels, as well as the percentage share of the population living in extreme poverty, both show that the region lags significantly behind other world regions. In 2015, 41 per cent of Africans below the Sahara lived on less than $1.90 a day, and a staggering 84.5 per cent of Africans lived on less than $5.50 (2011 PPP; World Bank 2020). There are more stylized facts underpinning the picture of low economic and social development: Africa features the highest share of the labour force employed in agriculture, the lowest share employed in manufacturing, and the highest share of primary commodities in total exports. Child mortality and illiteracy rates, even though they have fallen dramatically since 1950, rank among the highest in the world (World Bank 2020). Africa also experiences unprecedented high rates of population growth, which raises the challenge to create jobs for growing masses of underemployed youth that flock together in cities. Moreover, a majority of African states still depend on structural development assistance, which is offered through direct support of state finances, as well as an array of subsidized public services provided by foreign NGOs (AfDB/OECD/UNDP 2014).[2]

Throughout the long twentieth century, African societies have been exposed to a great deal of political instability, not infrequently erupting into violent conflict. There were wars at the onset of colonization in the late nineteenth century; African troops were deployed during World Wars

1 Throughout this chapter, 'Africa' will refer to sub-Saharan Africa, excluding North Africa and South Africa, which I will only mention in passing.

2 For the twenty-seven low-income African countries, the official development assistance share of GDP averaged 13 per cent in 2000–2005, and 9 per cent in 2013–14 (AfDB/OECD/UNDP 2014: 49).

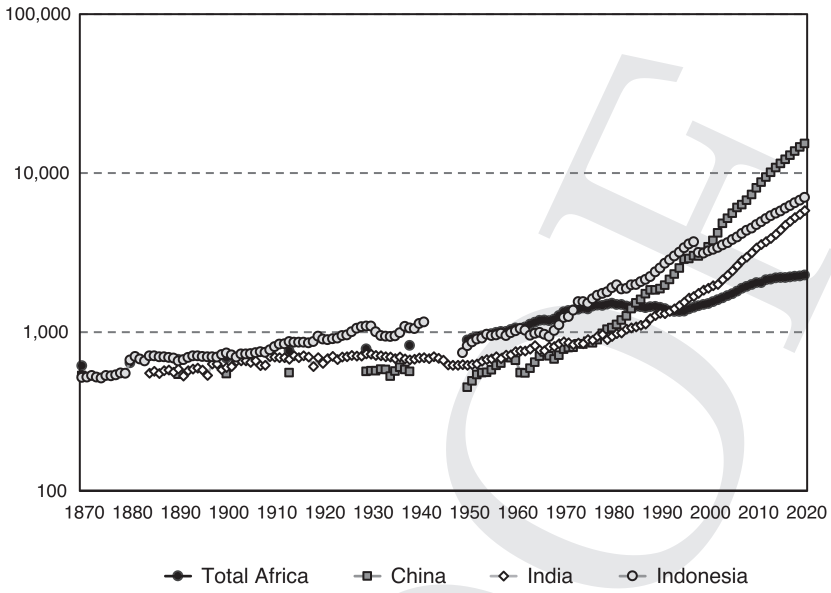

Figure 10.1 GDP per capita in Africa, China, India, and Indonesia, 1870–2020 (constant 1990 US$, log-scale)
Sources: 1950–2010: Maddison Project Database, version 2013; Africa pre-1950: backward extrapolations using Prados de la Escosura 2012: 23, table 10.3); 2010–20: forward extrapolations using International Monetary Fund 2020 (real per capita GDP growth).

I and II; independence wars were fought between the 1950s and 1970s; and during the postcolonial era, many newborn African countries experienced protracted civil warfare (Nugent 2012). A number of African states may qualify as a 'failed' state, or, in the terminology of North et al. (2009), as a fragile or basic 'limited access order'. Even though there has been an upsurge in more optimistic accounts of African economic and political development since the start of the twenty-first century (Bates et al. 2007; Radelet 2010; Young 2012), the general academic sentiment leans towards outright pessimism, or cautious forms of optimism at best (Lipton 2013; Rodrik 2014; Frankema and van Waijenburg 2018).

Figure 10.1 sharpens the main questions addressed in this chapter. This graph presents GDP per capita from 1870 to 2010 for Africa and three major Asian economies: China, India, and Indonesia. It shows that right after World War II, African countries were not the rock-bottom subsistence economies claimed by some scholars (Bloom et al. 1998: 207; Allen 2011: 91). GDP levels around US$900–1,000 per capita in the 1950s were substantially higher than the worlds' bottom range of US$300–400 per capita. This conclusion is also supported by studies documenting trends in real wages and human stature, or in reconstructed social tables (Moradi 2009; Frankema and van Waijenburg 2012; Bolt and Hillbom 2016). In fact, Africa only became the 'poorest' region of the world in the final quarter of the twentieth century, when other parts of the 'global periphery', and especially Asia, experienced accelerated growth, while Africa plunged into a long depression. Indeed, African economic development has been characterized by successive phases of growth and contraction, a pattern of cycles that has existed for a long time (Jerven 2010; Broadberry and Gardner 2019).

Will this pattern of recurrent growth and contraction transform into a more sustained growth path during the twenty-first century, with upward bending curves like those seen for India, China, and Indonesia? Or will growth reversals continue to hold the region back instead? While the future outlook is not central to this chapter, the insights into the comparative nature of African growth justify deeper historical reflections on the nature and drivers of long-term African development as a counterweight to ahistorical conceptions of 'structural impediments' to African growth (Austin 2008a; Frankema and van Waijenburg 2012). This requires an account that combines a view on the structural weaknesses of African economies, with a view on the deeper transitions that have taken place, and which continue to gradually, and sometimes radically, change their foundations. This chapter seeks to confront both aspects of African economic development since the start of the colonial era up to the present.

Growth, Reversals, and External Trade

Before we take a closer look at the major cycles of growth, we should point out that, historically, African poverty is deeply rooted in a combination of low agricultural productivity and large, albeit diverse, geographic barriers to economic and political integration. Extreme variety in rainfall levels, from deserts to rainforests, as well as erratic year-to-year rainfall, poor quality soils, a lack of navigable river systems and a high incidence of tropical diseases affecting humans, domesticated animals, and crops alike, created a comparatively harsh environment for human reproduction (Iliffe 2007: 1–16). Even though environmentally conditioned specialization created many opportunities for economic exchange, cultivation and herding practices were so diverse that fragmentation often prevailed over integration. Africa did not harbour the environmental conditions for a state like China, nor for the trade intensity that characterized the Mediterranean basin in ancient times, let alone early modern north-western Europe (Frankema 2014). To be sure, this is no reason for geographic 'determinism', but it is important to consider Africa's biogeographic make-up to understand long-term economic volatility *and* to appreciate the profundity of the transitions Africa has experienced during the long twentieth century.

