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African Governance Systems in the Pre and Post-Independence Periods: Enduring Lessons and Opportunities for Youth in Africa

A Discussion Paper Prepared

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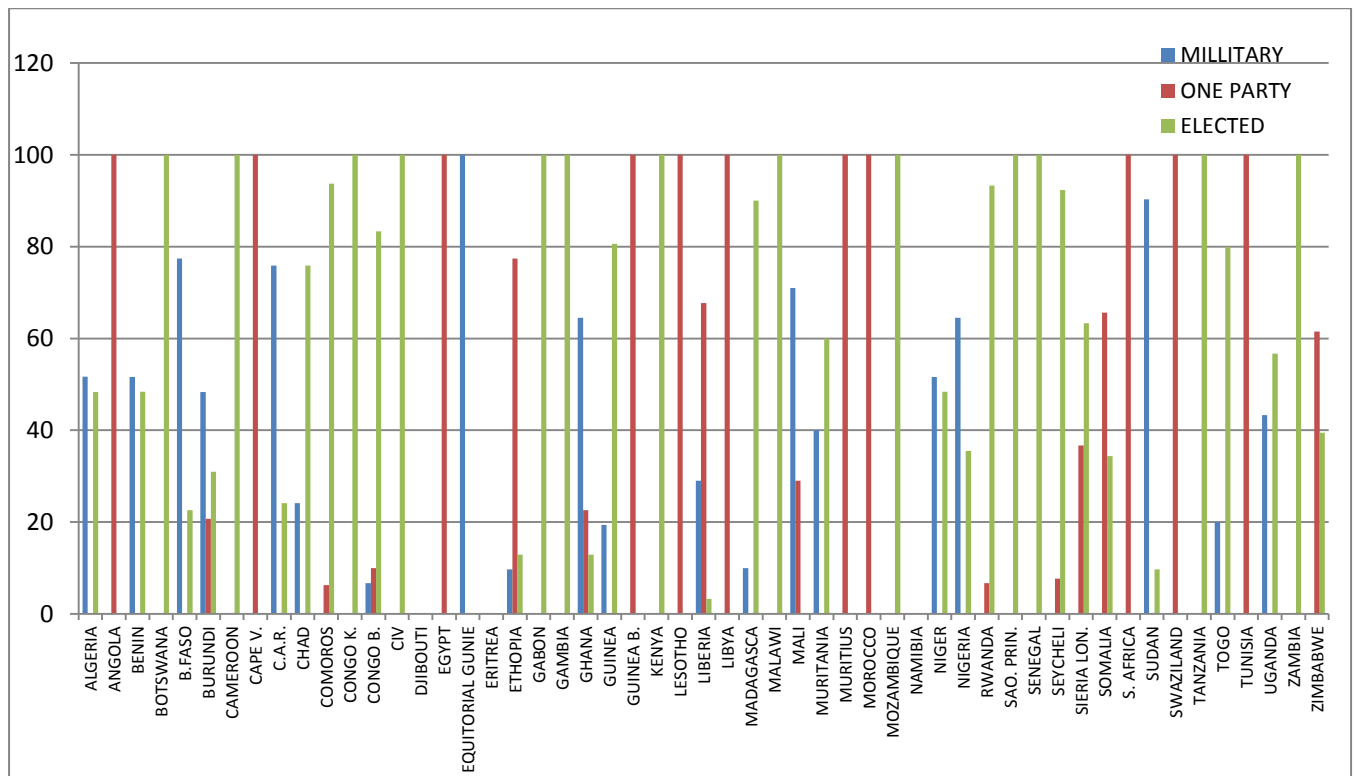
African Governance Systems in the Pre and Post-Independence Periods: Enduring Lessons and Opportunities for Youth in Africa

1.0. Background

In the last 25 years following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the challenges of African governance systems and the nexus between them and the plight of African youth have elicited a lot of interest. What is responsible for this shift of interest and attention? What accounts for the growing attention on governance systems in Africa; the place and role of African youth in political institutions and decision making processes in Twenty-First Century Africa? Answers to these central questions will shed light on Africa's present location in the global development discourse and tease out the important differences between African governance systems during and after end of the Cold War[1]. One of the defining features of African governance systems during the Cold War era was the phenomenon of 'sit tight' leaders and 'presidents for life' in many countries. **Figures One** presents a mixed bag of military dictatorships, one party systems and elected civilian regimes from 1960 to 1990.

Figure One: Africa, Percentage of Post-Independence years per Regime type (1960-1990)

The preponderance of 'undemocratic' governance systems reflects the low premium placed on the 'democratic' credentials of African leaders by Western powers keen to 'win' the loyalty of African states by all means possible against the Soviet Union in the period. Not surprisingly, the Cold War period witnessed some of the most brutal and oppressive regimes on the continent. The Cold War

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[1] For more on the impact of the Cold War on African Politics, see Sola Akinrinade and Amadu Sesay (Eds.) *Africa in the Post Cold War Internal System*, London: Frances Pinter 1998; Emeka Nwokedi, *Politics of Democratization: Changing Authoritarian Regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Munster: LIT VERLAG, 1995 and Claude Ake, *The Feasibility of democracy in Nigeria*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2000

also significantly undermined the growth and maturity of democratic governance and institutions on the continent, and frustrated directly and indirectly, the effective participation of young people in political decision-making processes.

Western policies towards Africa and African states changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall in October 1989, which marked the end of the Cold War. For Africa, the most lasting effect of the collapse of communism was perhaps the push towards democratization and democracy in the continent led by civil society forces and political actors that had lost political power to either military or civilian dictators during the Cold War[2]. The domestic pressure for political reform was supported by Africa's development partners who introduced conditionality in their relations with African leaders. In return for foreign aid, grants and technical assistance, African states were required to open up their political space and organise free and fair elections. Another enduring and even notorious consequence of the collapse of communism was the unprecedented violence and protracted 'uncivil' wars that broke out in many African states. Notable examples of this phenomenon are Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Spearheaded by opportunistic War Lords and their 'rag tag' youthful "armies", the civil wars saw the violent overthrow of incumbent leaders and regimes. In all of these instances, a recurrent factor was the prominent roles played by the youth during and after hostilities either as 'child soldiers' or as a major pressure group advocating political reform.[3]

The presence of millions of idle, and in some cases unemployable youth, across the continent that had participated in the political violence and civil wars, drew national, regional and global attention to the plight of young people in Africa. The plight of young people supported the argument that sustainable national development would continue to elude the continent as long as its most productive and vibrant population is unable to contribute effectively to political decision making and development processes at the state, regional and continental levels[4].This study seeks to provide answers to some very important youth questions in Africa: What is the perception of the youth with regard to their place in society and governance processes generally? What factors are responsible for the seeming inability of African youth to capitalize on their numerical superiority to influence policy on critical issues such as youth unemployment, access to qualitative education at all levels, skills acquisition, and access to life changing economic and financial resources in their respective countries? What are the most important societal and institutional barriers to youth participation in governance, elections, political parties and social mobility? What is responsible for the popularity of "democratic" governance in Africa since the 1990s? Are young people better-off under "democratic" governance? What are the implications of bad governance for youth's participation in important decision making processes in their countries in particular, and in Africa in general? What are the most important lessons learned by young people as core stakeholders in the context of current governance systems?. How can opportunities be created for effective youth empowerment and participation in decision making processes in Africa? The rest of the paper will try to provide answers to these and other critical questions.

1.1. Conceptual Discourse

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[2] See Bolade M. Eyinla, "Democratization and Governance in Africa", in Abdullah A. Mohamoud (Ed.) *Shaping a New Africa*, Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2006

[3] For details, see Amadu Sesay, Charles Ukeje, Osman Gbla and Wale Ismail, *Post-War Regimes and State Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Dakar:* CODESRIA, 2009).

[4] This is clear from a cursory look at the UN, AU, ECOWAS and various national youth policy documents For more details see **Appendix One**

This section attempts to operationalise some of the key concepts in the paper especially 'Youth', 'democracy' and 'governance systems'.

1.1.2 Youth

Table One presents definitions of youth from four randomly selected African countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa. From the **Table,** determining who a youth is may not be as simple as it seems on the surface. This is because 'youth' varies from one country or society to another. In some cultures, especially in an era of massive youth unemployment, one would remain a youth until one is married and/or has a paid job to meet personal and extended family responsibilities. Youth is a culturally bound concept, which explains the observable differences in definitions by the four countries. Also evident from a cursory look at the four definitions is the fact that 'youth' can be defined inclusively or exclusively depending on the country concerned. Kenya and South Africa provided conceptualizations that are more inclusive than those of Nigeria and Sierra Leone.. Finally, the age 'floor' for youth also varies from country to country. For South Africa youth are "Young people falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years"; in Kenya, youth are "persons resident in Kenya in the age bracket 15 to 30 years". The Nigerian youth policy document defines a youth as "Young male and female Nigerians aged between 18 and 35 years; while Sierra Leone characterizes youth as "all Sierra Leonean males and females between the ages of 15 and 35".

On paper, the Kenyan and South African youth policies seem to be more 'youth friendly' than their Nigeria and Sierra Leonean counterparts because they are non-discriminatory. The variations in the definition of youth could have serious implications for the enjoyment of civic rights and privileges by young persons resident in the four countries. Targets of the youth policies also show important variations. Sierra Leone targets 'youth diamond diggers", a group of young people that live far from their families and are also out of school. Nigeria's youth policy is unique in that it targets the "youth in diaspora", while South Africa includes "youth heading households" a reflection, no doubt, of the debilitating effects of the HIV /AIDS pandemic in that country. Definitions provided by local multilateral organizations are equally important because in principle, they take precedence over national policies. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the African Union, AU, define youth as young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years." [5] This is different from the one provided by the United Nations (UN), which is; "any young person between the ages of 15-24"and certainly too restrictive in an African context given the cultural nuances associated with youth in some countries. It would be illuminating to know from participants who a youth is in their respective countries.

Irrespective of the differences in their descriptions, African countries seem to attach a lot of importance to their youth population. The reasons are not farfetched. First, youth are perceived as the gate keepers of the future. Second, "young people in the age group of 15-35 years require social, economic and political support to realize their full potential"[6]and by implication, those of their families, communities, nations and continent. Young people are also full of "energy, ambition, enthusiasm and creativity"; but often experience economic, social and cultural uncertainties that may stunt their growth and development[7]. In an age of breathtaking globalization processes, young people

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[5] ECOWAS Youth Policy, 2009, p3. See also Amadu Sesay, Fighting Bush Fires: ECOWAS and Peacemaking in West Africa, a chronicle of its Peace Support Operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau, Abuja: ECOWAS Commission, forthcoming

[6] Ibid

[7] Ibid

in Africa connect easily with their peers across the globe, with grave consequences for national, regional and global peace and security. The demonstration effect of the Arab Spring is a pointer to what determined young people can do to even the most intolerant and dictatorial regimes in Africa in the Twenty First Century. Another important fact about the youth is their numerical superiority. Africa is the only continent where 65 per cent of total population is below the age of 35 years[8]. Accordingly, any African state that ignores this very critical category of its people does so at its own peril, as recent history has clearly demonstrated.

