

Emergence and Emancipation

A Fresh Look at Africa

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This essay is dedicated to the memory of Dr. David Hatendi (1953 – 2012), Zimbabwe's first black Rhodes Scholar - a fine gentleman, a distinguished representative of modern Africa, and a friend.

1. The beginning of Africa's turnaround

It is no longer a secret – Africa is finally on the rise. After decades marked by the Six Ds of horror - decay and disaster, drought and disease, despotism and despair - the continent is back on the world map with some good news. The Six Ds may not have disappeared, but they are beginning to lose their distressing monopoly in the news rooms as they are being complemented by the Three Es of emergence, evolution and emancipation.²

Robust growth rates over the past five years,³ hardly disturbed by the global financial crisis of 2008; a decrease in number and intensity of armed conflicts; a growing middle class; more and better elections; a higher degree of regional political integration; more girls attending school; better control of malaria and HIV/AIDS; and the gradual disappearance of some of the more notorious dinosaurs who have filled their coffers and ruined their countries for decades – such are the signs of hope for Africa. Could they be harbingers of a new era in which most of the continent joins the ever growing group of countries and regions emerging from poverty? Is the continent about to reinvent itself as a success story?

Africa is not there yet, but we ought to take a closer look at the new trends. And, in particular, at some recent African answers to the burning questions which are still preventing the continent from taking off in all respects; answers that will go far beyond the Six Ds which have shaped Western perceptions of Africa for too long; answers which will soon compel both the North (or the West, in still more familiar Cold War terms) and Africa's Asian partners to adjust their attitudes, and finally accept Africa as an equal partner. Despite all the impressive facts and figures, we are further away from dealing with Africa at eye level today in Washington, Paris or Beijing than we may assume and admit. Old attitudes die hard.

However, they are bound to finally change as Africans raise their voices in the global concert. For those who are ready to listen, they can now be heard all over Africa. Not recurring to outdated liberation ideology or underdog rhetoric, and not crying for more help.⁴ But stating Africa's case in the naturally persuasive manner its new elites, the East's and the West's present and future partners, have adopted; using global language, arguing at Ivy League and Sorbonne levels, starting to look China into the eye, and realizing that theirs is not a continent apart, but part of our One World. They are university graduates, entrepreneurs, development and investment bankers, ministers of finance, presidents chosen by their citizens in elections of an acceptable quality, religious leaders, mayors, lawyers, politicians and human rights fighters. They serve in schools, hospitals and boardrooms, in a few modern armies, and in some – not all - of Africa's

² The best recent analyses were published by The Economist (Africa Rising, December 2011), McKinsey & Company (Lions on the Move, June 2010), Ernst & Young (It's time for Africa, 2011), and the African Development Bank (The Middle of the Pyramid: Dynamics of the Middle Class in Africa, April 2011)

³ IMF, Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa, October 2011

⁴ Paul Kagame, interviewed by Der Spiegel, June 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-rwandan-president-paul-kagame-we-are-far-from-exhausting-our-potential-a-704894.html>

parliaments. They may still look like an avant-garde after decades of stagnation, turmoil and bad government. But they exist, and should be listened to by all those global social engineers who still think that poverty can be reduced from outside, that Africa mainly needs help and pity, and that wise and well meaning foreigners should do all the thinking for Africans. It is up to Africa's new elites to explain to China that African copper and cotton should not be shipped overseas before added value has been created *in situ*. It is up to Africa's new leaders to remind the World Bank and many others who are used to think on their behalf that they are perfectly able to think for themselves.

Privileged to have served on the continent for seven consecutive years, I have learned that many Western and Eastern ideas about Africa and its needs are fundamentally wrong. At the same time I was horrified to watch quite a few Africans in high places doing their utmost to nourish and entertain the donors' often condescending attitudes by playing the comfortable game of dependency. The dangerous dialectics of endless assistance continue to link the neurosis of many of the givers to the recklessness of many of the receivers. They are a constant threat even to lofty and noble international endeavours such as the Millennium Development Goals. While much of Africa is now showing robust growth rates, Western audiences are mostly ignorant about the real role of Western assistance today – many of us simply haven't realized how fast it is losing its importance as a major factor in Africa's development.⁵

2. Why Africa's emancipation has failed previously

Sub-Saharan Africa seemed to be on its way out of the doldrums at least twice during the past half century. For the first time, right after independence of tropical Africa, around 1960; and then again at the end of the Cold War, in the early 1990s when a number of "Big Men" were successfully challenged by democratic movements. At both moments, the wind of change was blowing.⁶

Both times, it died down again. Hope was followed by backlashes – in the 1970s when military regimes took over at a large scale, suffocating early political emancipation and giving way to mismanagement and corruption. Then once more in the late 90s when the number of wars in Africa reached its post-independence peak and foreign debt was at its highest. Between 1989 and 2004, UN peace keeping missions had to intervene in 15 African countries, and, mandates permitting would have had work to do in a few more areas of armed conflict. Commodity prices were down, and foreign debt was not yet forgiven. While Asia's small tigers first, and China later, stunned the world with impressive steady progress, Africa appeared to be trailing behind

⁵ Dambisa Moyo gives a thorough analysis of the role of aid in comparison to other methods of developing Africa (Dead Aid, Why Aid Is Not Working and How There is Another Way for Africa, 2009). She believes that international aid has harmed Africa and that it should be phased out.