The nineteenth-century 'commercial transition' was a prelude to these transitions. It set the stage for colonial occupation and profound long-term changes of African labour, land and capital markets (more on this below). Slave exports were substituted by increasing volumes of commodity exports (see Manning in Volume I, Chapter 10 of this book).[3] Without this transition, colonial rule would probably have been infeasible (Hopkins 1973; Frankema et al. 2018). Trade revenues provided the basis for colonial state expansion, and the more trade there was to tax, the larger the investment capacity of colonial governments (Frankema and van Waijenburg 2014). Throughout the colonial and postcolonial period, African export industries attracted the lion's share of foreign capital investment. Commodity export growth occurred in the context of overwhelmingly rural economies. Domestic consumer demand was constrained by low population densities, scarce concentrations of people in urban centres and large overland transportation barriers. The surpluses that were generated via growing labour specialization in export production thus weighed heavily in the region's income growth and placed African economies on a more *capitalist* footing (Warren 1980; Sender and Smith 1986; Austin 2005).

Colonial administrators, missionaries, merchants, and settlers largely agreed that 'commercialization' and 'civilization' were two sides of the same coin, as commercialization offered an alternative to internal slave trades and incentivized 'natives' to produce for the market.[4] Yet production for export markets occurred on African as well as foreign initiative, and it allowed colonial as well as African elites to reallocate significant parts of Africa's land and labour resources. Export growth also stimulated a broader process of technological change, since some of the revenues were reinvested into land improvements or imports of technology-intensive manufactures and capital goods for the diffusion of electrification, mechanized transportation, and long-distance communication. The explosive growth of African

3 The British decision to abandon the slave trade in 1807 did not initiate the so-called 'legitimate commerce', but it certainly stimulated its growth (Law 1995).

4 After the imposition of colonial rule, internal slavery was gradually phased out, but replaced by several forms of forced labour (Klein 1998; van Waijenburg 2018).

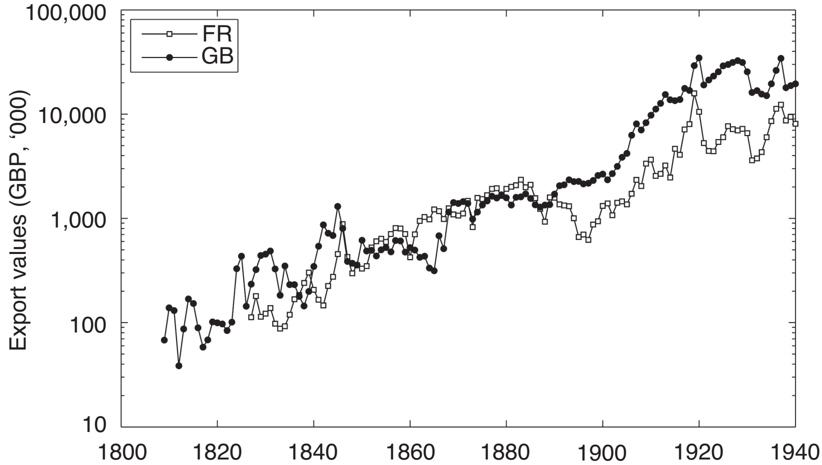

Figure 10.2 Total value of commodity exports from British and French West Africa, 1808–1940 (GBP x 1,000, log-scale)
Sources: African Commodity Trade Database, version 1.3 (Frankema et al. 2018: 243).

populations and cities from the 1940s onwards redirected parts of these capital flows into industries catering to domestic consumer markets.

Figure 10.2 shows the export values for British and French West Africa from 1808 to 1940. It shows a prolonged export boom that tapers off during the scramble for West Africa in the 1880s and 1890s. Figure 10.3 shows that West Africa's export boom was driven by a sharp rise in terms of trade, which stimulated production of palm oil, groundnuts, and gum Arabic, the three main export commodities in the nineteenth century. After the mid-1880s, the relative prices of African exports started to decline. Resistance against colonial encroachment and outright warfare led to major disruptions in ocean-bound trade, especially in the areas that came under French control. After 1900, when most regions were 'pacified' according to euphemistic 'colonial' vocabulary, export growth picked up again. A similar pattern occurred in East and Central Africa, where ivory dominated exports up to 1900, and slave exports continued up to at least the 1870s (Sheriff 1987), to be largely replaced by the export of mineral and tropical agricultural products, such as copper, diamonds, cotton, coffee, tobacco, tea, and sisal.

During the interwar years, trade was more volatile and the overall terms of trade decreased dramatically. Some products, such as rubber and palm oil,

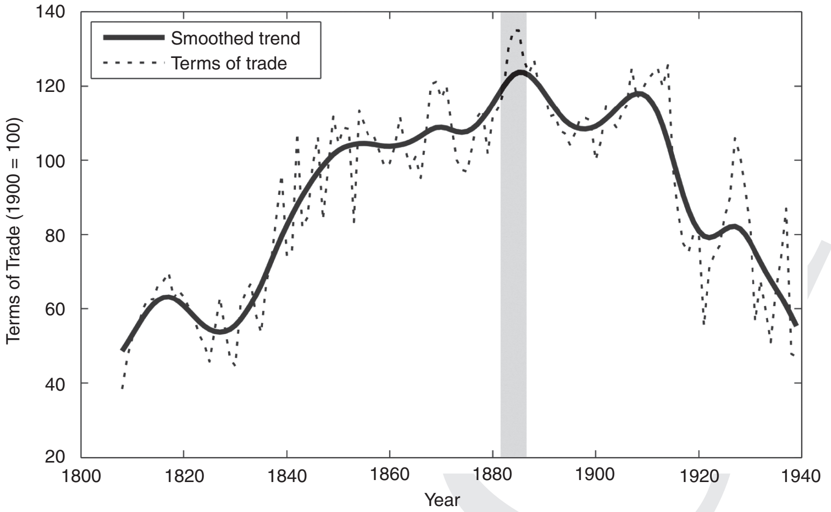

Figure 10.3 Net barter terms of trade, West Africa, 1808–1939 (1900 = 100)
Sources: African Commodity Trade Database, version 1.3 (Frankema et al. 2018: 247).
Note: Smoothed trend derived using Hodrick-Prescott filter, with a smoothing factor set to 100.

experienced fierce competition from Asian producers, whereas other commodity exports, such as cotton and copper, kept rising and recovered quickly from the depression of the early 1930s.[5] Despite the long-term decline in the terms of trade, colonial governments were pressing for specialization in a narrow set of primary export commodities, so that falling prices were compensated by rapidly growing production volumes (see Table 10.1 for West Africa). Colonial administrations funnelled major parts of local government revenues and metropolitan loans into the development of infrastructure (ports, railways, roads, electricity), which lowered transportation costs and stimulated the 'cash-crop revolution' (Tosh 1980) and the growth of mining enclaves.

Prados de la Escosura (2012) has used African trade data to draw conjectures of real per capita output growth for the period 1870 to 1950. He first estimated GDP growth by assuming zero growth in the domestic sectors of the economy, so that the observed growth in the purchasing power of exports, combined with the relative size of the export sector, determines the growth rate (dual approach).