1.1.3 Democracy

Democracy as a concept and system of government, is perhaps the most commonly *u*sed, 'abused' and misunderstood word in political discourses, especially in the post communist global dispensation. Democracy and democratic governance "…is essentially concerned with the control of the powerful organs of state such as …monopoly of violence …taxation and adjudication".[9]According to W.B. Gallie, democracy "…is one of those contested concepts…the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users"[10]. For Bolade Eyinla, "…democracy is…a difficult concept to define"[11] The difficulty in conceptualizing democracy is partly due to its universal appeal, especially after the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Democracy as a governance system has great appeal in Africa because of its perceived ability to accommodate diversity, a common feature in all African countries. Besides that African states and their leaders want to be "democracy compliant" to placate their citizens at home and development partners abroad. Preference for democracy in Africa in the last two decades is clear from a cursory look at **Figure Two** below

This paper adopts Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy which is: "government of the people, by the people and for the people". In contemporary political discourse, however, three fundamental notions are associated with Lincoln's characterization of democratic political systems, namely: representation, accountability and participation[12]. To the three concepts must be added a fourth; legitimacy. A government that is legitimate represents the will of the people exercised in free, fair and credible elections. A government that is elected by the people must be accountable to the citizens while they remain in office.

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[8] *International Youth Year* on www.social.un.org/youthyear, accessed on 29 may 2014, and . www.africa-youth.org accessed 28th May 2014

[9] Bolade M Eyinla,."Democratization and governance in Africa", op. cit and Claude Ake, The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa, p67..

[10] Quoted in Emeka Nwokedi; Politics of Democratization:, op cit 1995, p8

[11] Bolade M Eyinla,."Democratization and governance in Africa", op. cit and Claude Ake, The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa, op. cit especially Chapter Three.

[12] Bolade op cit, p68.

Figure Two: Africa, Percentage of Post-independence years per Regime type (1991-2012)
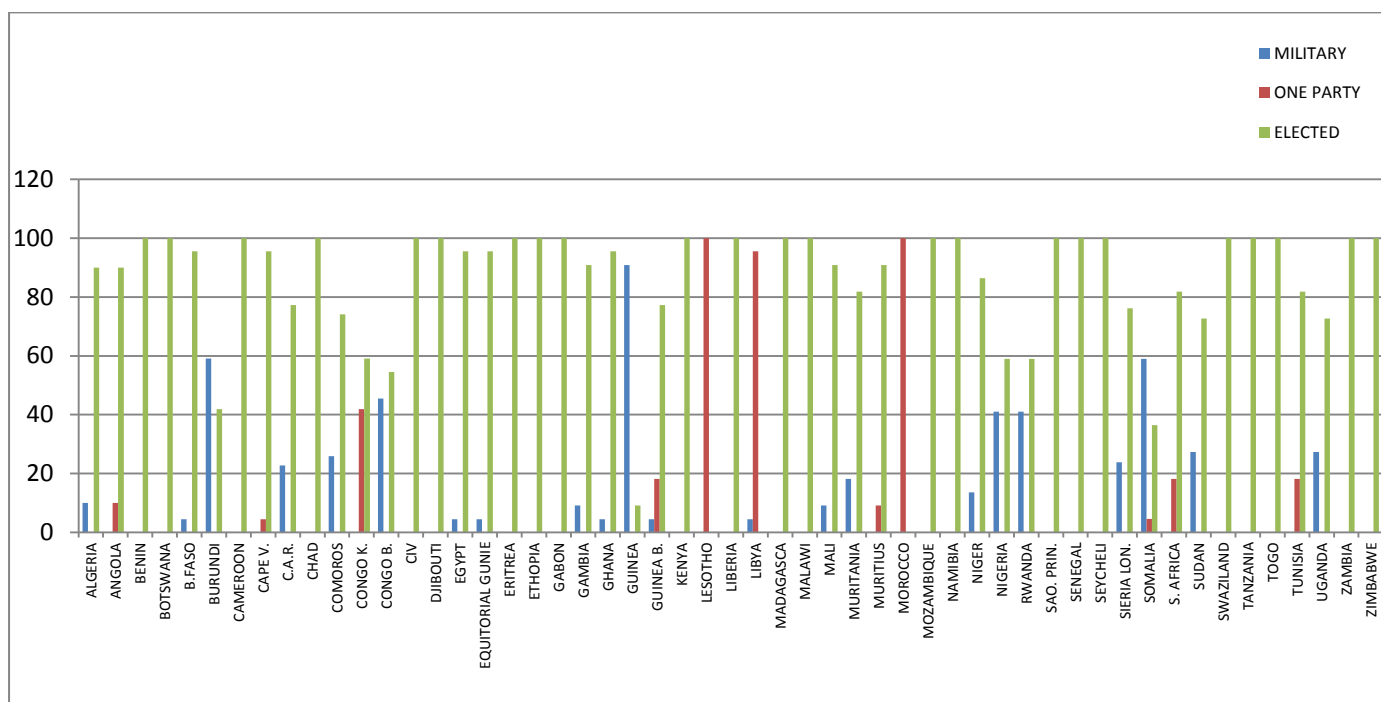

Finally, democratic governance is inseparable from accountability and separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government[13]. 'Democratic governance' and 'good governance' are underpinned by the supremacy of the rule of law, equity, popular participation, respect for fundamental human rights and effective public service delivery. Democratic governance is in many respects a social contract between public office holders and the citizens. In the more established democracies, a fundamental breach of the social contract would result in rejection by the people at the polls, electoral defeat and ultimately loss of political power. Understanding the challenges of African youth entails a good grasp of these important notions of democracy and governance. This is important because interviews conducted among young people revealed an overwhelming perception that youth unemployment, poor educational standards, ineffective participation in critical decision making processes, etc, will be mitigated in democratic governance systems. **See Figures Three and Four below.** However, post-independence governance systems in Africa have not been able to effectively deliver the dividends of democracy to the citizens because of the 'symbolism' that is embedded in its implementation in many African countries in the last fifty years. An overwhelming majority of the youth interviewed believed that an important aspect of good governance is that it gives them space and encourages them to take part in various aspects of national development and nation building **(See Figure Three below),** while the opposite is the case in a country that is badly governed **(Figure Four).**

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[13] For more on the British System of Government, see; A.H. Birch, *Representative and responsible Government*, London: Unwin University Books, 1969 and frank Stacey, *The Government of Modern Britain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969

Figure Three:

Identify what you consider as the implication of good governance for youth's participation in governance and governance institutions in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular?
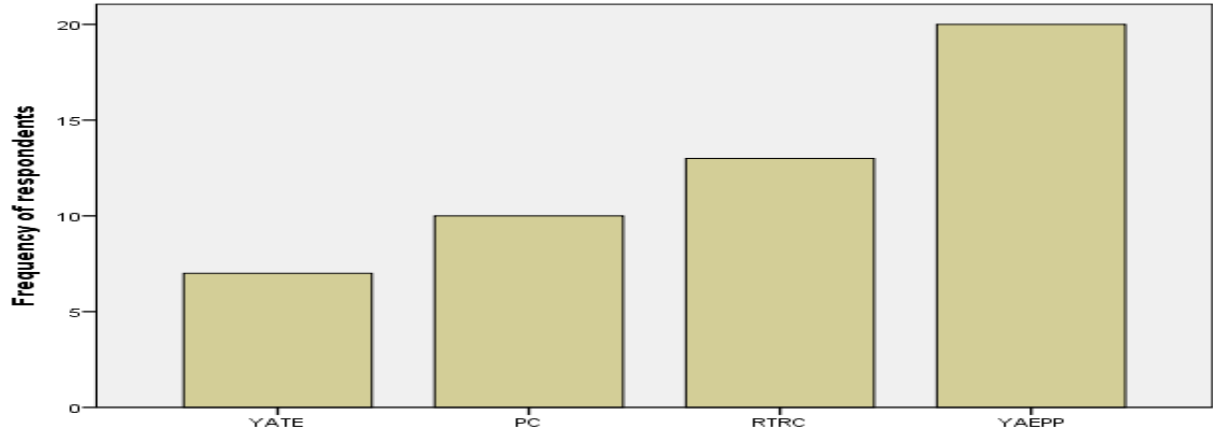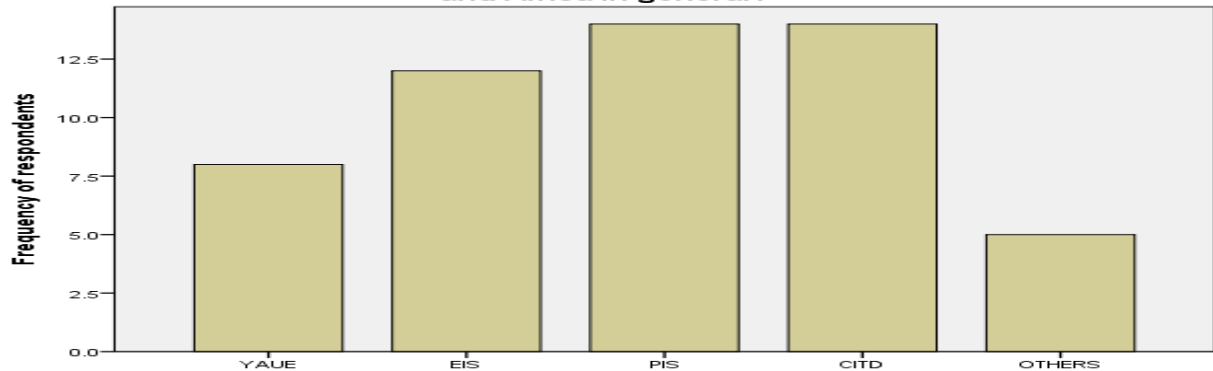
KEY;
YATE = Youth will be empowered
PC = Positive change
RTRC = Reduction in the level of corruption
YAETP = Encouragement of youth to participate in national development

Figure Four:

What do you think are the implications of bad governance for youth's participation in governance and governance institutions in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general?

KEY:
YAUE = Youths are unemployed
EIS = Economic instability
PIS = Political instability
CITD = Corruption
OTS = Others

Governance systems
In its simplest form, governance systems refer to the type of institutions that underpin and influence the actions of the leaders and other public office holders in a state, in the exercise of their authority in

areas such as politics and the economy or in running the affairs of a country, generally[14]. The type of governance systems in place, i.e. whether military rule, one party dictatorships or multi party democracy, will determine the behaviour of the power elite in a country.