⁶ The famous phrase was coined by British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan in his speech to Parliament at Cape Town, in February 1960

hopelessly, and forever.⁷ Afro-optimists had a hard time.

Africa's twice repeated failure to emancipate and emerge confirmed and fortified long standing perceptions elsewhere. As the continent seemed to be unable to help itself, intervention was considered inevitable. It came in different shapes. While the US and many European countries increased their aid, conceived the Millennium Development Goals and decided to write off most of Africa's foreign debt, China began to develop and exploit, building infrastructure (mostly using Chinese labour) and, in return, taking out commodities, as unprocessed raw materials. Western countries with strong protestant traditions still tend to see Africa through the distorting lens of their bad conscience, stemming from a now distant past marked by colonialism and the slave trade. It was Africa's precarious situation, much more than Asia's, that led to international agreement on the Millennium Development Goals. Africa's leaders subscribed to them. But did they really take part in their conception? As late as 2004, the Brookings Institute, under the leadership of Jeffrey Sachs, published a study about "Ending Africa's Poverty Trap"⁸ which drew a grand picture of everything that needed to be done in Africa, and for Africa. Astonishingly, not a single one of the eminent authors was African.⁹

Some recent critics of both Western aid in its present form, and of Chinese 'aid *cum* exploitation', argue that both these attitudes are in the way of Africa's autonomous development. William Easterly¹⁰ and Dambisa Moyo¹¹ have put forward compelling arguments for this view which cannot be discussed in detail here, but which have finally shifted the focus of the debate to Africa as the master of its destiny rather than the eternal victim, or object of other peoples' ideas.¹²

3. Why it could succeed now

Since 2000 the picture has started to change. The latest facts and figures speak for themselves.

In eight of the past ten years, sub-Saharan growth has been faster than East Asia's. At least a dozen countries have expanded by more than 6% *p.a.* for six or more years. Despite the current slowdown in the northern hemisphere, the IMF still expects sub-Saharan Africa's economies to expand by 5.75% in 2012. Several countries are likely to hit growth rates of 10%. The World Bank believes that "Africa could be on the brink of an economic take-off, much like China was 30 years ago and India 20 years ago."¹³

Labour productivity has been rising. It is now growing by, on average, 2.7% a year.

⁷ Reflecting the general assessment then prevailing in the debate about Africa, The Economist called it "the hopeless continent" in May 2000.

⁸ Jeffrey D. Sachs, with John W. McArthur, Guido Schmidt-Traub, Margaret Kruk, Chandrika Bahadur, Michael Faye and Gordon McCord, Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, 1:2004, pp. 117 – 240, <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/BPEAEndingAfricasPovertyTrapFINAL.pdf>

⁹ Critical remarks by Richard Cooper at the end of the report, p. 230

¹⁰ The White Man's Burden, 2006

¹¹ Dead Aid, 2009

¹² Controversy between Jeffrey Sachs and Dambisa Moyo, Huffington Post. May 2009

¹³ Africa's Future and the World Bank's Support to it, The World Bank, March 2011

Trade between Africa and the rest of the world has increased by 200% since 2000. Inflation dropped from 22% in the 1990s to 8% in the past decade. Foreign debts declined by a quarter, budget deficits by two-thirds.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has steadily increased since 2000. According to a recent survey by Ernst & Young¹⁴, Africa is becoming increasingly attractive to international investors. Perceptions have significantly improved as far as the long-term horizon is concerned. This is a fairly recent development, and a consequence of Africa's enhanced political stability following international and regional peace keeping and peace building efforts. The long-term horizon is of particular importance for the mining sector which requires considerable upfront investment and a long breath thereafter.

Africa's share of new global FDI projects has grown over the last decade. Capital investments are set to grow further in the coming years, and are forecast to stand at 150 billion dollars in 2015. Africans themselves are displaying unprecedented optimism about their continent's potential. They now invest in other African countries, something almost unheard of before. Investors from emerging economies, on the whole, seem to be generally more positive about opportunities in Africa while traditional investors from developed countries tend to be more cautious. However, they will have no choice but to join the party if they want to make sure that African commodities continue to be available for them. China is currently acting much faster than the West when it comes to securing access to natural resources.