5 For details, see African Commodity Trade Database, www.aehnetwork.org/data-research/african-commodity-trade-database.

Table 10.1 Decomposition of export growth in British and French West Africa, 1853–1929

	Annual average growth (%)				Contribution (%)	
	Purchasing power of export (1)	Import price (2)	Export price (3)	Export volume (4)	Price (5)	Volume (6)
British West Africa (£)						
1853–85	**4.65**	−0.68	0.83	3.14	32	68
1885–1929	**5.49**	1.32	0.46	6.36	−16.00	116.00
French West Africa (fr.)						
1853–85	**4.96**	−1.06	1.67	2.23	55.00	45.00
1885–1929	**1.98**	4.43	3.38	3.03	−53.00	153.00

Source: Frankema et al. 2018: 249, table 10.3.

Table 10.2 Conjectures of GDP per capita growth in Africa, 1870–1950

	Dual approach		Econometric approach	
	Sub-Saharan Africa	Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Africa
1870–1900	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4
1900–1950	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5
1900–13	1.6	1.4	0.7	0.8
1913–29	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2
1929–38	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.6
1938–50	0.9	0.6	0.9	0.6

Source: Prados de la Escosura 2012: 22, table 10.2.

Subsequently, he used the econometric association between observed GDP per capita and income terms of trade per capita for the 1950–90 era to infer growth estimates for the period 1870–1938 (econometric approach). His results, shown in Table 10.2, suggest a positive rate of income growth throughout the period, with a particularly strong performance in 1900–1913, a modest rate of growth in 1913–29, and a high growth rate during 1929–38. Notwithstanding the limitations of this estimation method, it appears that African output per capita grew for eight decades in a row. In a study on British Africa, Broadberry and Gardner (2019) show considerable cross-colony variation in growth, but they also point out that the most prolonged economic setback of the region occurred after 1970, and not in the full century before.

It would be wrong, though, to infer that broad segments of the African population benefited from economic growth in the half century between 1870 and 1920, as much of it was 'coerced growth'. Real wages rose in British West Africa and, perhaps to a lesser extent, in the more dynamic parts of French West Africa as well, but in British East Africa real wages stayed close to subsistence level (Bowden et al. 2008; Frankema and van Waijenburg 2012; de Haas 2017a). Moreover, the mobilization and commodification of scarce African labour involved high degrees of suppression. Forced labour, sometimes extracted at gunpoint, was needed for human porterage, for mining, for railway construction, and to run large-scale cultivation schemes. But these investments were not geared to cushion the impact of crises caused by rainfall shocks, famine, disease epidemics, let alone the effects of protracted colonial wars and large-scale mobilization during World War I (Reid 2009: chapter 11). Venereal disease and excessive violence used by the militia of European concession companies contributed to a dramatic population collapse in Central Africa (Vansina 2010). The rinderpest of the 1890s caused great hardship among pastoral groups in East Africa (Kjekshus 1996). Indeed, the early decades of colonial rule were extremely turbulent and mostly unsafe.

This phase of 'coerced growth' started to change, slowly, during the interwar years. Changing conceptions of 'civilization', 'development', and '*mise en valeur*' in European metropoles heralded different approaches to the problem of labour scarcity and a growing call to abolish the harshest forms of forced labour (Okia 2012; van Waijenburg 2018). African practices of soft resistance, violent protest, and emerging 'civil' movements forced colonial governments to reconsider policies of land alienation and forced labour recruitment. The growing influence of educated African elites, missionaries, war veterans, and international organizations such as the International Labour Organization also added to shifting power relations and policy frames with regard to the African labour question, which played out more intensively in the decades leading up to independence (Cooper 1996).

A second terms of trade boom began with the recovery of African commodity export prices in the second half of the 1930s, which continued in the immediate post-war years up to the mid-1970s. During World War II, international trade declined, but the prices of several strategic commodities, such as copper, rubber, and uranium, boomed. In the 1970s, price trends diverged again. The oil crisis caused large windfall gains in oil-producing countries such as Nigeria, Gabon, and Angola, but prices of most tropical cash-crops and minerals collapsed. In the 1980s, when oil prices also came down, the terms of trade declined in virtually all African countries, and this

Table 10.3 Direction of African exports, 1960–2013 (%)

	Africa*	Asia**	Western Europe	Eastern Europe & (former) USSR	North America	Latin America & Caribbean	Other
1960	7	6	69	6	8	1	3
1990	7	7	61	3	19	1	2
2000	10	18	48	0	19	3	2
2013	14	30	40	0	9	4	3

Notes: * Africa incl. North Africa, excl. South Africa. **Asia excl. the Pacific.
Sources: 1960: United Nations, *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics* 1968, table B; 1990: *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics* 1995, table B; 2000 and 2013: *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics* 2014, table D.

setback lasted until the mid-1990s, when a new cycle of commodity price rises set in, which levelled off around 2015.

Although the dominant pattern of specialization was in primary, resource-intensive, or land-extensive commodities, there were major shifts in the direction and composition of trade, two of which are worth highlighting. First, in the export mix, the relative share of tropical cash crops, such as palm oil, rubber, sugar, cotton, coffee, tea, tobacco, and cocoa, declined with the surge of highly valuable mineral resources such as gold, diamonds, copper, tin, and, above all, crude oil. A large part of Africa's trade boom in the two decades between 1995 and 2015 was driven by favourable oil prices. Since the first oil exports in the late 1950s by Angola and Nigeria, the number of African oil exporters has grown steadily.[6] In most of these countries, the oil revenues drive a large part of income growth and directly impact public revenue. Figure 10.4 shows the growth of per capita exports in the non-oil countries, showing that non-oil export growth up to 2010 barely sufficed to make up for the ground lost in the period 1974–2001. Only if we add oil to the mix has the peak of the early 1970s been surpassed.

The second major shift occurred in the *direction* of trade. For about a full century, African exports had been oriented mainly towards European markets, still absorbing some two-thirds of African exports in 1960. Throughout the colonial era, recorded intra-African trade remained low, probably under 10 per cent of the total. This colonial legacy is now dissolving. Table 10.3 shows that during the first three decades after independence (1960–90) the

6 There are currently nine African countries with significant proven oil reserves: Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Sudan, Chad, and Mauritania. Ghana has joined this list in recent years.

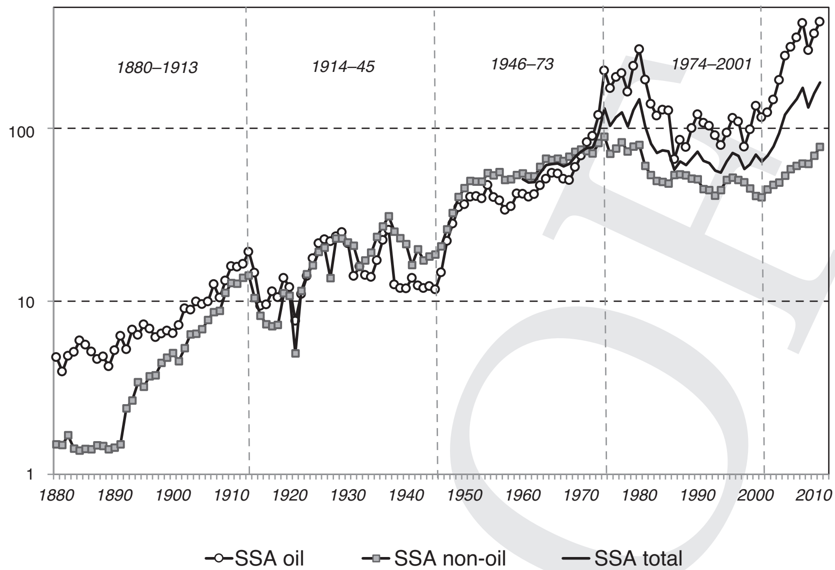

Figure 10.4 Index series of per capita merchandise exports in sub-Saharan Africa, oil and non-oil exporting countries, 1880–2010 (SSA TOTAL 1980 = 100, log-scale)
Sources: for 1880–1939: author's own calculations, based on the African Commodity Trade Database (Frankema et al. 2018); for 1940–59: Mitchell 2007: table E1; for 1960–2010: *Africa Development Indicators* (World Bank 2020); population data from Frankema and Jerven 2014.
Note: The oil exporters include Angola, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Sudan. South Africa is excluded from all series.