1.2. Mapping the evolution of Pre- and Post-Independence Governance Systems in Africa

The political systems, structures and processes in Africa as well as the norms, rules and traditions that underpin them are rooted in diverse historical contexts[15]. This section of the paper seeks to address the following important questions: Where was the locus of power in pre-colonial Africa? How was it utilized and sustained by the colonial administrations? Who were the dominant actors in pre-colonial and colonial governance systems, and how were basic functions like rule making, rule implementation and adjudication performed? In what ways were such governance systems different from those in post-independence Africa? Scholars have identified three broad governance systems in pre-colonial Africa in the dominant patterns of contemporary governance systems. They are:[16] (a) large centralized kingdoms and empires; (b) centralized medium-size kingdoms; and (c) widely dispersed empires and chiefdoms. Each of these systems is examined briefly below

1.2.3 Centralized Pyramidal Governance Systems

These were large empires governed by Kings with absolute powers. They were a pyramidal governance architecture, akin in several significant respects to their European and Asian counterparts. The kings operated vast court systems with a lot of grandeur. Court officials, bureaucrats and vassal heads held their positions in trust for the King and security of tenure and life depended on loyalty to king, the supreme leader. Examples of such empires are those in ancient Egypt in North Africa; the Nubia and Axum in East Africa; Mali and Shonghai in West Africa; and the Shona and Zulu in Southern Africa.[17] There was no separation of powers because the king and his court performed executive, legislative and judicial functions. They had sophisticated bureaucracies and tax systems that brought in valuable economic and financial resources. Pre-colonial African empires shared striking similarities with the Roman and Greek Empires in Europe, and with the Mogul or Siam Empires in Asia, because they were all absolute monarchs. Mansa Musa of Mali, Sundiyata Keita and Sonni Ali of the Shonghai Empire claimed divine right to kingship just like some of their counterparts in Europe. Finally, and perhaps most instructively, large centralized African governance systems did not last forever. Indeed, most of them succumbed to either protracted succession competitions, or because incumbents failed to consolidate their grip on power and control due to the sheer expansiveness of their territories and the ambitions of vassal chiefs.

Colonialism marked a critical milestone in the evolution and development of governance systems in Africa. Kings of large and centralized kingdoms and empires hitherto answerable to no superior authority came under the control of colonial officials through conquest; treaties, or depositions and

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[14] See Bolade Eyibla, op.cit for more on this aspect

[15] See Bolade Eyinla and Victor Osaro Edo, National Cohesion and Peaceful Co-existence: the Role of Traditional Rulers since Amalgamation, unpublished Conference Paper, December 2014 for an excellent analysis on the role traditional rulers in Nigeria.

[16] For more on this, see Vassina, J. *Kingdoms of the Savannah*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, Hull, R. W.. *African Cities and Towns before European Conquest*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1976 and Edo, Edo. V. O "African Traditional Political Institutions and Government" in Ajayi, S. A. (ed.) *African Culture and Civilization*, 78- 85, Ibadan: Atlantis Book, 2005.

[17] Reader, J. *Africa: A Biography of a Continent*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997.

their powers were drastically curtailed. Some of them, like the Bini Kingdom in colonial Nigeria, were broken into smaller administrative units. However, their centralized pyramidal political structures were preserved and incorporated into the *indirect rule* system because it served the overall interest of the colonial authorities. Indirect rule, or 'divide and rule' system, especially in British West Africa, ensured that the royal elite retained their status but only to the extent that the interests of the colonial administration were effectively guaranteed. The system also weakened opposition to colonial administrations because it set groups against one another in the colonial territories. With the exceptions of Belgian and Portuguese colonial authorities, it is safe to say that British and French colonial authorities utilized in varying degrees, existing pre-colonial governance structures in Africa.[18]

Indirect rule was not benevolent because it was designed to facilitate the exploitation of the natural and human resources of the colonies, and to guarantee law and order. Colonial officials were the most formidable and decisive actors in the colonial territories. To that extent, indirect rule in centralized pre-colonial governance systems was successful but it could not stop the expansion of the educated indigenous elite, who were keen not only to succeed the traditional power elite, but to eventually displace the colonial officials in the governance processes. The lesson that can be drawn from this scenario is that the hereditary nature of these empires made it difficult for the youth to make significant impact on their decision making processes, especially in the absence of a well-organized structure for effective youth mobilization. This is a trend that is also observable in the post-independence era, thus the imperative of youth mobilization and sensitization to facilitate and enhance their involvement in governance decision making processes.

1.2.4. Centralized Medium Kingdoms

Several pre-colonial societies were organized into medium sized city-states with centralized and pyramidal structures of authority. The most important distinction between medium and large pre-colonial kingdoms in Africa was their territorial size. Medium-sized kingdoms were urbanized and their kings wielded immense powers, which they shared only with trusted cliques or allies. Law making, implementation and adjudication powers were concentrated in the king-in-council. Royal elite monopolized access to vital economic resources such as land and revenue from taxes, and also controlled the military and security agencies. Examples of centralized medium-sized governance systems are: Oyo and Ife Kingdoms in Western Nigeria; the Ashanti Empire, in Ghana, the Buganda and Bunyoro Kingdoms in Uganda and the Zulu Kingdom in South Africa.

Divide and rule strategies were deployed by the colonial authorities in Medium-sized kingdoms successfully because they had well-established centralized governance systems, just like the large and centralized pyramidal empires discussed earlier. The colonial also authorities arbitrarily merged different kingdoms, divided others into several administrative units[19] in order to weaken their resistance to indirect rule. More important was the symbiotic relationship between the colonial overlords and their royal allies, allowed the latter to achieve their objectives at minimum cost. In return, the kings and royals maintained their paraphernalia of office and privileged traditional

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[18] Gifford, P. and Roger Louis, *The Transformation of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1982.

[19] Crook, R 'Decolonization, the Colonial State and Chieftaincy in Gold Coast,' *African Affairs*, 85, 338: 1986 75-105

authority. What scholars call *hybridity*[20] in post-colonial governance systems in Africa is traceable to indirect rule, which created political space for the ruling elite while it retained important traditional governance structures.

1.2.5. Widely Dispersed Empires and Chiefdoms

The third and final category of governance systems in pre-colonial Africa were the 'stateless' or acephalous societies that had well-organized and centralized administrative structures. Without kings, chiefs or clearly identifiable centralized ruling elite, these societies were perceived as 'stateless.' However, the absence of centralized structures of authority does not necessarily imply statelessness, because there was law and order as well as sanctions for deviant behaviour.

Widely dispersed empires had governance systems that operated at village and town levels. Leadership was rotational rather than hereditary, with emphasis on collective decision making and implementation processes. Unlike the other two systems, age played an important part in the choice of leaders and chiefs in the community. Because leaders were appointed, they were expected to engage in wide ranging consultations before decisions were made. Moreover, executive, legislative and judicial functions were diffused among various centres of power such as the village councils of elders, age grades, secret societies, etc. The system also enshrined and utilized the principle of checks and balances so that power was not concentrated in the hands of a single individual or group. Examples of these governance systems were; the Igbos in Eastern Nigeria; Baoulé, Dida and Bété in Southeast Cote d'Ivoire; the Nuer and Dinka Gnoc in South Sudan; the Massai in Kenya; the Nyjakusa in Tanzania and Tonga in Zambia. Indirect rule encountered the most serious challenges in these empires because there was no clear source of sovereign authority. Thus the colonial officials were compelled to appoint 'chiefs' as administrative middle-men between them and local communities, and in many instances without regard for the prevailing governance practices that emphasized age and lineage. The result was resentment and frequent uprisings against the colonial administration, because the rights and privileges of the "chiefs" appointed by colonial authorities eroded the powers of existing structures and institutions. In Eastern Nigeria, for example, institutions such as Okpara and *Umuada* age grades were neglected following the empowerment and ascendancy of appointed warrant chiefs. The net result was political tension and acrimony, which significantly undermined the effectiveness of the colonial administration. Compared to the other two pre-colonial governance systems, it is safe to assume that young people had more opportunity to participate in decision making processes in decentralized governance systems because of their relative openness.

1.2.6. Hybridization, Decolonization and Pre-Independence Governance Systems

Resentment against colonial rule was not limited to decentralized societies. Several factors were responsible for this situation. Of particular importance, however, was the role of the indigenous educated people who vigorously challenged the colonial governance system as well as that of the traditional royal elite. Their quest for space and relevance in the colonial governance system propelled and sustained the anti-colonial struggles, which were spearheaded primarily by the educated elite among whom were youth. As other sections of the paper show, young people were able to access

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[20] Boone, C. The Political Topographies of the Africa State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

space in the nationalist movements and played active and constructive roles in the nascent political parties in the build-up to independence in many African territories, just as they did in the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Not surprisingly, decolonization represented a tripartite governance system that was made up of colonial authorities, traditional rulers and educated political elite, which led to a lot of suspicion and confrontation among them from time to time.

1.2.7 Between Path Dependence and Path Switching: A glimpse into the evolution of post-independence Governance Systems in Africa

In the search for an answer to the question whether pre-independence governance systems and dynamics adequately explain contemporary governance experiences and challenge across Africa, and their impact on young people, scholars are divided between *path dependence* and *path switching* [21]systems. From the perspective of path dependence, the root of identity politics in the period leading up to independence in the post-independence era, stemmed from the role that was assigned to traditional institutions in the colonial period. As earlier noted, the pre-colonial governance system conferred special privileges on traditional elite in such a way that when the mantle of post-independence governance fell on the shoulders of the educated elite, its structures could only be a hybrid arrangement that incorporated traditional structures into the modern governance institutions. In the run up to independence, nationalist movements metamorphosed into political parties while nationalist leaders transformed into politicians. A series of constitutional talks were held between colonial authorities and the colonial people, leading to the gradual transfer of power from the colonial administrators to the educated indigenous political elite that did not have royal backgrounds. Among them were many young people. Expectedly, the traditional institutions felt threatened and demanded a greater 'voice' in the construction of the post-colonial governance system to reflect their own interests. Consequently, nationalist movements and political parties assumed ethnic identities in order to secure votes and rally support among the critical mass of electorates, a development that resulted in creating synergy or *hybridity* between the educated political elites and traditional institutions in the post-colonial governance architecture. The educated elite emerged as the dominant actors in the post-colonial African state but the tension between traditional and modern elements (path dependence) in has persisted.

Put differently, post-independence governance systems in Africa are essentially a hybrid of modern governance norms and principles based on liberal democratic ideals such as free and fair elections, separation of powers, respect for human rights and the rule of law on one hand, and on the other hand, traditional practices that emphasize unlimited tenure, 'strong man' autocrats, and a fusion of legislative, executive and judicial responsibilities. In countries with a dominant ethnic group and a single traditional institution, the relationship between the modern governance elite and traditional authority was negotiated and constructed without much tension. For example, the dominance of the Ashanti king in Ghana's traditional domain creates less tension in managing the tenuous power configuration between traditional and modern sources of authority. Ghana's case is particularly interesting because it represents the *path-switching* system in which the tension that accompanied the independence struggle abated, leading to a stable post-colonial governance system that recognizes the importance of traditional structures while maintaining the authority of modern governance structures and institutions. The contrary is the case in Nigeria where there are diverse and very powerful traditional centres of power and authority. Elements of *path-dependence* are more dominant in Nigeria's post-colonial political and governance systems, because the tension between traditional and

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[21] Boone, op.cit; 2012

modern institutions has endured while inter-ethnic competition and acrimony remain as potent as they were in the days of colonial rule. As Eyinla and Edo rightly observed:

> …While the degree of their influence is often dictated by the ebbs and flows of the …political system and the disposition of the regime in power, no government can afford to ignore their relevance in stabilizing the polity in times of crisis. In fact, any government that overlooks the place and role of traditional rulers in promoting national unity and cohesion does so at its own peril[22].