With all these positive trends consolidating, Africa today has a much better chance to succeed in its attempt to finally emancipate itself from the various burdens of the past than ever before, mainly for five reasons:

- the impact of cell phone and internet,
- the slow but steady move towards better governance,
- the rise of a young educated middle class,
- the new role of China, India, Brazil and other emerging countries,
- and South Africa's integration into the African mainstream since 1994

A sixth reason will – sadly - be missing from this list: a decisive role for Europe, North America and the rest of the West in Africa's development. We have retreated to second rank. Western policy makers admit to it in private. They would be well advised to find new ways to move back to centre stage as Africa's traditional partners since the West still has a lot to offer to the continent.

Let us take a closer look at these five parameters for change in Africa.

¹⁴ It's Time for Africa - Attractiveness of Africa Survey, Ernst & Young, 2011

--- Cell phone and internet

The most important agents of change in Africa have been, and continue to be, the cell phone, and, with some delay, the internet. The whole continent seems to be on the phone most of the time – unless there is a power cut that prevents recharging. Many of Africa's new billionaires are network operators. Modern communications have paved the way for emancipation of the new African middle class. The cell phone has greatly improved trade efficiency in Africa's urban centres, and on its innumerable markets. It has helped to enhance the quality of elections by facilitating the transmission of results from remote polling stations to central electoral commissions. It has assisted civil rights groups and opposition movements in their struggle for freedom, democracy, and the Rule of Law. Together with the internet, it has enabled the African diaspora all over the world to stay connected with home at a fraction of previous communication cost.

In 1998 there were just 4 million cell phone subscribers in Africa. Within ten years the number had increased to 260 million, and it continues to rise. E-government is not utopia in Africa any more, but being embraced by a number of countries, with East Africa leading the way.¹⁵

While the cell phone has become ubiquitous, internet coverage is still facing multiple challenges. Frequent power cuts continue to be in the way of fast and secure traffic. Access is being hampered in a number of countries by prohibitively high prices of government controlled telecom companies. But these prices are bound to fall as broadband is being installed in many parts of the continent. The best recent news came from the Indian Ocean region. A submarine fibre optic network system was launched in July 2009.¹⁶ This cable network provides direct connection of Southern and Eastern Africa with Europe and Southern Asia, covering a distance of over 17 000 km worth of fibre optic technology. As a result, full bandwidth solutions can now be offered to customers in most countries of the region.

--- Better governance

Africa is still far from being well governed. The influential Mo Ibrahim Index of Governance¹⁷ only lists a handful of countries as being well run. They are mostly small, and enjoy exceptional conditions.

However, improvements can be seen in many places. Most of the change comes from within. Western support for civil society groups and institution building does play an important role, but ideas are more and more being formulated and pursued by Africans. China's complete absence from this terrain is conspicuous. Dialogue about democracy, Rule of Law and justice

¹⁵ More details at <http://africa.comworldseries.com>

¹⁶ This privately financed venture is having an enormous growth triggering impact on regional development. For details see <http://www.seacom.mu/>

¹⁷ <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/en/section/the-ibrahim-index>

remains a field of constant, often fruitful debate between Africans and Westerners.

Africans have become more assertive in insisting on their choices. Events in 2011, all over Africa (though more dramatically north of the Sahara), have made one choice very clear: the democratic path has become the preferred option of governance for Africans – “one that can guide us to deliver the future our people demand.”¹⁸

Nana Akufo-Addo, a distinguished Ghanaian lawyer and opposition leader, looks at Africa’s democratic credentials and shortcomings against the background of the Arab Spring: “The spread of democracy in the last twenty years in Africa has been dramatic, with 2011 a year of reaffirmation – as the year of the Arab Spring also saw elections in some 27 nations in Africa. It marked the beginning of the end of 50 years of post-independence struggle for democracy.”¹⁹

Better governance requires better leaders. They have started to emerge since the turn of the century, and in some cases been able to gain power and influence.²⁰ Akufo-Addo strikes an optimistic note when summing up that “the period of passive citizenship in Africa has hopefully come to an end, and governments have begun to adapt. Africa’s young and enthusiastic Facebook generation has no time for non-performing leaders.”²¹

However, this generation’s rise is often blocked or at least slowed down by one of the greatest cultural obstacles on the way to Africa’s modernization: the traditional pattern of respect for the elders, and the abuse of this pattern by those who enjoy its benefits - Africa’s old leaders.²² Most of them simply don’t want to leave office. Few resist the temptation of having constitutions changed to enable them to remain president for life.²³ Why would an ailing octogenarian not wish to retire and enjoy his last days in a dignified way? The question is Western in its thrust, and would rarely be asked in this way in Africa. Life’s phases are different for an African leader. In many cases he simply cannot afford retirement. No pension funds, a greedy clan, scores of clients around him expecting to be fed; and often skeletons in the cupboard from many years of too much power. The fear of prosecution by a successor government, or, in

¹⁸ Nana Akufo-Addo, *The Future of Democracy in Africa and the Arab Spring*, IISS Oppenheimer Lecture 2012, <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/oppenheimer-lecture/>

¹⁹ Oppenheimer Lecture, loc.cit.