direction of trade remained largely unchanged, with a growing share for North America at the expense of Europe, and stable but tiny shares for other regions. After 1990 the tables started to shift. Asia, led by China, expanded its share from a meagre 7 per cent in 1990, to 30 per cent in 2013. The share of intra-African trade also doubled, from 7 per cent in 1990, to 14 per cent in 2013. This figure is probably underestimated in the official statistics, as parts of it remain unobserved due to widespread smuggling activities.[7]

The revival of African-Asian trade signals a return to deeper historical trade connections in the Indian Ocean basin, where, amongst other things, Indian cloth was traded for African gold, ivory, and slaves for centuries before the imposition of colonial rule. The declining dependency on Western markets has given African exports a more solid foothold than they had in the early

7 The expanding share of exports to Asia is not exclusively driven by China. India and several South East Asian economies have also enlarged their stake.

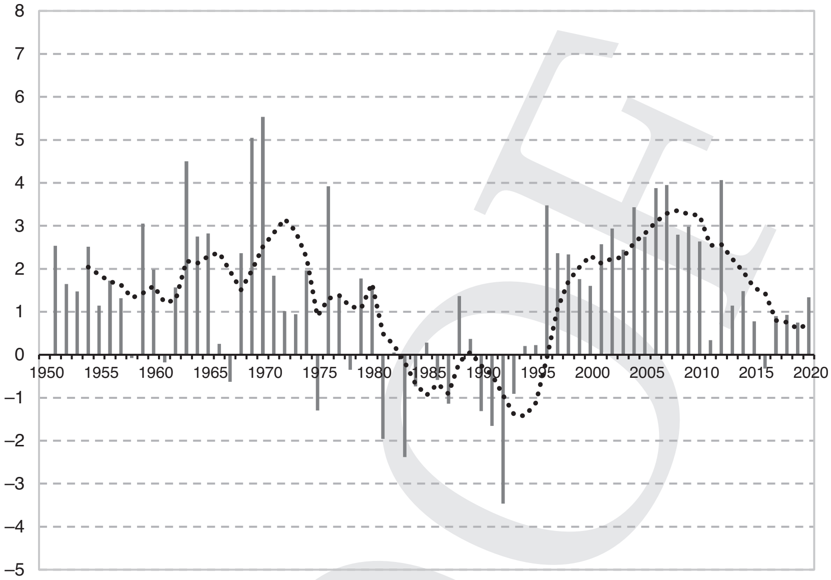

Figure 10.5 Average annual GDP per capita growth in sub-Saharan Africa, 1950–2020 (%)
Sources: 1950–2009: Maddison Project Database, version 2013; 2010–20: International Monetary Fund 2020.
Note: The growth estimate of 2020 was made before the outbreak of COVID-19.

postcolonial era. An important sign of this development is that the deep financial crisis and growth slowdown in Europe and the US of the post-2008 years has not dragged Africa into a new phase of prolonged stagnation, as the crises of the 1930s and the 1970s did.

But growth has remained very volatile. Figure 10.5 shows that the secular trends in trade were closely correlated with the trends in GDP growth. In the two decades between 1995 and 2014, a number of African economies were ranked among the fastest-growing in the world, with annual growth rates of 5–10 per cent being no exception. The aggregate average annual GDP growth rates for sub-Saharan Africa (including South Africa) have been estimated at about 5 per cent since 1995, resulting in a per capita rate of growth slightly over 2 per cent (International Monetary Fund 2012). As demographic growth eroded a major part of total GDP growth, post-1995 per capita growth rates were far from exceptional, and basically meant a return to levels that were observed in the 1950s and 1960s. Part of this growth spurt was a recovery from a long period of stagnation, in which quite a few countries hit rock-bottom in the years 1985–95, thus starting off from very low levels.[8] Yet in the second half of the 2010s, when world commodity markets – especially the oil markets after 2014 – cooled down, growth rates fell back to very modest rates, to be further depressed by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.[9]

One of the pre-conditions for the post-1995 growth recovery was the containment of the debt crisis that unfolded during the 1980s and which curtailed long-term investments. The regional average debt burden peaked at 130 per cent of GDP in 1994 and declined to manageable proportions of around 25 per cent in 2006.[10] Debt rescheduling programmes, which were part of broader structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), came along with a stricter application of economic policy orthodoxy, such as money supply controls, inflation targets, exchange rate adjustments, and more shock-proof fiscal policies. SAPs were also combined with political decentralization programmes designed to raise the accountability of African governments. Increased macroeconomic stability and accountability, in turn, have improved the investment climate for African and foreign entrepreneurs. This improved investment climate is illustrated by a doubling of capital investment rates, from a mere 11 per cent in 2000 to 23 per cent in 2012 (International Monetary Fund 2020: 7). But since 2012 African state debt has been growing rapidly again, leading to renewed concerns that history will repeat itself, even though debt ownership has changed to China as well.

Varieties of Capitalism under Colonial Rule

As indicated above, there was no blueprint model for the governance of colonial economies. In some colonies, such as the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, and Senegal, African farmers and merchants took advantage of existing commercial relations to boost production of cocoa, palm oil, and groundnuts. Elsewhere, commercialization and commodification were enforced by agents of European imperialism, often through co-opted African elites. In other cases, such as the Ugandan cotton sector, external stimulus was soon overtaken by

8 Although the reliability of current and historical GDP estimates has been contested (Jerven 2013), there are no indications that aggregate regional growth rates have been systematically biased to either over- or underestimate growth in particular periods of time. There is also complementary evidence from other economic indicators (e.g. current accounts, state budgets, consumption surveys, investment records) suggesting that the post-1995 growth revival was more than a statistical fantasy.

9 At the time of writing, the magnitude of this shock remained unclear.

10 This figure relates to sub-Saharan Africa excluding South Africa (*Africa Development Indicators*, World Bank 2020).

African initiative (de Haas 2017b: chapter 5). Plantation owners and mining companies often competed for scarce supplies of (migrant) wage labour and lobbied intensively for measures to avoid paying market-clearing wages. Apart from regulating forced recruitment by colonial agents or private recruitment companies, colonial governments developed other strategies to commodify African labour, such as pass laws, land alienation, the establishment of native reserves, or restrictions on African tenancy, the levying of head, hut, or poll taxes, and racial discrimination in education (Arrighi 1973).