By and large, then, post-independence colonial governance systems followed three dominant patterns: One-party rule, military rule and civilian/elected across Africa. **See Figure One** above. The demise of communism led to a shift in favour of civilian administrations of various shades and persuasions in the continent, after multiparty elections in the majority of African states, a subject that will be explored further in the paper. **Figure Two above**

## 1.3. **Comparative perspectives on Governance Systems in Nigeria and UK since 1960**

Introduction

On the surface, it seems audacious to make a comparison between governance systems in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom (UK) is after all, the oldest democracy in modern times while Nigeria is less than six decades old as an independent nation and it is a former British colony that gained independence only in October 1960. For more than twenty five years, the country was under military rule and its democracy dates back only to 1999. Nigeria has a presidential system of government that is patterned after that of the United States of America. The President is Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. In contrast, the UK operates a unicameral parliamentary system of government with the Queen as Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Furthermore, the UK is a constitutional monarchy with the Queen as ceremonial Head of Government. She appoints the Prime Minister who remains 'Her Majesty's First Minister.' The United Kingdom has never in recent history been governed by any other country and has not been under military rule. However, what is known as Nigeria today was administered by the UK as a colony for many years as mentioned earlier. From such a view point, Britain was, and is, Nigeria's political mentor although some notable scholars have argued that the country was not effectively prepared for a Westminster style of government, citing the collapse of its democracy just six years after independence in January 1966.[23]. Accordingly, the UK's governance system is "home grown", whereas Nigeria 'inherited' its own governance system from the UK, its former colonial master and political mentor. **Figures Five** and **Six** present percentages of the numbers of years under military and civilian rule in the country from independence in 1960 to 1990 and from 1991 to 2012 respectively. It is obvious from **Figure Five** that military rule is still much longer than its civilian variant.

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[22] Bolade M. Eyinla and Victor Osaro Edo, "National Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence: The Role of Traditional Rulers since Amalgamation", unpublished Conference paper December, 2013.for more on this important point

[23] Interviews with Professors W.A. Fawole and Charles Ukeje, Ile-Ife, Osun State, and Bolade Eyinla, Ilorin, Kwara State

Figure Five: Nigeria; Percentage of Post-Independence years per Regime type (1960-1991)

NIGERIA 1960-1990
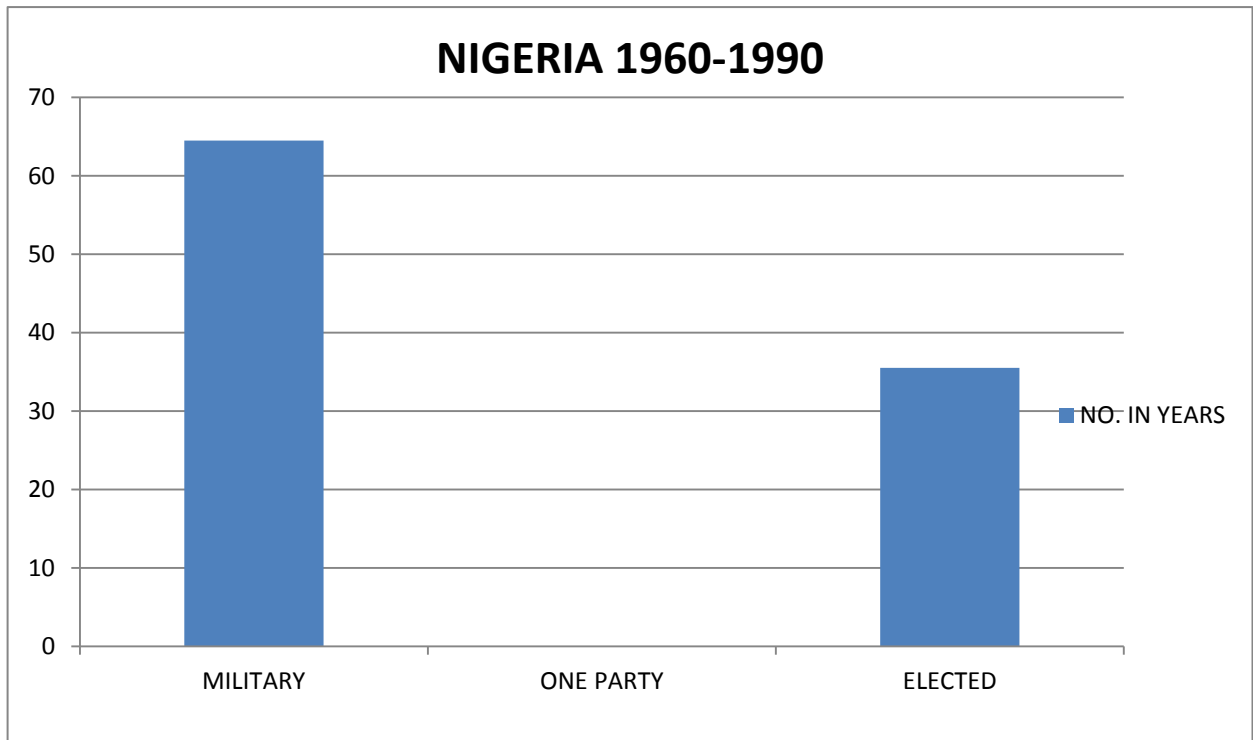
Source: Computed by the Author.

Figure Six below however indicates that like other African countries, Nigeria has embraced civil rule after multiparty elections in line with the dominant governance trend in the post-Cold War political dispensation.

There are as well, significant differences with regard to the two countries' administrative styles and practices. Before 1966, Nigeria practiced a federal system of government with a weak federal centre. The UK operates a unitary system of government with two dominant political parties, Labour and Conservative. Although there are constitutional checks and balances in both countries, Parliamentary oversight of the Executive in Nigeria is minimal.

Figure Six: Nigeria; Percentage of Post-Independence years per Regime type (1991-2012)

NIGERIA 1991-2012
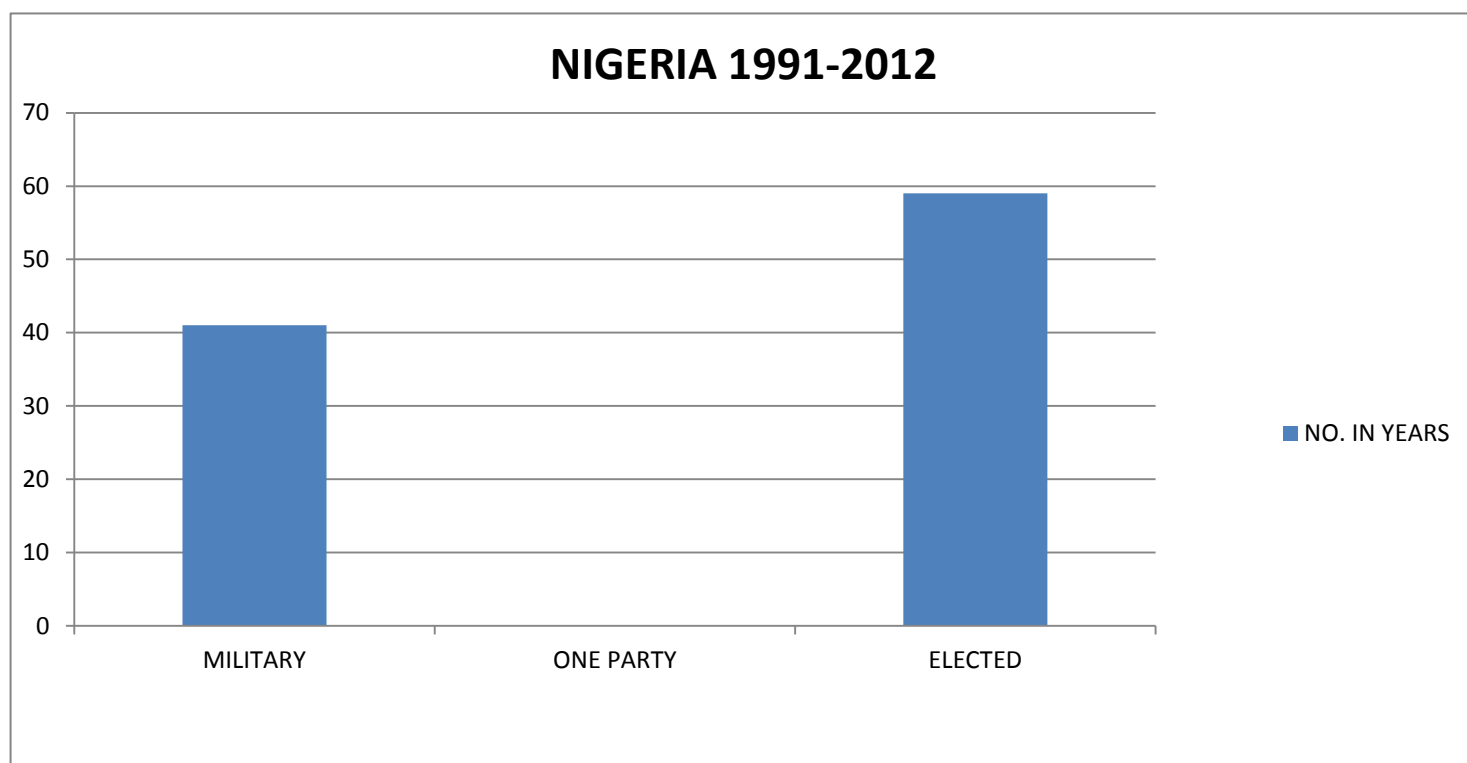
Source: Prepared by the Author

In the UK unlike in Nigeria, the principle of collective responsibility is a deeply entrenched convention in governance. A minister or public officer takes responsibility for his/her action ultimately, and could be forced to resign if found wanting. The government may even fall if the Prime Minister is involved in proven scandalous behaviour because his colleagues will withdraw their support for him in a vote of confidence in Parliament.[24]. This is not the case in Nigeria where Ministers hold office at the pleasure of the President, and can only be relieved of their posts by him. As a rule, Ministers do not resign their appointments because of personal scandals no matter how grave they may be[25]. Again, although both countries have two legislative chambers, there are remarkable differences. In the UK, there is a House of Commons, the seat of politics and it is made up of popularly elected representatives of the people, while the House of Lords has appointees of the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. There are 'hereditary' as well as 'life peers' in the House of

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[24] See A.H. Birch, Representative and Responsible Government, London, Unwin University Books, fourth Impression, 969, and Frank Stacey, The Government of Modern Britain, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969, for more on this famous governance system.

[25] The recruitment scandal in the Nigeria Immigration for which the Minister took full responsibility did not lead to his resignation and the President did not think it was "serious" enough for him to go.