²⁰ Rotberg, *Transformative Political Leadership*, 2012

²¹ Oppenheimer Lecture, loc.cit.

²² Daniel Etounga-Manguelle, in his stark criticism of some sclerotic aspects of African culture, explains the roots of authority focused thinking which permits leaders to remain in power for life unless their subjects turn into citizens demanding democratic reform (*Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program?* – in *Culture Matters*, ed. Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, 2000, p. 70

²³ Mo Ibrahim’s unorthodox attempt to “bribe away” African leaders from the temptation to change constitutions and acquire life tenure has not been too successful: for two consecutive years the cell phone tycoon and distinguished democrat was unable to identify suitable candidates for The Ibrahim Prize which is awarded to a democratically elected former African Executive Head of State or Government who has served his term in office within the limits set by the country’s constitution, has left office in the last three years, and has demonstrated excellence in office. <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/en/section/the-ibrahim-prize>

extreme cases, of having to go to The Hague,²⁴ can lead to absurd consequences of old men hanging on to power without end, with the support of those who are afraid of going down with them. Dysfunctional coalitions as in Kenya, with over 100 government ministers, and Zimbabwe, with fire and water trying to govern together, are recent examples for the sad consequences of the lack of orderly retirement schemes for leaders who have lost elections.²⁵

The good news is that these cases are now considered scandalous by Africa's new middle class. By way of an orderly election, the Senegalese have recently removed their 85 year old president from office – he had tried to fiddle with the constitution and overstayed his welcome. In Benin in 2006, a few courageous young people garnered popular support for their appeal to veteran president Mathieu Kérékou not to run for yet another term after 24 years in office.²⁶ Reacting to a strong wave of popular discontent, he gave in to their demands and retired. In more and more African countries, people “have accepted the wisdom of expressing their impatience through the ballot”.²⁷ In Ghana, polls²⁸ have shown that 90 percent of the people believe that leaders should be chosen through regular, open and honest elections. More than 80 percent reject the idea of being ruled by one party, one man, or the military. There is little doubt that most other Africans share this view. Ghana itself is one of the best examples of the trend towards better governance. Its current president was elected by a tiny margin only, and his opponent accepted the result without protesting. Not a single shot was fired. Skeptics who still believe that democracy is not for Africans unless “we do it for them” were proven wrong. Africans are perfectly able to do it themselves, though not everywhere yet. However, the continental trend for more democracy and better governance is now beyond the risk of being reversed.

Will modern leadership, improved management of public affairs, and economic progress lead to a decrease in corruption? Combined with more freedom for the media, it might. Corruption is not a specifically African issue, but a feature of any dysfunctional political system worldwide. Again, it is up to Africa's emerging middle class to deal with the issue, and make efforts to contain and reduce its scope.

Better governance is needed in all segments of public affairs. As long as current trends for improvements of communication networks, health, education, the economy, and the living conditions of the middle class remain steady, governance will gain in quality, inasmuch as Africans request this to happen. It will be a long process, but chances for substantial progress are

²⁴ Robert Mugabe's military junta members are particularly obsessed by this fear.

²⁵ In spring 2012, the Top Five among Africa's long lasting despots had a combined 155 years of tenure behind them: Obiang (Equatorial Guinea) 33, Dos Santos (Angola) 33, Mugabe (Zimbabwe) 32, Biya (Cameroon) 29, and Sassou Nguesso (Congo Brazzaville) 28 years.

²⁶ The civil society movement „Don't touch my constitution” was successfully led by a young activist, Reckya Madougou, now serving as Benin's Minister for Microfinance.

²⁷ Akufo-Addo, Oppenheimer Lecture 2012, loc.cit.

²⁸ Afrobarometer, Popular Attitudes toward Democracy in Ghana, May 2009,

http://www.afrobarometer.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=11&Itemid=89

now more real than ever before since decolonization.

--- The new middle class

Economic growth and the emergence of a sizeable middle class usually come together, leading to significant reduction of poverty. As a result, consumptive expenditure rises, the social fabric improves, and the new middle class will ask for improved services, adherence to the rule of law, and better governance.