To account for the differences in colonial governance Amin (1972: 504) divided colonial Africa into *trade economies*, *labour reserves*, and areas ruled by *concession-owning companies*. In this threefold typology, the trade economies include the coastal colonies of West Africa, Cameroon, Uganda, Sudan, and Chad (see Figure 10.6). In these areas, African farmers produced the bulk of

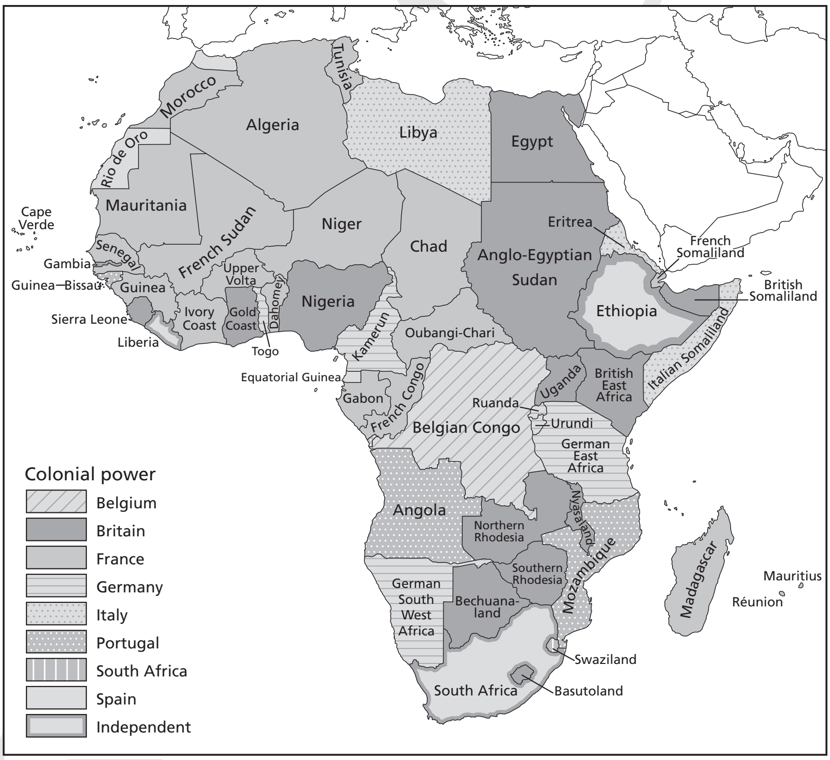

Figure 10.6 Colonial borders of Africa, *c.*1914
Source: Drawn by the author.

agricultural export commodities, while European export companies focused on domestic transportation, shipment, and control of the buyer's market. In some of these colonies, such as Uganda and the Gold Coast, foreign landownership was even prohibited. Colonial governments tended to be less repressive towards local labour and focused most of their interventions on tapping off revenues from trade, via custom duties or, from the 1940s onwards, via marketing boards (Meredith 1986).

In Amin's typology, the Africa of labour reserves included East Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, and Uganda, as well as Portuguese Africa (Angola and Mozambique) and Southern Africa (South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Lesotho). In these areas, colonial institutions were largely geared towards mobilizing African labour for European enterprises engaged in trade, cash-crop cultivation, mining or infrastructural development. Central Africa, including the Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa (French Congo, Gabon, and the Central African Republic; but not Chad) made up the Africa of the concession companies. In these areas, chartered companies were granted administrative control over African land, labour, and mineral resources, and often also obtained the right to tax and use force to maintain order.

Although this classification shows that colonial approaches to capitalist production were diverse, it has clear limits for understanding historical change. Chartered companies were granted full administrative powers during the early phase of colonial rule, but almost all of these charters were revoked as companies collapsed under the weight of unsustainable debt. Concession companies obtained charters for selective territories and avoided part of the military costs to subjugate local populations and develop infrastructural connections, but their 'rights' were reduced by expanding colonial administrations during the interwar years (Austen 1987: 123–125). In the 1920s, the British South Africa Company, established by Cecil Rhodes, gave up much of its territorial rights in Southern Africa, and the Portuguese government refused to prolong the concessions of companies active in Mozambique. Concession companies were dismantled or forced to focus on their production activities, while the collection of taxes, the mobilization of labour, and local policing was taken over by the colonial state.[11]

11 Another distinction that has been popularized in the economics literature – between settler and non-settler colonies – is equally problematic (Easterly and Levine 2016). Based on the share of (white) settlers in the total population, only South Africa would qualify as a real settler colony. A more subtle classification scheme focuses on the degree of control exercised by foreign settlers over production factors (land, labour, and capital) and commercially exploitable natural resources (Frankema et al. 2016).

It is probably true that in the trade economies a larger share of African people stood to benefit from export growth and related capital investment, while in mining-dominated colonies (e.g. South Africa, Northern Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo) the labour scarcity problem curtailed human freedoms. But in the mining regions policy regimes changed too, and sometimes dramatically. For example, workers who were forcibly recruited for the dangerous work in the Katangese copper mines in the 1910s must have been amazed by the material living standards enjoyed by the 'stabilized' workers of the Union Minière in the 1950s, who were probably among the best-paid African manual labourers in sub-Saharan Africa (Juif and Frankema 2018).

South Africa stood apart in many respects. The country emerged out of frontier confrontations between indigenous groups, including the Zulu, Xhosa, Khoisan, Tswana, and Basotho, and settler communities of British, French, and Dutch origin who flowed into the Cape colony from the mid-seventeenth century, supported by the absence of malaria and its strategic location on ocean trade routes. The colony developed in the eighteenth century, amongst other factors, through exports of wine, wool, and other livestock products, and the exploitation of slave labour (Fourie and van Zanden 2013). Yet the mineral discoveries of 1867 (diamonds) and 1886 (gold) changed the game entirely. They further poisoned the already tense political relations between groups of white settlers (the Boer wars, 1880–81 and 1899–1902), as well as between Africans, Europeans and those of mixed descent. It raised the stakes of white settler elites to control African labour and land. In 1909, South Africa was the first African colony to obtain nominal independence, but it went hand in hand with increasing oppression of African peoples. The Natives Land Act of 1913 restricted the ownership of land by blacks, and in 1948 the elected National Party formalized racial segregation under the infamous apartheid system. The exploitation of its exceptional mineral wealth made South Africa much richer than any other sub-Saharan African country in aggregate, but the inequalities inherent in apartheid jeopardized long-term growth and created a legacy of deep social divisions (Feinstein 2005).

Decolonization, Crises, and Structural Adjustment

Gradually increasing welfare investments were motivated by a growing realization that the legitimacy of colonial rule ultimately depended on delivering upon the 'development' promise. Despite the disruptions caused by World War II, the effects of colonial policy reforms on African living standards became more tangible during the late 1940s and 1950s. More than 80 per cent of the railways that were built during the twentieth century were in place on the eve of World War II (Mitchell 2007: table F1). Larger shares of government budgets were being allocated to education and health care. Economic development programmes also received more funding through imperial loans and grants-in-aid. Governments increasingly took over responsibility for primary and secondary education from Christian missionaries. Universities were established and school enrolments shot up (Frankema 2012). The clearest marker of progress was the acceleration of population growth across the region. Improved access to new medicines (e.g. penicillin) and the extension of health care facilities had significant effects on maternal health and child care (Doyle 2013). Child mortality rates fell, life expectancies lengthened.