Lords, which is technically also the highest court of law in Britain. Nigeria has a Senate or 'Upper Chamber', and a House of Representatives or 'Lower House'. Unlike the UK, members of both Houses are popularly elected by the people every four years in multiparty elections.

Finally, the Nigerian governance system has been mortally undermined by unprecedented corruption in the last three years in all three tiers of government; Federal, State and Local. Three examples of the way the Nigerian governance system is perceived by important stakeholders shed light on the country's democratic deficits. On parliamentary oversight, a cardinal tenet of the UK governance system, a highly regarded commentator noted:

> We are presented with a seriously compromised political atmosphere where accountability and transparency are the first victims…there are no mechanisms for holding government responsible. The occasional hiccups and theatrical attempts at impeachment are merely symptoms of the rumbling of an empty stomach. This is why our democracy remains so weak[26]

Another perceptive observer had this to say about the role of political parties in Nigeria:

> Political party alignment and realignment is driven more by opportunist calculation than by conviction. When they are not running their jurisdictions and constituencies like their personal estates, many political officials carry on in the manner of military prefects[27].

Finally an **Editorial** in the widest circulating national daily, noted disappointingly that:

> …Democracy remains defined by tentativeness and tokenism. Those who largely buy their way into power sit on the throne belching out orders like potentates. They regard the people as foot mats and are adept at devising means of side tracking the electorate in the electoral process. The result is impunity. They act to override the General Will[28].

The pervasive shortcomings of Nigeria's political and governance systems led a prominent civil society activist to characterize the country as being under "civil rule, and not democracy."[29] Obviously, the Nigerian system presents serious challenges to youth seeking to engage it and/or exert some influence on decision making processes, thus the imperative of mobilizing and creating awareness among them, which is presently not the case.

In spite of the fundamental differences in the governance systems, institutions and governance styles between of the UK and Nigeria, there are good reasons for comparing them. First, evaluations are not necessarily about itemizing and/or discussing similarities between two or more entities; they are also designed to elicit the vital dissimilarities. Second, Nigeria and the UK are both under civilian rule. Thus the observable disparities are due more to their unique historical and contemporary experiences. Finally, both countries are democratic even if the UK's democracy is much older than Nigeria's. In other words, some of the observable differences in the governance systems of the two countries may be due largely to the differences in their 'age'

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[26] Catholic Bishop Mathew Hassan Kuka, Interview in *The Nation*, Lagos, Sept 18, 2012

[27] Olatunde Dare, "May 29: Not yet Democracy Day", *Nation,* June 3, 2014.

[28] "Wobbling Democracy: Still a long way to go, 15 years after", Editorial to Mark Democracy Day, *The Nation*, Lagos, May 29, 2014

[29] Femi Falana, commenting on Nigeria's democratic credentials after 15 years of uninterrupted civilian rule, in *The Nation*, June 1, 2014

1.4. Seeming preference for Democracy over other governance systems in Africa before and after independence

The democratization wave that swept across the African continent in the late 1980s and early 1990s is not unconnected with the triumph of democracy following the demise of communism as a rival ideology to capitalism/liberal democracy in global politics. Apart from the dramatic end of the Cold War, the pressure for democratization in most African countries was due to many other key factors. First, was intense pressure from local African elite that had been side-lined for many decades by the phenomenon of 'sit tight' leaders and 'presidents for life' on the continent to step aside and make way for a new set of leaders. Second was the imposition of 'political conditionality' by Africa's former colonial masters and their allies in return for foreign aid and grants. They were required to transit from single party to multi party systems and holding free and fair elections and return to civil rule. Conditionality had the support of important western donor agencies, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU) and global financial international institutions, especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The final push in favour of democracy was provided by the pan continental African Union and regional economic communities (RECs), such as ECOWAS and the East African Economic Community (EAC). With regard to the AU, its African Governance Architecture (AGA), provided a "comprehensive, overarching and consolidated framework for addressing issues of governance and governance related challenges…" on the continent[30]. An important component of AGA is the *African Charter on Democracy*, *Elections and Governance*, which among other things, seeks " to entrench in the continent a political culture of change of power based on the holding of free, fair and transparent elections conducted by competent, independent and impartial national electoral bodies….[31] The AGA expressed the AU's and Africa's commitment to "promote the universal values and principles of democracy, good governance, human rights and the right to development"[32], an initiative which contributed to the overwhelming adoption of multiparty elections and civilian rule in the continent since the early 1990s. (**See Figure Two)**.

In explaining the apparent preference for democracy in Africa, it is significant to bear in mind that the anti- colonial struggles in countries that negotiated independence from the colonial master and those that waged bitter nationalist wars, were at a level, about governance systems; freedom of speech and association, respect for human dignity, accountability, and the privilege of the colonial people to choose who governed them, etc. African nationalists rejected the authoritarian traditional governance systems in favour of democracy even before independence in the 1960s. The predilection for democratic governance systems was also discernible in the activities of the Pan-African Movement and Congresses, including the landmark 1945 Manchester Conference, which had in attendance many delegates from mainland Africa.

The Internet revolution in Africa also contributed significantly to the swing in favour of democracy on the continent.. Social Media platforms like facebook, You Tube, Google, WhatsApp, Blackberry, etc., which are very popular among young people in Africa, weakened considerably African governments'

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[30] See: "Africa's Democratisation within the Framework of the African Governance Architecture AGA", Press Statement by H.E. Dr. Aisha Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs, at AU Head Quarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on January 24, 2014, p5

[31] Preamble, African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, African Union Commission: Addis Ababa, on http//au. int/en/sites/default/files/African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, accessed on May 31st, 2014, p1

[32] Ibid

propaganda and control over dissenting voices both from within and outside the continent considerably. It is now possible to know what goes on in any part of the world in ones' living room and in glorious colour instantly[33]. Accordingly, African leaders were compelled to give their restless citizens, comprising mainly youth, a voice, even if reluctantly. In other words, it is no longer easy for governments to silence their people. The potency of the social media was clearly demonstrated during the bloody events in North Africa in 2011, following the suicide of a young and unemployed Tunisian man, which as noted previously, *Arab Spring*. The lesson of the Arab Spring for young people is that if they are united and resolute, they can effect significant political and social changes that reflect their concerns and preferences at home and abroad.

Africans are attracted to democracy because it is generally perceived as the governance system that is most suitable for promoting peaceful co-existence in plural societies like those in Africa. Democracy is also seen as a much more effective platform for solving political and economic differences within a state, and for striking compromises over other knotty nation building questions in Africa's heterogeneous societies than any other political system. Finally it is assumed that democracy addresses much more directly the nexus between human security and development. This is why democracy has become an irresistible attraction not just in Africa but also for other emerging economies. Accordingly, any African country or leader that ignores its irresistible pull does so at its own peril, because young people believed that democracy promotes freedom of speech and offers more opportunities for self-actualization. See **Figures Three and Four** above.

However, Africa's present governance systems are still "evolving". Thus, there is a nuanced distinction between democratic governance and civilian rule. While the charts clearly indicate a strong pull towards democratic governance and majority of African states are now under civilian rule, their 'democratic' credentials should not be generalized because democracy is anchored on critical elements such as legitimacy, popular participation and representation; accountability, free, fair and competitive electoral processes. On such a score, however, few civilian administrations in Africa are really 'democratic' in the popular understanding of the word. This is not to say that older democracies like the UK or the US are perfect because youth in their societies are also challenged by social inequalities, alienation, marginalization, human rights abuses and corruption both in the public and private sectors etc. It will therefore take some time for governance processes which are taken for granted in the older democracies such as free, fair, transparent and credible elections in which every vote counts, are firmly entrenched in the psyche of African leaders and citizens. For instance, at the moment, some electorate based their decisions to support or not to support a candidate or political party in Africa on considerations such as ethnicity, religion, and other primordial factors, which is not necessarily the case in the older western democracies.

1.5. Other brands of Post-independence governance systems and their uniquely African Character, if any

One of the most remarkable post-independence political developments in Africa has been the successful devaluation of the powers of traditional rulers and their complete exclusion from partisan politics with the exception of very few countries, by the successor elite. From the mid-1960s up to the end of the Cold War, African States tried diarchy; military headed governments with civilian technocrats in key sectors

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[33] Narrate personal experience when my son's friend took my photograph in front of an ATM and sent to him in London. My son sent the photograph to me via BB messaging almost immediately to my greatest surprise.

of the public service, as ministers, special advisers, members of parastatals, etc., side by side with their military counterparts. A good example of this symbiotic relationship was Samuel Doe's government in Liberia, which relied heavily on pro-democracy activists.[34] Military regimes, more than the civilians they replaced, relied on traditional rulers for support and legitimacy. Military rule was 'popular' as a mechanism for regime change because the Cold War environment did not frown at such unconstitutional and undemocratic modes of political succession. France, a major stakeholder in Africa before and after independence, regularly used the coup as an instrument of regime change in countries with perceived "deviant" regimes and leaders. In some countries, military strong men were able to successfully 'civilianize' and remained in power for many decades: Mobutu Sese Soko in the Congo (DRC), Nyasimgbe Eyadema in Togo, Samuel Doe in Liberia, Yayah Jameh in the Gambia, Blasé Compaoré in Burkina Faso and Yoweri Museveni in Uganda, among many others. Military regimes were subjected to immense pressure to return to the barracks because they never, really, delivered 'prosperity' to the people. Apart from that, the military as an institution paid a heavy price for meddling in politics in terms of loss of professionalism and the politicization of the rank and file in the armed forces. Happily, there is now zero tolerance for accession to political power through unconstitutional means, which has reduced the phenomenon of coup d'états especially in West Africa.

Some African countries also experimented with "socialism" or "African socialism". However they operated under very difficult domestic and external circumstances and such regimes did not last. Socialism was ostensibly the preferred form of governance in countries that fought long and bitter liberation wars; Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique are good examples. Guinea under Shekou Toure tried socialism but it led to a lot of political, economic and social hardship in the country. Tanzania under late President Julius Nyerere experimented with a variant of Socialism rooted in African communinalism called Ujamaa, which he formally launched in Arusha in 1967 (the famous Arusha Declaration). President Nyerere was highly respected in Africa and the rest for his principled commitment to Ujamaa, and Africa's political and economic liberation, but it is doubtful if his Ujamaa policy was a success.[35]

The monarchy or monarchism has been an African mode of governance from time immemorial and survived in a few countries after independence. Notable among countries that still practice this brand of governance are, Morocco in North Africa and Swaziland in Southern Africa, although there are subtle differences between the two systems. Morocco for instance, is a benevolent monarchy whereas Swaziland is the only remaining absolute monarchy in post-independence Africa. Morocco is the older of the two monarchies having been founded in 789 AD, whereas the Swazi Kingdom dates back to only 1745. Both are hereditary monarchies and have come under a lot of pressure to modernize in line with the rest of Africa. It is remarkable that Morocco has for now, at least, survived the *Arab Spring* that swept 'sit tight' Arab leaders like Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Muamar Gaddafi of Libya out of office. How long the two countries will continue to defy the strong democratic wave that is blowing across the continent remains a matter of conjecture.