The middle class is widely acknowledged to be Africa's future. It represents the vanguard of its societies, and it is driving the continent's economic and political development. Africa's emerging middle class today is believed to be roughly comparable in size to the middle classes in India or China.²⁹ By 2010, the middle class as defined by the African Development Bank had risen to 34.3% of Africa's population or nearly 313 million people, up from about 111 million or 26.2% in 1980, 151 million or 27% in 1990 and 196 million or 27.2% in 2000. According to Standard Bank, which operates throughout Africa, 60 million African households have annual incomes greater than \$3,000 at market exchange rates. By 2015, that number is expected to reach 100 million - almost the same as in India now.³⁰ These figures indicate a rather fast pace of development.³¹

However, income inequality in Africa remains very high. The most affluent 100,000 Africans had a net worth of \$800 billion in 2008 or about 60% of Africa's GDP, or 80% of sub-Saharan Africa's. Most of the poor still have little chance to leave behind poverty, and the continent's dramatic demographics will produce hundreds of millions of more poor Africans before birth rates are likely to go down.

The key challenge now is to ensure that public services, a growing economy, and democratic freedoms can deliver opportunities and prosperity to those below the age of 20, and those to be born within the next thirty years.³² African societies today present limited opportunities for the masses. "What Africa needs, above all, is value addition – and this starts with adding value to our human capital through an education system that provides every child with the skills to realize his full potential. Africa needs a confident, educated workforce to be able to compete effectively in the global economy".³³

²⁹ African Development Bank, *The Middle of the Pyramid: Dynamics of the Middle Class in Africa*, April 2011

³⁰ *The Economist*, December 2011, loc.cit.

³¹ Akufo-Addo, loc.cit.

³² "Prioritizing health, education and basic services is key to ensuring that the most vulnerable are not left behind" (Pedro Conceição, Chief Economist at UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/news-events/article/>)

³³ Akufo-Addo, loc.cit.

--- China, India, Brazil and the others

A generation ago Brazil, Russia, India and China accounted for just 1% of African trade. Africa's top five emerging trade partners are now China (38 percent), India (14 percent), Korea (7.2 percent), Brazil (7.1 percent), and Turkey (6.5 percent). China's and India's growth has become Africa's growth.³⁴

The emerging economies can provide additional know-how, technology and development experiences required to raise the standard of living for millions of people on the continent. China in particular is everywhere with its cheap consumer goods. Africa's rising middle class is buying Chinese today while dreaming of buying German later.

Trade between Africa and China has surpassed \$120 billion in 2010, and in the past two years China has given more loans to African countries than the World Bank. About one-fourth of China's total crude oil imports originate in sub-Saharan Africa, and more than two-thirds of Africa's exports to China consist of crude oil.³⁵

Between 2005 and 2010 about 14% of China's investment abroad is estimated to have found its way to sub-Saharan Africa.³⁶ This has brought increased employment and prosperity to the region, but also allegations of damage to local businesses, corruption and the hoarding of natural resources.³⁷

Africans view China's new economic dominance with mixed feelings.³⁸ Beyond affordable consumer goods, China is able to give something to Africa that the West is unable to provide: immediate advice on how to overcome poverty. A West African minister of Finance once told me what he considered to be Africa's main problem with Western advice: "Your countries have become rich one and a half centuries ago. You cannot explain to us how your ancestors managed to overcome poverty. The Chinese can – they have only just done it themselves, and not everywhere yet." Indeed a simple truth to reflect about by Western social engineers advocating their grand design for Africa.

However, there is a downside to these considerable advantages African countries and their citizens can obtain from the impressive growth of their trade with China, and of Chinese FDI. Starting in the 1990s, China has flooded African markets with cheap textiles, destroying local production. In Kinshasa, everybody knows the story of Utextafrica, once the DRC's biggest textile

³⁴ Figures from African Economic Outlook, 2011

³⁵ Shimelse Ali, Nida Jafrani, China's Growing Role in Africa: Myths and Facts, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2012

³⁶ Derek Scissors, Chinese Outward Investment: More Opportunity Than Danger, Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, July 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/07/chinese-outward-investment-more-opportunity-than-danger>

³⁷ The Economist, April 2011, http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/04/chinese_africa

³⁸ A good overview of the "mixed bag" can be found in "Trying to Pull Together", The Economist, April 2011. Detailed poll results in Afrobarometer on China, Working Paper 117, January 2010.

plant. Around the turn of the century, it went bankrupt, unable to compete against Chinese import ware smuggled across the Congo River from Brazzaville. A Chinese company then bought the plant, closed it down and copied the local designs for further production in China, and subsequent export to the Congo. This story is one of many others. One can hear a lot more grudges and complaints about China and its African activities today in Africa than ten years ago, even after factoring in a certain amount of self-indulgence of African economic actors who continue to dream of protectionism which will never come back.