Urbanization created new jobs and reconfigured social relations. The number of manufacturing enterprises rose, in particular those producing lighter consumer goods for domestic markets (food and beverages, cigarettes, cotton textiles, footwear, furniture, soap), but also some export-processing of cash crops (cotton ginning, oil-seed crushing), ore smelting, saw-milling, and cement production (Austin et al. 2017). Table 10.4 shows shares of manufacturing in GDP of selected African countries on the eve of independence. These shares varied from 3 per cent in Tanzania to 14 per cent in the Belgian Congo, and 16 per cent in Zimbabwe. In South Africa, manufacturing even comprised 20 per cent of a much larger GDP, but in most other countries – not listed here – shares below 5 per cent were common (Kilby 1975: 472).

The considerable variety of manufacturing development reflected differences in local opportunities as well as economic governance. Colonies with a sizeable mining sector (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Northern Rhodesia, Belgian Congo) demanded manufactured products (food, drinks, clothing, housing, utensils) for increasing urban work forces. Processing industries (e.g. copper refining), construction industries (e.g. cement, steel), and energy provisions were also required to keep the mines going, while growing urban populations with increasing spending capacity deepened the market for consumer manufactures.

The adoption of import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies offered some stimulus to African manufacturing as well. While the French sought to pursue autarky on an imperial scale (Boone 1992), the British feared that overseas competition for British firms would harm the recovery of post-war

Table 10.4 Manufacturing output of selected African countries, 1960 (in 1964 US$)

	Manufacturing/GDP (%)	Population (millions)	GDP ($ millions)	Per capita income ($)	Manufacturing output ($ millions)
S. Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)	16.0	3.6	751	206	120.2
Belgian Congo (DRC)	14.0	14.1	910	58	127.4
Senegal	9.5	3.1	678	218	64.4
Kenya	9.5	8.1	641	79	60.9
Uganda	6.5	6.7	583	87	37.9
Ghana	6.3	6.8	1,503	222	94.7
Cameroon	6.0	4.7	511	109	30.6
Ethiopia	6.0	20.7	1,021	49	61.3
N. Rhodesia (Zambia)	5.5	3.2	511	155	28.1
Ivory Coast	5.3	3.2	584	181	31.0
Sudan	4.8	11.8	909	77	43.6
Nigeria	4.5	40.0	3,500	88	157.5
Angola	4.3	4.8	726	151	31.2
Tanganyika	3.0	9.6	671	67	20.1

Sources: Kilby 1975: 472, table 112; see also Austin et al. 2017: 353.

British industries (Butler 1997). ISI policies were more fully embraced after independence, not only by 'socialist' governments, such as Ghana under Nkrumah (1951–66) and Tanzania under Nyerere (1961–85), but also by 'capitalist' governments, such as Ivory Coast under Houphouët-Boigny (1960–93) and Kenya under Kenyatta (1964–78). Most of these governments also pursued the late colonial habit of five-year development plans to promote key sectors of the economy (Austen 1987: 224–259).

In South Africa and Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), which were granted political autonomy in 1910 and 1923 respectively, ISI policies were adopted earlier and more wholeheartedly. Lobbying groups from various ranks of the settler population used their influence in parliament to rally for policies making unskilled African labour artificially cheap and protecting domestic industries against Western and Japanese imports. In the Belgian Congo, post-war FDI in manufacturing boomed as Belgian firms and settlers sought to diversify their activities (Buelens and Cassimon 2013: 237–241). In contrast, Salazar's dictatorship in Portugal (from 1926 onwards) restricted the influence

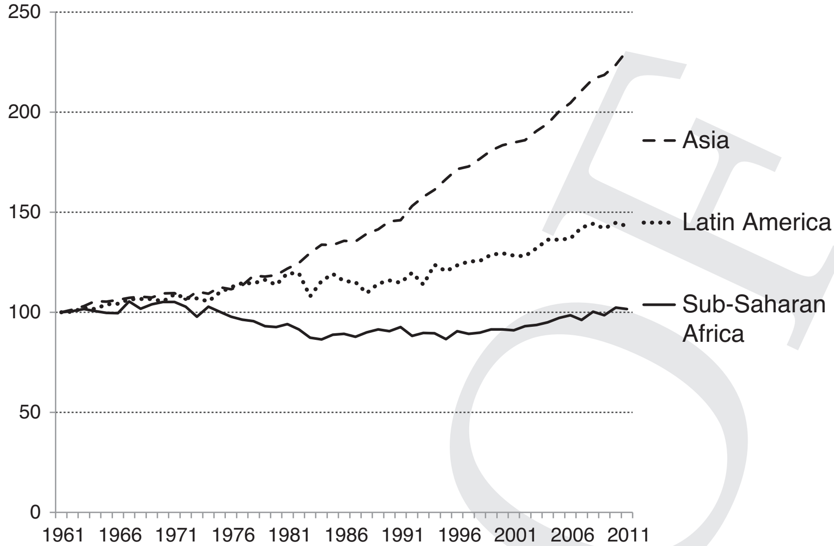

Figure 10.7 Per capita food production in Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa, 1961–2011
Sources: Graph from Frankema 2014: 2; data from FAOSTAT 2013.

of Portuguese settlers on their governments and sought to continue the production of raw materials, such as cotton for Portuguese textile firms, thus limiting the former's ability to lobby successfully for local manufacturing enterprises (Clarence-Smith 1989: 177–178). Indeed, by 1960 manufacturing constituted only 4 per cent of GDP in Angola, and 14 and 16 per cent in the Belgian Congo and Zimbabwe, respectively.

That said, food crop agriculture remained the largest sector in terms of output and employment in the majority of African economies. Even though farming systems varied enormously from place to place, the aggregate picture in Figure 10.7 depicts a structural, broadly shared weakness: a lack of productivity growth. After 1970, population growth rates even started to outpace growth in food production, so that only in recent years was per capita production of food just back to 1960 levels. This lack of productivity growth partly explains why the modest upsurge in manufacturing growth came to a halt after the 1970s. Continued rural poverty eroded both domestic consumer demand and domestic savings (Austin et al. 2017). The 'Green Revolution' of the 1940s to 1970s, which lifted considerable parts of the world's 'poor periphery' out of extreme poverty, largely bypassed sub-Saharan Africa. High-yielding varieties of wheat and rice did not suit

African ecologies well, although improved maize varieties did. Markets were insufficiently integrated, food storage remained a critical weakness, fertilizers were hard to come by, and a pronounced 'urban bias' in early postcolonial economic policy, or disastrous collectivization programmes, did not help solve these problems (Lipton 1977; Otsuka et al. 2009).

In the early 1950s, few would have guessed that independence would come within a decade. Only Portugal held on to its colonies until 1975, at the cost of prolonged wars of independence, which eventually undermined Portuguese state finances. The years before and after 1960 were characterized by heightened nationalist sentiment and grand visions of African unity (pan-Africanism). But the spirit evaporated quickly, and in some countries almost immediately. Within two decades the region plunged into a deep economic and political crisis, just at the time that many Asian countries started to experience the welfare gains from agricultural and industrial productivity growth.