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[34] For more on this phenomenon, See Amadu Sesay, The Liberian Revolution: Forward March; Stop; About Face Turn", in, Conflict Quarterly, (Fredericton, Canada), Vol., 1 No.4, summer, 1983.

[35] I was in Dar es Salaam for three weeks in 1982 as a young researcher working on a book to mark the OAU"S 20th anniversary and saw both the failure of Ujamaa and the hardship on the people first hand

1.6. The place and role place of youth in pre independence politics and governance systems in Africa

In some important ways, there is an implicit assumption that the youth did not effectively engage in politics and governance processes before and after independence. However, a closer examination of governance and political systems in the two eras revealed that such a perception is incorrect. Starting from the nascent consciousness that led to the formation of the Pan African Movement in the early Twentieth Century and the land mark Manchester Conference in 1945, "radical" African youth were actively involved in the struggle to liberate the continent and its people from colonialism and in the push for their self-determination. Young people also played decisive roles in determining the future of the continent and its people during the penultimate days of colonial rule. For example, virtually all the 12 African participants at the Manchester Conference were in their youth: Kwame Nkrumah who was appointed Secretary General at the Conference; Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Wallace Johnson of Sierra Leone, etc.[36]. As students in the diaspora they "fired the imagination" of their colleagues back home in Africa. Many of them later founded political parties that became the arrowhead of the agitation for independence in their respective countries. Their consciousness of the huge challenges before them and Africa prompted the Manchester Conference to pass resolutions that would increase pressure on the colonial powers to quickly dismantle their colonies. The Conference made an unequivocal declaration on the equality of all men, irrespective of colour or place of birth; and appealed to the colonial powers to free the African people "forthwith from all forms of inhibiting legislation and influence and be reunited with one another". They expressed their determination to "be free…"and demanded for "one man one vote". Finally, the delegates affirmed "the right of all colonial people to control their own destiny…"and urged the indigenous people "to fight for these ends by all means at their disposal…" [37].These remarkable resolutions set the tone for the anti-colonial struggles in Africa in the run up to independence in the continent. Kwame Nkrumah, a major player at the Manchester Congress, later returned home to found the Convention Peoples Party, which led Ghana to independence on March 6, 1957 the first country in Africa South of the Sahara to throw away the colonial yoke. Other territories under youthful leaders were to gain independence later: Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Kenya in 1960, 1961 and 1964, respectively. In Francophone Africa, Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, Sheku Toure of Guinea and Felix Houphouet Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire successfully pressured France to grant independence to their territories, starting with Guinea in 1958. 16 other Francophone territories were to follow two years later in 1960. In East Africa, Jomo Kenyatta, Tom Mboya, Julius Nyerere were in the vanguard of the liberation struggles that led to the independence of their respective countries.

In the Portuguese colonies that were regarded as metropolitan Portugal, young men and women led the liberation wars to wrestle power from recalcitrant Lisbon. In South Africa, the bastion of white supremacist minority rule, emerged the iconic Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu; Steve Biko and of course, the heroic young people who led the Soweto uprising of 1976, which drew global attention to the obnoxious apartheid regime in Pretoria, and became a rallying point for the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world. Thousands of young people also paid with their lives during the colonial and anti-apartheid struggles. Without their dogged commitment and supreme sacrifice, many African countries would not have achieved independence at the time they did.

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[36] For more on this and the representatives from West Africa and other regions in Africa, see C.O.C Amate, *Inside the OAU: Pan Africanism in Practice,* London: MacMillan Publishers, 1986; Amadu Sesay, Sola Ojo and Orobola Faseun, *The OAU after Twenty Years*, Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1984, p35

[37] C.O.C. Amate, Inside the OAU, op.cit, p37

One important lesson for young people, among others, is that purposeful determination to pursue a good cause does yield positive results in the long run. It is extremely important to document in much greater detail, the various roles played by young Africans in the liberation struggles for posterity than it is possible to do in this paper.

1.7. The place and role of youth in post-independence politics and governance systems in Africa

There is a popular perception that the youth are apolitical, lethargic or at best played only marginal roles in governance processes after independence in the 1960s. This viewpoint is due largely to the domination of the political and governance space by the old guard in the last fifty years in many African countries. Is such a perception correct? What are the views of young people on how they are perceived by society? What do they consider as the most serious constraints to their political and social mobility and economic empowerment? What do young think should be done to address such challenges now, and in the future? These and other youth related questions were put to 100 young people randomly selected between the ages of 18 and 35, in school and out of school, employed and unemployed, etc, in three states of the Federation; Kwara in the North Central where the researcher is based, Osun and Ekiti in the South West of the country. This methodology was preferred because the youth are in a better position to identify and articulate the issues that are "closer to their hearts' than anyone else. Thus the methodology, in other words, sought to "hear it from the 'horse's mouth'", so to speak. Due to space constraints only answers to 'core' questions will be presented in this section.

What came out clearly in the study is not that young people have not been involved in decision making processes, or they have not participated in elections. Rather, they have not been able to use their numerical superiority to put in place policies that would address critical youth issues such as unemployment and access to qualitative education in their respective countries. **Figures Seven, Eight**, **Nine** and **Ten** below present what young people believe are the constraints to their effective participation in governance and electoral processes in Africa.

Figure Seven:

Why are Nigerian and African youth apathetic during election in Africa despite their numerical superiority among the voters?
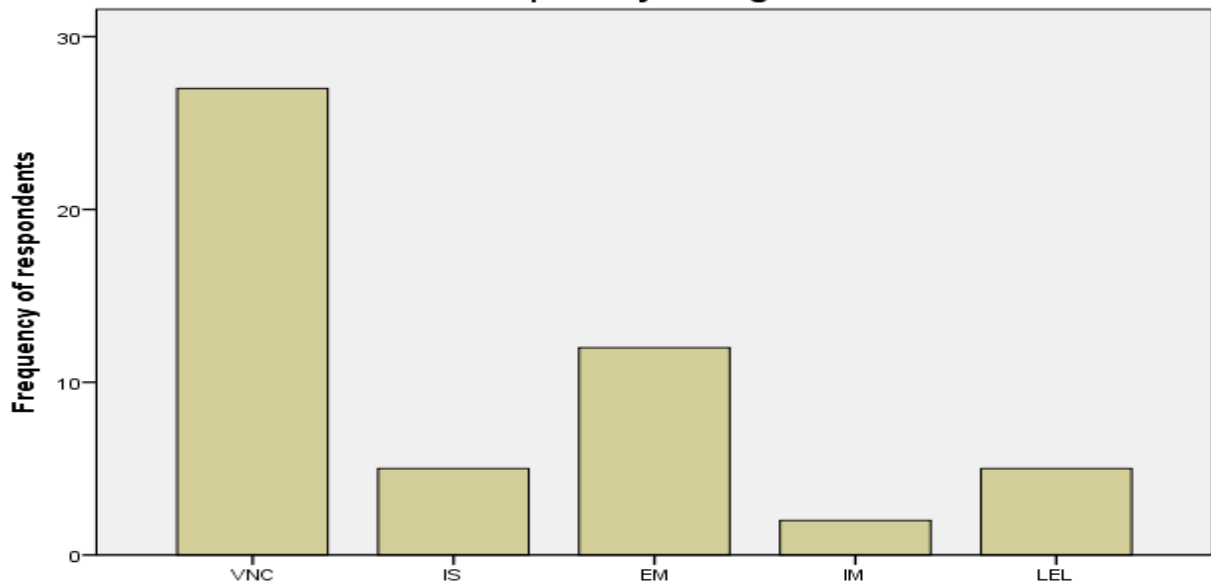
KEY
VNC = Votes do not count at elections
IS =Insecurity
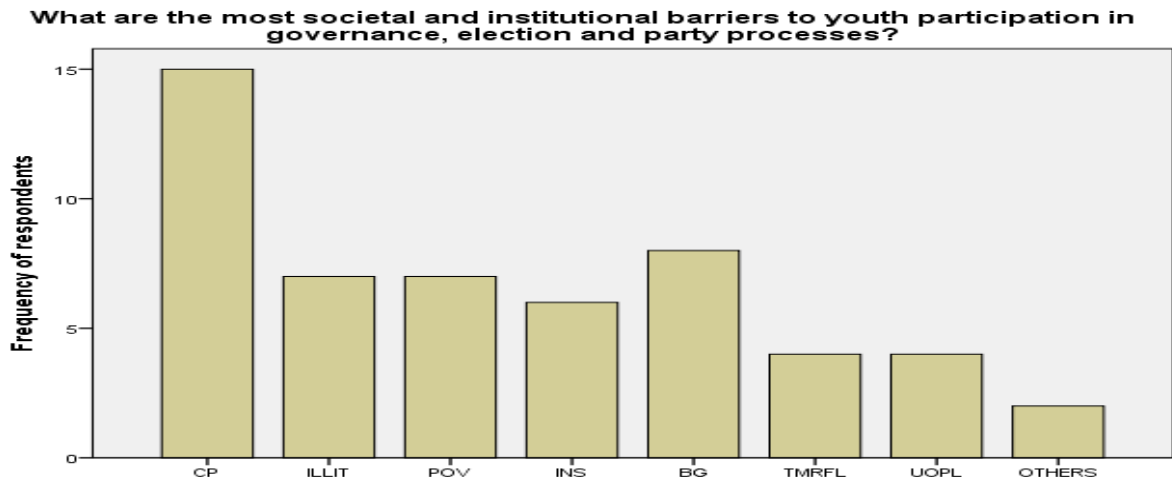**EM =Electoral Manipulation**
IM =Ill-motivated
LEL=Low educational level

From the three figures, one of the most potent limitations to youth participation in governance processes and elections is corruption, which is blamed for their inability to translate their numerical majority into youth friendly policies because as they put it, "Votes do not count at elections" implying that election results are often rigged in some countries even under civilian rule. As well, elections are an extremely capital intensive affair in Africa, and only those with money or have "political god fathers" can stand for elective positions and hope to win. Even after they are elected or appointed into important positions, they remain beholden to their "god fathers" or "money bags" as very rich people are referred to in Nigeria. This was particularly so in Sierra Leone during the long years of President Siaka Stevens from 1968-85, and in Liberia during the elongated presidency of William Tubman, from 1943 to 1971. The practice significantly disempowered young people in both countries[38]. The youth also identified bad governance as a major constraint to their social mobility because it encourages corruption; promotes social exclusion, alienation and mass youth unemployment. In fact corruption is one of the most frequently mentioned causes of the 'youth crises in Africa. Finally, the youth blamed what they called "neglect by society" as a major challenge.

Figure Eight:

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[38] See Amadu Sesay, "Betrayal of an Ideal: The transformation of Sierra Leone from a multiparty to a single party system under the APC" in Peter Meyns and Dani Wadada Nabudere (Eds.), Democracy and the One-Party-State in Africa, Hamburg: Institut Fur Afrika-Kunde, 1989, and Amadu Sesay, "Societal Inequalities, Ethnic Heterogeneity and Political Instability: The Case of Liberia", in *Plural Societies* (The Hague), autumn, 1980, pp15-30.