The cultural gap between Chinese and Africans is huge. Chinese engagement in Africa reflects the enormous socio-economic dynamics which the country is currently experiencing at home. Chinese business leaders in Beijing will easily admit to foreigners that the 500.000 to one million Chinese cadres and workers who now live in Africa³⁹ do not exactly represent the country's elite. Not all of them understand Beijing's official political line with regard to Africa which is based on the principles of mutual benefit and respect. However, Chinese leaders are beginning to sense the risks of their country's reputation being tarnished, and may act to avoid any atmospheric deterioration of what has become such a strategically important relationship for them.⁴⁰

While China definitely has a strategy on Africa, the reverse is not true. Africa ought to do something about it⁴¹. In order to maintain the positive edge within the balance of advantages and risks in the highly dynamic and increasingly important Chinese-African relationship, it is extremely important for Africans not to feel exploited by China, but to be sure to benefit from an equal partnership at eye level. Given traditional Chinese perceptions of Africa, this will not be easy to achieve.

Brazil – mostly in lusophone African countries – Russia and India are mainly acting as investors in extractive industries. Their sales in Africa are either close to zero (in Russia's case) or still relatively modest in figures. South Korea and Turkey have also started to focus more on Africa, but for the time being, all these emerging economies are far behind China in terms of their importance for Africa's development. But they are present, and they contribute to Africa's growth.

³⁹ No reliable figures are available. However, the number continues to grow, and below the thin layer of managers and traders, most Chinese workers in Africa are of rural origin and poorly educated. They have no place to go back to in China, and will – as permanent immigrants – compete for limited resources with the growing number of Africans. Conflicts are bound to arise. Interesting observations by Eric Olander, Who are the Chinese in Africa? <http://www.chinaafricaproject.com/2012/01/who-are-the-chinese-in-africa/>, and by Deborah Brautigam who comments regularly on the issue in her blog, <http://www.chinaafricarealstory.com>

⁴⁰ Roy Laishley, Africa needs to "play it smart" in trade with Asia, United Nations Africa Renewal 2010, Department of Public Information, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/africarenewal/newrels/emerging-economies-09.html>

⁴¹ Roy Laishley, loc.cit.

--- South Africa's growing importance

Arguably the single most astonishing African development since 1994 has been South Africa's rapid integration into mainstream Africa, in all respects. The end of apartheid has come as a profound relief to the continent. In Africa's south, entrenched front lines had hindered peace and progress for one more generation after the great wave of decolonization of the 1960s. The almost miraculous healing of this scar in the 1990s created enormous political, economic and social space.

Political space as it has appeased the Southern African region, and given its dominant power the pan-African role it had never been able to play before, with South African leaders mediating in numerous conflicts, with varying success, and the country bringing its considerable weight to African issues, be it at the G-20, the BRIC group, now having become BRICS⁴², or the African Union⁴³.

Economic space as it has removed the distortions of trade, traffic and investment that had isolated the former pariah state from its neighbourhood, triggering growth in South Africa itself and beyond.

And social space as it has opened new possibilities for movement of people across borders, enabling – to mention only a rather sad example – millions of distressed Zimbabweans to vote with their feet and leave behind their homeland, ruined by Robert Mugabe's folly. As many Africans like to put it, South Africa quickly became to Africa what the United States has always been for the Americas. This may be an exaggeration, but the argument can at least provoke our thinking. South Africa attracts other Africans almost as much as the US attracts Latin Americans.

All is not well though with present day South Africa. The legacy from before 1994 still has its impact on government and society; the ANC has not managed to deliver on many of its promises for better education and health care, and for more jobs; subsequent leaders have been unwilling or unable to bring to an end the ongoing tragedy of Zimbabwe. But in many ways, South Africa has become a factor of pride for the whole continent, not least through rugby, cricket and soccer. The country has gained much international respect for the peaceful change it has achieved, and for the – by and large – commendable level of constructive coexistence of its diverse ethnic communities. The rainbow seems to hold, somehow. Wise Africans have told me that one should not forget that it is only just 18 years old, and will improve with age.

⁴² Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

⁴³ A good example of South Africa's considerable clout is the recent election of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to the office of chairperson of the AU Commission, following a bitter contest which resulted in the defeat of incumbent Jean Ping, see <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/07/15/uk-africa-au-idUKBRE86EOH020120715>

1. The risks of new failure

Africa's emergence and emancipation is visible at many places. While it is likely to continue, it could be retarded or spoiled by a number of adverse factors. A number of cultural, demographic, and economic obstacles need to be mentioned.