In Nyerere's Tanzania, for instance, high ideals of African socialism, cast in the concept of *ujamaa*, resulted in disastrous initiatives of villagization and collectivization. In other places, the artificial and externally secured colonial 'peace' fell apart for lesser aspirations. In many countries, tendencies of political instability were aggravated by the debt crisis of the 1980s to 1990s, which sentenced the region to a long period of economic stagnation, and in several places, such as the Congo, Zambia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia, full-scale economic collapse (Bates 2008; Young 2012). Ethiopia and Liberia, the two countries below the Sahara that had largely escaped colonial domination, did not fare much better. On the contrary, the devastating Ethiopian famine of 1983–85 showed that structural economic weaknesses were not just a colonial legacy, but could also occur in a consolidated state built upon centuries of sedentary plough-based agriculture.

During the colonial era, most African economies had access to metropolitan capital markets, which supplied colonial states with relatively cheap loans that were backed by the metropolitan treasury. In the post-independence era, this dependency shifted. Former French West African states held on to the CFA franc and avoided the hyperinflation that plagued former British West African countries, such as Nigeria and Ghana, but their exports suffered from chronic currency overvaluation (van de Walle 1991). Poorly managed and overambitious development schemes (often part of Five-Year Plans) were financed with increasing (trade) tax revenues at first, but when the export boom came to a full stop in the 1970s, government borrowing became more important to maintain expansionary fiscal policies. These loans were supplied eagerly by global capital markets, glutted by superfluous oil dollars. The influx of large amounts of oil dollars at negative interest rates tempted African leaders, with short-term political time horizons, to take on uncontrollable levels of debt. When local currencies depreciated and interest rates shot up in the 1980s, this burden became unbearable (Parfitt and Riley 2013).

The SAPs imposed by the IMF and World Bank consisted of severe cutbacks in public expenditure, trade liberalization, and privatization, and, later, also included debt-rescheduling negotiations. These SAPs cut short the government subsidies that underpinned most of the social and economic development programmes, and hit the rural sector particularly hard. The urban bias in policy directives compounded agricultural neglect, led to the deterioration of important public services, and enhanced the invasion of (Western) NGOs filling the gaps left by local and central government bodies.

The political and economic crises were far from uniform, but they did share some commonalities. First, the colonial inheritance of 'states without nations': ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and/or religious divisions played a role in virtually all violent conflicts, and most of these were fought within the confines of colonial territorial borders. Second, in most conflicts, control over valuable resources, and especially the revenues from the export sector, played a role. Resource monopolies and rent extraction facilitated politics based on patrimonialism, clientelism, and corruption, in many respects comparable to the ways in which colonial governments had taken control over wealth and people (Mamdani 1996; Bayart 2009). Third, up to the 1990s, cold war politics often crept into local African conflict in some way or another. Incumbent regimes as well as opposition groups faced the question of international alliance in their demand for weapons and financial aid. Fighting groups paying lip service to Western capitalism, Soviet-style socialism, or religious fundamentalism were often able to find support somewhere. This international context prolonged local conflicts and raised the chances of new disruptions of fragile political equilibria (Nugent 2012).

Deep Transitions: Changing Economic Geographies

Underneath the patterns of growth and contraction discussed above, there were a number of deep transitions that continued more or less unabated. Africa's booming population is probably the most fundamental of these deep

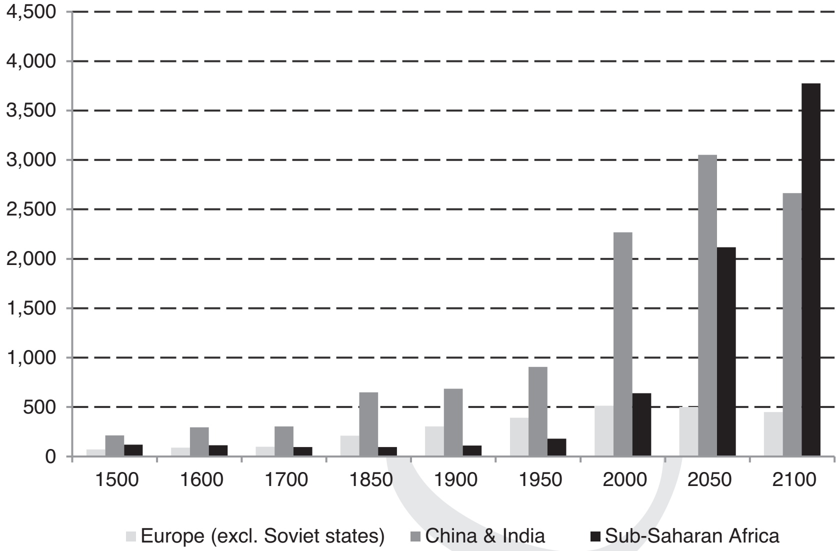

Figure 10.8 Historical and projected population trends in sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and Asia, 1500–2100 (millions)
Sources: Population estimates, Europe and Asia 1500–1950: Maddison 2010; African estimates 1500–1950: based on Manning 2010; Frankema and Jerven 2014; all figures for 1950–2100: United Nations 2019, medium-fertility scenarios.

transitions. Population growth rates exceeding 3 per cent for decades in a row were historically unprecedented, and even though fertility rates came down in most places after 1980, they remain far above the net replacement threshold. According to the United Nations mid-range population projections, shown in Figure 10.8, sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where substantial demographic growth will continue beyond 2050. With an estimated 4 billion people in 2100, the region may experience a thirty-fold natural increase of population in just two centuries. If these projections hold, Africa will be home to almost 40 per cent of the world's population in 2100 and include five of the ten most populous countries in the world (i.e. Nigeria, Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Niger).

It is uncertain when (natural) population growth started to accelerate, but it certainly varied from region to region. Doyle (2013) has shown that even within relatively confined areas (e.g. the East African great lakes area), the take-off may easily have differed by some two to three decades. For the continent as a whole, the acceleration of demographic growth became visible in the 1940s, but future work on African historical demography may push the dates back somewhat further. Populations in North and South Africa, where disease climates were milder and where access to medicine and health care was more advanced, recorded significant growth already before 1900 (Manning 2010; Frankema and Jerven 2014).

From an economic point of view, there are at least two major implications of the population boom that deserve further exploration. First, the transition from a historically low-populated region (around 5 persons per km^2 in 1950) into one of the most densely populated continents of the world (around 150 persons per km^2 in 2100) is changing relative factor proportions of labour and land fundamentally. The demographic boom is closing the door to the land-extensive agricultural growth trajectory which has dominated African development since the decline of the slave trades, and which continued during the cash-crop revolution of the colonial era (Tosh 1980). Arable land is increasingly becoming a scarce production factor, while the supply of both unskilled and skilled/educated labour has increased steeply.

Second, the demographic boom partly initiated and partly reinvigorated an increasing concentration of scattered rural populations. Demographic growth is thus driving one of the most fundamental (and probably irreversible) changes in the topography of African economies: urbanization. This development has been facilitated by the spread of transportation, information, and communication technology, which provides the necessary infrastructure for large-scale urban food supplies. Whereas Africa has historically always depended on domestic produce for its subsistence, a growing number of countries became net food importers during the final quarter of the twentieth century.