What are the most societal and institutional barriers to youth participation in governance, election and party processes?

KEY
CP = Corruption
ILLT = Illiteracy
POT = Poverty
INS = Insecurity
BG = Bad Governance
TMRFL = Too much respect for elders
OUPL = Unwillingness of old politicians to leave the stage for young ones.

In spite of these serious challenges, there is no denying the fact that young have occupied and continue to take up important positions in different countries in Africa since the flush of independence in the 1960s. A few examples will suffice. Nigeria's second military leader, General Yakubu Gowon, became the Head of State at the age of 32 years. The leader of the botched Biafran secession in Eastern Nigeria, Odumegwu Ojukwu, was 34 when he led the rebellion. In Sierra Leone, Valentine Strasser who led a successful coup against President Joseph Momoh in 1992 was no more than 27 years old[39]. A more recent example is Julius Malema, the erstwhile President of the powerful youth wing of the African National Congress, ANC, in South Africa, until his expulsion from the Party in 2012. At 34 Malema formed his Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party, contested the May 7, 2014 general elections and won 25 seats in the South African Parliament. All post-independence political parties in Africa have youth wings ostensibly to mentor their members to take up leadership positions in the parties and in government, although some political parties also use young people as political thugs, especially during elections. Across Africa, young people are from time to time appointed *Special Advisers* to governments, or given ministerial portfolios, and occasionally get elected into parliaments.

Figure Nine:

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39 See "The Palace Coup and the Future of Democracy in Sierra Leone", in *African Journal of International Affairs and Development* (Ibadan), Vol. 1, No.2, September 1998, for more on his regime..

Why are youth in Nigeria not capitalizing on their numerical numbers to influence political decisions to improve their situation on issues such un-employment, education, skill acquisition and access to economic and financial resources ?
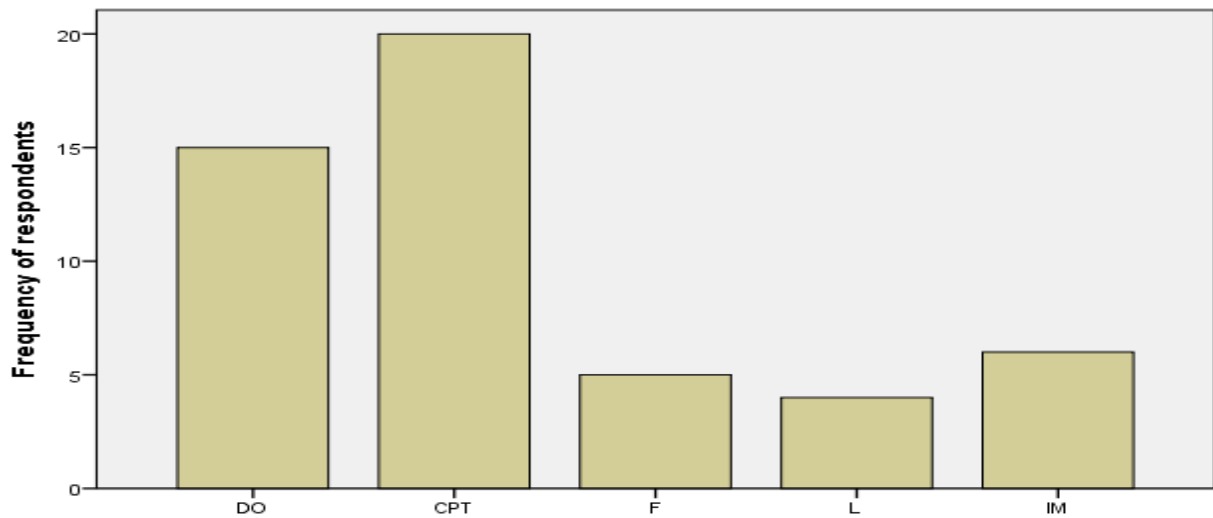
KEY
DO = Deprived and Oppressed
CPT = Corruption
F = Fear
L = Laziness
IM =Ill-motivated

The other side of the coin however, is that the 'uncivil' wars and political turbulence that broke out in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire; the genocide in Rwanda, the post-election killings in Kenya, the violent rebellion in Uganda by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and more recently the civil war in the Central African Republic (CAR), had overwhelming youth participation as 'War Lords', 'child soldiers' or armed rampaging thugs[40]. A lot of atrocities were committed in these conflicts, e.g.; crude amputations[41], rape and other serious crimes against humanity.

Undoubtedly, the plight of young people is more pronounced in Africa because its democracy is rudimentary compared to older ones in the United Kingdom, Western Europe and the US. This is not to imply that youth do not face serious challenges in the advance democracies. However, the major difference between the two systems is that, in Europe and America, governments make determined efforts to address the situation, which is not so in many African countries.

Figure Ten:

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[40] For more on this phenomenon, see Amadu Sesay, (Ed.), Civil Wars and Child Soldiers in West Africa, Ibadan: College Press, 2003

[41] This is euphemistically called "Long Sleeve" and "Short Sleeve" in Sierra Leone. If the hand is amputated from the wrist, it is long sleeve, and if it is from the elbow, it is short sleeve.

Why have youth failed so far to play significant roles in shaping Nigeria and Africa in ways that suit them to meet their needs?
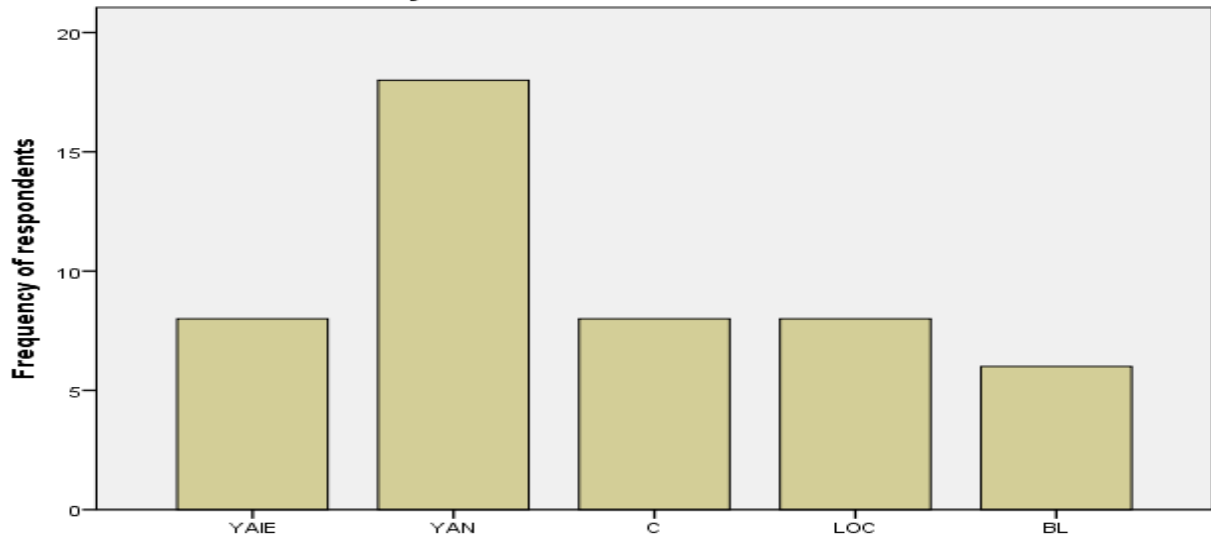
KEY
YAIE = Youth are inexperienced
YAN = Youth are neglected
C = Corruption
LOC = Lack of self Confidence
BL = Bad leadership

1.8 Lessons for the Youth

The study revealed that African youth were involved in governance and political parties in the pre and post-independence eras. The youth did not have much role to play in traditional pre-colonial governance systems because of their hereditary and closed character. Accordingly, the popular belief that the youth have not contributed much to national development in post-colonial Africa is grossly erroneous. A more nuanced proposition is that African youth have not effectively made use of their superior numbers to effect changes in their favour consistently and sustainably. The interviews clearly revealed that it not due to lack of interest and effort on their part, but more because of the hostile political, economic and social environment, rigid structural barriers to youth mobility in politics and the economy in many African countries. Furthermore, 'harmful' cultural practices that require young people to defer to older ones make it hard for the youth to 'liberate' themselves. Young people have also not been able to successfully organize themselves into workable pressure groups to effect positive political and economic change in their favour. It is therefore very important to put in place national, regional and continental policies that will promote collaboration, understanding and mutual respect among the youth, to reduce the influence of the older generation over them, and to undermine 'divide and rule' strategies such as cooptation, which is common to all African countries.

1.8.1 Opportunities

One question that begs for an answer is; are African youth doomed? What opportunities exist for African youth nationally, regionally and continentally in the Twenty First Century, and under what conditions can such openings be created and effectively accessed by young people? The study has revealed that the plight of the youth is not as hopeless as it is often presented. Also, young people, including those out of school in the rural areas know what is responsible for their present challenges and marginalization. What is missing thus far is a credible youth agency for their mobilization,

enlightenment and motivation, to channel their enormous energies towards positive change nationally, regionally and continentally.

Developing pro-youth policies and programmes will not be easy because of the reluctance of the older generation to give up their elaborate political, economic and social privileges. **Figures Eleven** and **Twelve** give vital insights into what the youth think would mitigate their current situations. From the literature and interviews, unemployment is perceived as one of the major challenges facing the youth. To address youth unemployment successfully requires close cooperation between the public and private sectors and development partners including the UN family. In addition to that, it is essential to convince the old political class that youth empowerment and inclusion in governance processes is a sine qua non for overall national development, peace and security.