Cultural patterns change much slower than growth rates. What I have said about signs of better governance is today not much more than the upside of a long history of failure of the ruling elites to organize African societies in a more rational and modern way. Too much went wrong in Africa for too long. African thinkers such as Moeletsi Mbeki, Daniel Etounga-Manguelle, Wangari Maathai and many others have pointed to deeply rooted phenomena which stand in the way of Africa's integration into the One World. The continent remains full of contradictions - young vs. old; educated urban vs. backward rural people; daylight rationalism and modernity vs. nightly atavism based on superstition; modern society and statehood vs. clan and tribe; and the consequences of all of these. While the foreign traveller may perceive these phenomena as part of Africa's daily life – and, sadly, will often find them exotic - the new middle classes are more and more determined to leave behind the continent's darker side. They will naturally seek orientation from Western – or rather: global – trends and patterns, enabling them to put to rest the old demons. I have sensed this in many discussions with students at African universities. How fast they will succeed I cannot tell.

Current demographic trends may perhaps create a considerable dividend to Africa, or – more likely - become its new curse. As emigration to other continents is bound to become ever less of an option, Africans will have to deal with demographic issues mostly by themselves, and at home. The latest UN predictions⁴⁴ indicate that populations throughout sub-Saharan Africa will double, and in some cases triple and quadruple by 2050 or before. Two, three or four times as many citizens will not just need much more food, health care and education. They will also need leaders which are two, three or four times better than quite a few of those in power today, in order to steer Africa through this high risk period. This may seem like a piece of utopia, but it has to be addressed.⁴⁵

Food security should not be the biggest of the challenges stemming from exponential population growth. 60% of the world's reserves of arable land are situated in Africa. But health care, only just improving, could face breakdowns at many places in view of the demographic explosion. Metropolitan life is likely to become more difficult in overcrowded agglomerations lacking infrastructure, and water is expected to become scarce at many more places. Worst of all,

⁴⁴ <http://esa.un.org/wpp/unpp/> - World Population Prospects, analyzed by Robert Rotberg, March 2, 2012, www.robertrotberg.wordpress.com

⁴⁵ Wangari Maathai, *The Challenge for Africa*, p. 72. In his latest book, Robert Rotberg, *Transformative Political Leadership*, 2012, has identified and thoroughly analyzed the quality of leadership as one of Africa's core problems, calling for "transformative leaders". <http://robertrotberg.wordpress.com/2012/05/09/nurturing-responsible-and-effective-political-leadership>

Africa's emerging education system may collapse when confronted with the huge numbers of children asking for schooling. This issue could become the most dramatic consequence of the expected demographic explosion, as education – of girls in particular – is the only road towards sustained birth control which may, in the second half of our century, lead to a flattening of today's worrying demographic trends.

In order to cope with them, Africa only has one option: steady economic growth and full concentration on education at all levels.⁴⁶ Stagnation would quickly bring back the Six Ds, and destroy the recent emancipation. Unless current trends are reversed, the risk is high that economic growth could be of a jobless nature.⁴⁷ Extractive industries should not continue to be based on raw material exports without generation of added value before shipping. Africa needs cotton mills for its high quality cotton. It needs industrial investment in the labour intensive textile sector in order to employ young women, and refineries for its crude oil, reducing its present dependency from fluctuating commodity prices. It does not need the massive influx of Chinese labour employed in infrastructure projects financed by Chinese companies or state actors. Serious policy adjustments are now of the essence to manage and accommodate the coming youth bulge.⁴⁸

The challenge for Africa lies in the urgency to address several huge issues simultaneously. The battle for FDI must be fought alongside the battle for education. A better educated workforce needs jobs. Value addition starts with adding value to human capital through an education system that provides every child with the skills to realize his full potential.⁴⁹ Otherwise, Africa would put at risk its newly acquired place in the global economy, and return to its calamitous former role as a burden to the world.

2. Aid and the West – an inevitable farewell to old thinking

Where does Africa's new emancipation leave the West, the continent's traditional partner, former dominator and current self appointed mentor? We have seen that twelve years after the proclamation of the Millennium Development Goals, this isn't the same Africa any more.

Jeffrey Sachs' "Big Five"⁵⁰ are the right objectives. So are the Millennium Development

⁴⁶ While a lot has been achieved in improving primary education (for the latest UNESCO figures from April 2011, see http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=48436&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html), secondary schools are underfunded and universities in a disastrous state all over Africa.

⁴⁷ Akufo-Addo, loc.cit.

⁴⁸ Mthuli Ncube, Chief Economist and Vice-President of the African Development Bank (AfDB): "Urgent attention is needed to foster inclusive growth, to improve political accountability, and address the youth bulge." (African Economic Outlook 2011)

⁴⁹ Akufo-Addo, loc.cit.