Urbanization also led to profound changes in social and gender relations, and in access to education, information, and knowledge. The changes are particularly visible in the urban service sector, since demand for transportation, communication services, finance, catering, water, and energy has expanded so vastly. The main part of the associated service activities is conducted in the informal sector, where enormous reserves of underemployed youth engage in petty trade, street vending, food processing, handicraft workshops, motorbike drives, small-scale business services, prostitution, and a range of other informal and/or illegal activities. Informal employment shares in African economies typically range from 70 to over 90 per cent of total employment (International Labour Organization 2018: 14). This also means that city and state administrations operate on very thin tax bases. Urban dwellers tend to have a range of 'jobs' to make a living and rely on extensive social networks for credit and insurance. Links between family members living in cities and the countryside are vital for spreading the risk of both economic environments.

Deep Transitions: Institutional Development and Factor Markets

The high shares of informal sector employment show that the institutions required to facilitate broad-based labour productivity growth and provide a minimum basis of social security remain underdeveloped. This type of paralysis is often understood as a problem of rigid 'extractive' institutions inherited from the colonial or precolonial past, acting as structural barriers to growth (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Nunn 2008). However, such popular conceptions of institutional persistence are rather misleading. African societies have undergone tremendous institutional changes during the twentieth century, which have given rise to new institutional complexes embedded in political economic structures that are very different from those prevailing in previous centuries, which is not the same as arguing that they are necessarily better at promoting growth. These institutional complexes have been shaped by the intertwinement of institutions imposed by colonial regimes and the older customary institutions that have survived and adapted to colonial rule. In this process, institutions governing factor markets and the allocation of communal resources were not only reconfigured, they also created new sources for conflict and rent-seeking. A brief sketch of some major transitions in the four principal factor markets – labour, land, and physical and human capital – can give the reader some idea of the depth of these changes.

The transition in African labour markets entailed a shift away from labour coercion through systems of slavery, forced and (debt) bonded labour, towards commodified labour and self-employment, the latter increasingly concentrated in urban informal sectors. Slavery and forced labour are generally regarded as institutional responses to chronic labour scarcity in settings where most African farmers had few incentives to abandon subsistence agriculture. This situation dissolved during the twentieth century in more and more places (Iliffe 2007; Austin 2008b). Coerced labour is now largely shaped by the opposing force: vast supplies of skilled and semi-skilled workers who have little opportunity to resort to subsistence farming. This situation provides ample opportunities for local 'strongmen' to extract labour services. Institutions to protect workers from outright exploitation, such as minimum wage schemes, employment protection, disability insurance, or anti-harassment and anti-child labour legislation, are largely ineffective in informal sector arrangements. In other words, while precolonial and colonial governments officially sanctioned the coercion of labour, postcolonial societies increasingly moved to labour arrangements outside the reach of the state.

In land markets, the transition involved moving from one of myriad systems of communal landownership, often arranged at a village level, based on hereditary claims and enforced through customary law, towards a system of individual property rights, with a special role for large-scale land appropriation by colonial and postcolonial states, which extract(ed) revenue from the lease or sale of alienated land. As a result, African land markets are paralysed by many overlapping claims and legal opacity. Malfunctioning cadastres and growing political stakes in control over land have given rise to intensive land conflicts, especially over high-valued land in or near expanding cities, or between agriculturalists and pastoralists. Overlapping claims to land are by no means a recent phenomenon, but the intensity of land conflict has been aggravated by population growth and increasing (colonial) state intervention in local land markets with corrupting effects (Boone 2014). Indeed, whereas labour became the abundant factor, land has become scarcer, and in both cases the institutions governing factor allocation have changed profoundly.

Markets for capital have seen major expansion during the twentieth century, even though access to financial services from banks or insurance companies remains complicated for the majority of poor African households, who dispose of little savings and other forms of collateral. Capital markets have long been dominated by foreign suppliers. Domestic savings rates have fallen back below 20 per cent of GDP in the past two decades, instead of climbing to rates of 30 per cent, as has been common in many Asian industrializers (World Bank 2020). Yet government borrowing and FDI has partly diversified from the metropole to other global suppliers, with a particular role for Chinese credit and investments. Nigeria and South Africa, the two largest economic engines south of the Sahara have also expanded their share of FDI in the region, but much of the FDI inflow continues to be very volatile, responding to both world commodity price fluctuations and frequent ruptures in political stability.

Finally, a major transition has occurred in the market for human capital. Although Africa's performance compares unfavourably to other world regions, the education revolution has had a deep impact on social relations and economic capabilities. Literacy and numeracy rates have risen throughout the twentieth century, and have made a large set of basic skills much cheaper than they were at the start of the twentieth century (Frankema and van Waijenburg 2019). New information and communication technologies have given an impulse to knowledge-intensive activities, and it is hard to see how such developments will fail to stimulate labour specialization in the future. That said, most African societies continue to cope with large inequalities in access to education, and social exclusion of the poorest who cannot afford school fees, let alone the fees of private schools and universities offering higher quality education. Unequal access to schooling remains one of the key factors sustaining inequality in African societies, and it is destined to be one of the major political issues of the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

African per capita income levels have fallen significantly behind other world regions during the long twentieth century, but especially after 1973. Despite this appearance of relative stagnation, African economies underwent profound transitions. This chapter has contrasted persistent patterns of recurrent growth and contraction and specialization in primary commodity production, to deeper changes in African economic geographies and institutions governing factor markets. Will Africa embark on a path of sustained economic growth in the twenty-first century?

Pessimists point out that continued dependence on primary commodity exports, weak institutional environments, and frightening rates of population growth will continue to hold the region back. They point out that the ranks of underemployed youth in African cities without a perspective of betterment are swelling every year, and that this continues to undermine prospects of long-term political stability. They also point out that increasing scarcity of vital resources, such as drinking water, rainforests, and pastures, alongside decreasing biodiversity and insecure change of climates, are threatening the region more than ever.

Optimists point out that many historical constraints to growth have been dissolved during the long twentieth century: labour and capital have become less scarce, transportation barriers have been lifted, African labour is no longer tied up in low-productive agriculture, domestic consumer demand is increasing, and life expectancy, literacy rates, and access to electricity, the internet, and clean drinking water have all improved, while rates of extreme poverty continue to fall. They may even argue that Africa's population boom lays the foundation for domestic growth and investment, and a reduction of the external dependencies that have characterized much of the twentieth century.

No matter what the future will bring, it is clear that African economic development will take place in a rapidly changing global economic and political context. By 2050, Asia and Africa together will hold over 80 per cent of the world population (United Nations 2019). The income gap between both regions is growing and may well give rise to a new 'great' divergence. Will Asia's economic renaissance offer new opportunities to Africa, or does it close the windows instead? Will plans to create the world's largest free trade zone in Africa materialize? What happens to intra-African migration if economic inequality across countries rises? These are some of the big issues that will shape the future of new generations of Africans. Their growing weight will have a growing impact on the development of the world economy in the twenty-first century.

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