Figure Eleven:

In what ways do you think youth in Nigeria and Africa can contribute to transforming the socio-economic and political situation of Nigeria and the society generally?
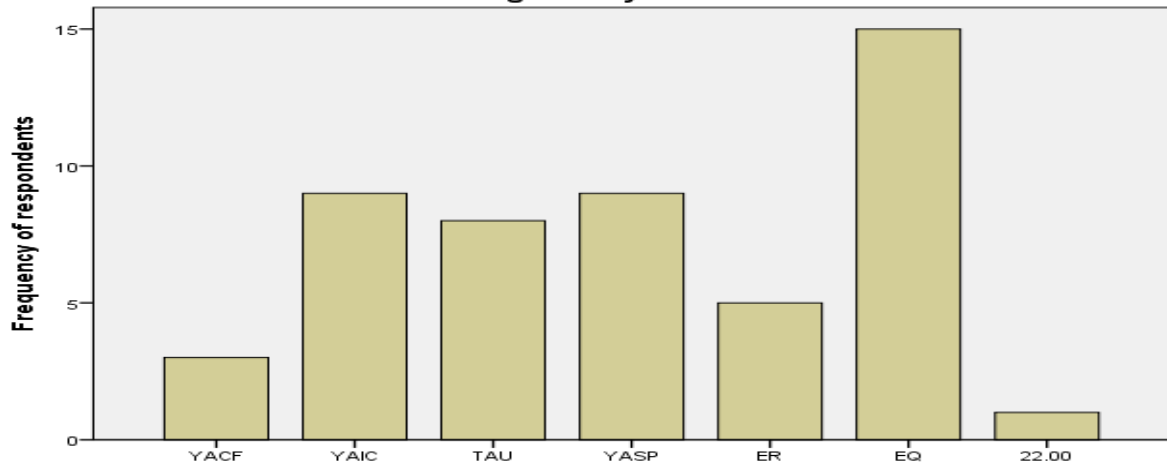
KEY
YACF = Youth are to be corruption free
YAIE = Entrepreneurship programme for the youth
TAU = Youth should be united
YASP = Youth should be allowed to participate in development programme
ER = Equal rights
EQ = Quality education

Figure Twelve:

What do you think the government and society can do to get African youth to make meaningful contribution to development processes and in particular in finding African solutions to African Problems?
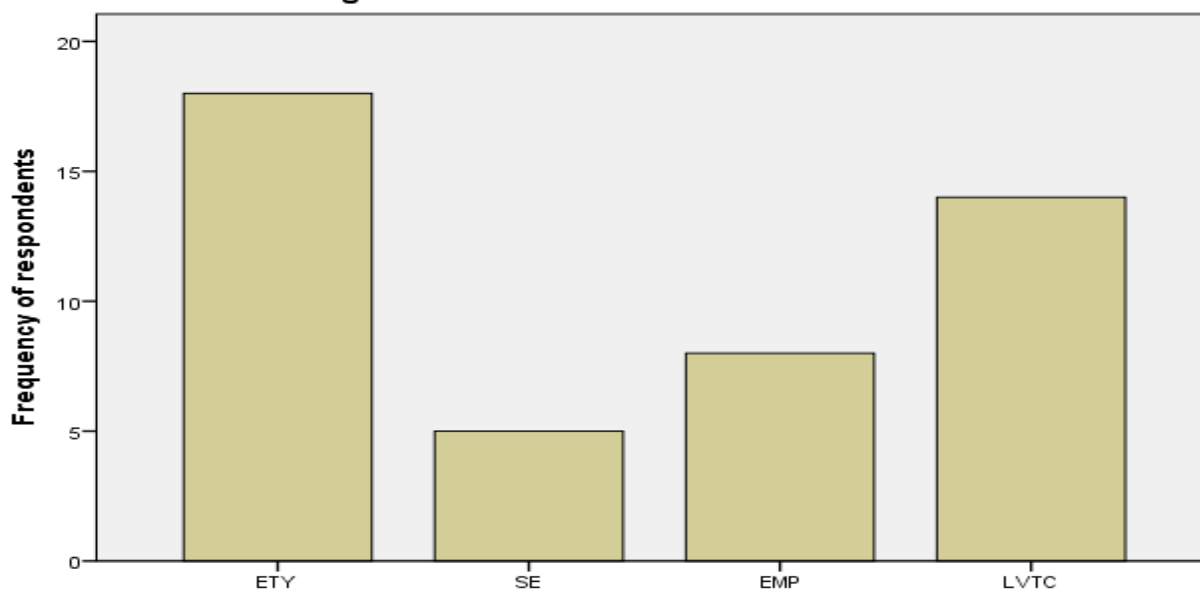
KEY
ETY = Educating the youth
SE = Stable Economy
EMP = Employment opportunities
LVTC = Votes of the youth should count

It is not farfetched to say that the youth problem' in Africa is partly due to continent's "crisis of knowledge production", in a knowledge driven world. Urgent steps should be made to revise the secondary and tertiary curricula in the education sector and encourage students to take up science based subjects up to university level. Countries that have broken through the developmental and poverty barriers and created unlimited opportunities for their citizens including the youth, are those whose people have mastered "technical skills … acquired through the acquisition of the knowledge of applied sciences and technology, which can engender creativity, innovation, production and employment"[42]. Such crucial changes in the education sector call for a determined and sustainable shift from reliance on white collar job based curriculum, to vocational instruction that prepares young people for the job market in and outside their countries.[43] It would be illuminating to hear from participants the state of the education sector in their respective countries.

Also pertinent is public and private sector support for advance research into the challenges and needs of youth in Africa. An area of research priority is on the effects of cultural practices and norms on

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[42] Keynote Address by Prof. Olatunde Fawole, Rector of Ibadan Poly, at the Opening Ceremony of the National Conference on Science, Technology and Innovation, in Ibadan, Nigeria, quoted in The Nation, (Lagos), on June 10, 2014, p7.

[43] There are frequent certificate scandals involving state governors, ministerial appointees and other public officers, especially those that would require clearance from Senate. Also, even recipients of "paid for" honorary degrees are quick to flaunt them while their committees of friends take up whole pages in national dailies to congratulate them.

youth participation in governance and political parties in Africa. Another long overdue research area that could unlock immense opportunities for youth, is on the political, social, economic and cultural factors that continue to that undermine youth solidarity nationally, regionally and continentally. Competition among the youth for the very few opportunities available and lack of a credible youth led platform for the articulation of collective youth interests, are among the most limiting factors identified by youth in the survey. **(See Figure Eight, above)**. Another area worth investigating is the feasibility of affirmative action for youth in governance and politics. African States could be persuaded or pressured as they case may be, to allocate a certain number or percentage of seats in their Parliaments and ministerial portfolios to the youth, as it is presently being done for women to enhance their empowerment in some African countries.

The youth crisis will be successfully tackled if Africans in general and the youth in particular, prize and defend democracy and good governance in their respective countries. The interviews revealed the overwhelming endorsement of democracy by the youth as the governance system that is most youth friendly and bad governance as the most unfriendly. This perception and concern explain, perhaps, why young people constituted the majority of those who took to the streets in Kenya in 2007 and in Cote d'Ivoire in 2010 after their disputed elections. In other words**,** consolidating good governance ethos in Africa will be an effective way of addressing societal ills such as rampant corruption, marginalization, cronyism, ethnicity and cooptation, which are among the salient factors that have "short-changed" young people. In doing so, however, youth policies and programmes must be gender and location blind if they are to be effective. Present national policies in some states are heavily skewed in favour of western educated urban dwellers at the expense of those in the rural areas.

Another important youth empowerment strategy would be to study the feasibility of incorporating the informal economy in which a substantial number of young people are actively engaged, into the main stream of the national economies. Such a move could provide unlimited avenues for sustainable youth empowerment. It could be done in collaboration with banks to support youth owned small scale enterprises (SMEs), so that enterprising young people can easily secure start up loans. This is in line with Wale Ismail *et al's* belief that the sector could provide important "…new avenues of support to young people working in (the sector) that are more appropriate and 'emancipatory'"[44] "…National youth development funds"[45] should also be set up and made easily accessed by youth with viable business proposals, and such enterprises should be mentored by appropriate government and private agencies until they are self-sustainable. The possibility of creating viable partnerships between local youth and their peers in the diaspora is worth researching into. Diaspora youth may have brilliant business ideas and even start-up capital, but may be scared of the unknown back home. A transparent working partnership between this group of young people and their peers at home, with government support, could encourage them to invest at home to create jobs or to return home and contribute their quota to nation building efforts. Finally, opportunities for youth empowerment would be created and sustained if there is sincerity of purpose, as opposed to the present symbolism and tokenism that characterize youth policies in some African states. Sustaining youth programmes would also require a new approach to youth empowerment that involves young people in decision making processes as

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[44] Wale Ismail et al; *Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion in West Africa: Synthesis Report*, op cit. p51

[45] Ibid; p64

opposed to the present highly personalized policies and programmes in many Africa countries, which end up guzzling huge sums of money without visible gains or benefits to the youth.[46]

1.8.2 Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the study. First, there is a direct link between the plight of Africa's youth and the prevailing governance systems on the continent. Second, there is growing interest within and outside Africa in the challenging status of Africa's teeming youth population that constitute the majority. Third, African youth are increasingly engaging with their states especially now that majority of African countries are under civilian rule, to put in place youth friendly policies and to open up the political space for more youth participation. Finally, the study revealed that irrespective of the governance systems in place, African youth have historically played key and diverse roles in the transformation of their societies.

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[46] This phenomenon is particularly evident in Nigeria, where "first ladies" or wives of military/civilian Presidents, governors and local government chairpersons, waste huge sums on 'pet projects' that disappear once their spouses leave office, irrespective of how pro youth they may be. Notable examples are former General Babangida's wife's **Better Life for Rural Women** programme, which gulped billions only to be abandoned when General Abacha seized power in 1993. Also, late President Yar'Adua's wife national cancer project was not only abandoned after the death of her husband, the expansive and choice landed property was forcefully taken over by the present First Lady, Dame Goodluck Jonathan, and used for an entirely different purpose.

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Appendix One: YOUTH POLICY FOCUS IN SELECT AFRICAN COUNTRIES

COUNTRIES	THEMATIC FOCUS		
	YOUTH DEFINED	ISSUES TARGETED	TARGET YOUTH
SOUTH AFRICA	Young people falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years	NOT EXPLICIT	• Young women • Youth with disability • Unemployed youth • School-aged-out- of- school-youth • Youth in rural areas • Youth at risk i.e. those living HIV/AIDS • Youth heading households* • Youth in conflict with the law • Youth dependency creating substances • Youth at risk of being subjected to all forms of abuse
SIERRA LEONE	All Sierra Leonean males and females between the ages of 15 and 35	• Job creation opportunities • Skills training • Information and sensitization • Community development projects • Presidential award for excellence • Youth consultation participation	• Girl child, young women, sex workers • Unemployed young people • Rural youths • Disadvantaged and disabled youth • Youth diamond diggers* • Youth living HIV/AIDS • School dropouts • Drug addicts
NIGERIA	Young male and female Nigerians aged between 18 and 35 years.	NOT EXPLICIT	• Students in secondary schools • Out of school youth • Unemployed and under employed youth • Youth with disabilities • Youth engaged in crime and delinquency • Female youth • Gifted youth • Rural youth • Young people living in the street

			• Young men and women living with HIV/AIDS • Youth engaged in and affected by armed conflict situations • Illiterate youth • Sex workers • Youth in diaspora*
KENYA	Persons resident in Kenya in the age bracket 15 to 30 years	• Unemployment underemployment • Health related problems • Increasing college and school dropout • Crime and deviant behavoiur • Limited sports and recreation facilities • Abuse and exploitation • Limited participation and lack of opportunities • Limited and poor housing • Limited access to Information and Communication Technology ICT	• Youth with disability • Street youth • Youth infected with HIV/AIDS • Female youth • Unemployed youth • Out of school youth

*Peculiar to these countries

SOURCES:
Kenya National Youth Policy, 2006
South Africa Youth Policy, 2009-2014
Second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2009
Sierra Leone National Youth Policy 2003 (This policy was deliberately chosen because it was the first after the end of the civil war)