⁵⁰ Quoted from Wangari Maathai, loc. cit., p. 71; they are agricultural inputs; investments in basic health; improvements in education; better power, transport and communication services; and the provision of clean drinking water and proper sanitation.

Goals. But the method by which they can best be achieved needs to be reviewed, and partly changed. Paul Kagame, Rwanda's relentless modernizer, sums up the fundamental problem: "We appreciate support from the outside, but it should be support for what we intend to achieve ourselves. No one should pretend that they care about our nations more than we do; or assume that they know what is good for us better than we do ourselves. They should, in fact, respect us for wanting to decide our own fate."⁵¹

Kagame, as more and more fellow Africans, advocates Africa's emancipation. His view reflects the fundamental ideas of Africa's emerging middle class. Unlike the more radical William Easterly and Dambisa Moyo, he is in favour of having aid reduced inasmuch as other means of development gain in importance.⁵² His is a gradual approach, not a revolutionary one.⁵³ It seems wise to me to follow this line.

Western Aid has deep moral roots.⁵⁴ They are honourable, they are understandable, but they are at least partly wrong. For half a century, Africa has been the continent of myriads of well meaning foreigners. They often did, and continue to do, extraordinary things. But they have become part of a self-perpetuating system which needs a poor, seemingly helpless and mostly hopeless continent to justify its existence.⁵⁵ I once had to address a function which celebrated forty years of continuous activity of a distinguished German development agency in an African country. Opening my speech with the slightly sloppy remark that I was hoping that no German Ambassador would have to address a similar meeting after another forty years of the agency's activity, making it eighty in total, I found my audience mortified. It was obvious that nobody there had ever thought of making himself superfluous – in my humble view the noblest of objectives for any foreign aid worker in Africa.

Only Africans can, and are indeed beginning to explain to Westerners that traditional aid should be phased out, and funds spent in Africa shifted to a few key areas which cannot be reached by private enterprise and market mechanisms. Support ought to be focused on education, institution building, strengthening the Rule of Law, and facilitating elections where appropriate. Incidentally, these are the sectors in which China shows little or no interest. They are key areas

⁵¹ Op Ed, Financial Times, May 8, 2009

⁵² Interviewed by Fareed Zakaria on CNN (July 2009), he declares an end of foreign aid to Rwanda during his term of office as a desirable objective. However, he avoids a more precise commitment.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJ-CvQSsMF0>

⁵³ Jeffrey Sachs detects some hypocrisy behind Kagame's lofty ideas, pointing out the exceptionally high amount of budgetary aid Rwanda has received from Western donors since the 1994 genocide (Huffington Post, May 24, 2009)

⁵⁴ While I have always been aware of the enormous development dynamics generated by political Protestantism in Northern Europe and the United States, I was introduced to the traditional Jewish concept of Tikkun Olam ("repairing the world") by Marsha Dubrow at Harvard. It should be noted that these two rather similar sets of ideas are powerful undercurrents of Western attitudes towards Africa, and have no parallel in Chinese thinking.

⁵⁵ Linda Polman (War Games, 2010) has aptly analyzed the „humanitarian crisis caravan“ and its constant search for the next crisis. Humanitarian aid (otherwise not addressed in this essay) is particularly exposed to the risk of exaggeration of "doing it on behalf of others". However, regular development work is also frequently affected by this phenomenon.

for Africa's further emancipation and stabilization, and thus of long term political interest of the West. The world simply cannot afford Africa to once again deviate from the promising path it has recently taken.

“We face neither East nor West. We face forward.” With a delay of half a century, Kwame Nkrumah's ambitious and, in his day, idealistic words are about to gain a new meaning. Africa will continue to take what it deems useful from whatever direction – affordable consumer goods, roads, railways and football stadiums from China, modern technology, support for institution building and many other things from the West. But Africa must learn very fast how to pay for this in a reasonable way – neither through wholesale surrender to foreigners of concessions for commodity exploitation, nor by way of short sighted protection of the interests of its ruling elites. Aid will continue to lose its importance while trade and investment will be driving development – very similar to what we have seen in Asia over the past two decades. Those of us who keep advocating “the big push” of large scale social engineering from outside should start to listen before they speak. Those in some major capitals, East and West, who still stick to patronizing attitudes when dealing with Africa, should be corrected by the new African elite – gently, but firmly. It is in both the West's and China's interest to finally acknowledge that Africans are now masters of their fate, fully responsible for their continent's further development, and equal partners on a global scale. Africa is facing huge challenges, but Africans are better prepared today than ever before to meet them. In driving the change, they need partners at eye level. If we as Westerners stand ready to brush up our attitudes, we can indeed be these partners – much more so than certain others who have recently been seen as frontrunners over much of the emerging continent. Africans will know how to make their choices.