

Con Case:

On balance, the benefits of urbanization in West Africa **DO Not** outweigh the harms.  
Value Premise: General Welfare

The definition of urbanization is the movement of people from less populated (rural) areas to more populated (urban) areas. Africa is currently one of the fastest-growing continents in the world in terms of urbanization. More and more people are moving into cities at higher rates than ever seen before in Africa. The percentage of the urbanized population jumped from 27% in 1950 to 40% in 2015 and projected to reach 60% by 2050 according to the UN department of economic and social affairs.

## DIRECT RESULT VS INDIRECT RESULT

GDP:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2019&locations=ZG&start=1961>

Contention 1: Lack of Infrastructure & Sustenance

- Many African governments have been discouraging rural-urban migration.
  - [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/28/EGM\\_Joseph\\_Teye\\_ppt.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/28/EGM_Joseph_Teye_ppt.pdf)
- Over crowding, and risk to disease, specifically COVID
  - <https://borgenproject.org/10-facts-about-overpopulation-in-africa/#:~:text=While%20Africa%20may%20not%20be,urban%20population%20lives%20in%20slums.&text=Close%20to%20half%20of%20all,continent%20are%20living%20in%20slums>
- Had urbanization been the perfect solution to poverty, every country in the world would have urbanized as fast as possible. However, these problems are CAUSED by urbanization, and rather than offering a solution to the problems it created, urbanization in Africa has only exacerbated the problem by forcing people to live in cramped, unsanitary and unsafe spaces. These living quarters would be illegal in the United States, however that is due to the fact that the United States has developed at a much slower and steadier pace than Africa has. As a result of its gradual growth, the US is able to conceive and maintain its high standards.
  - [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-13-6958-2\\_21](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-13-6958-2_21)
  - Read the abstract from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0956247813490908>

Contention 2: Risk of corruption

- While only a risk, industrialization (essential for urbanization to succeed) and corruption is correlated. This not only impacts the financial sector, but also potentially the political

and social spheres of countries. Examples in America, which did not have access to technological advancements available to Africa right now, include the Tammany Hall political machine of the 19th and 20th century, to Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company and Standard Oil Trust. Given the rapid nature of Africa's urbanization, it is even more likely that individuals or organizations will seize the opportunity to benefit themselves.

#### Contention 4: Social instability inside Africa

- Civil Wars, which reduces the chance for urbanization to produce modernization and industrialization
  - <https://www.economist.com/baobab/2013/11/13/the-picture-in-africa>
    - Not so long ago civil wars raged in Mozambique, Angola, Sudan, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Chad and Uganda.
  - <https://www.seeker.com/how-many-wars-are-going-on-in-africa-1792719967.html>
    - Countries that had Civil Wars in Western Africa include Nigeria, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone

<https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/the-five-fastest-growing-economies-in-the-world-2020-10-16>  
“South Sudan has registered positive economic growth. However, in order for growth to have more impact on the lives of ordinary citizens, a significant portion must be reinvested in improving food security and basic service delivery,” says Husam Abudagga, the World Bank Country Manager for South Sudan.

- Upward mobility (specifically household welfare) is not actually gained x
- <https://portal.pep-net.org/document/download/33518>
- As seen with Kuznet's curve

One of the major outcomes of migration (Owusu, 2018). The proportion of the world population living in urban areas rose from about 30% in 1950 to 54% in 2015 and is projected to rise to 66% by 2050 (UN-DESA 2014). • Africa's urban population has been growing at a very high rate (i.e.

from about 27% in 1950 to 40% in 2015 and projected to reach 60% by 2050 (UN-DESA, 2014).

• Many African governments have been discouraging rural-urban migration. • This presentation will examine the relationship between urbanization and migration in the context of sustainable development. • It is argued that despite the developmental challenges associated with migration and urban growth in Africa, they contribute to socio-economic development. Migration governance should be an integral part of urban planning and sustainable development programmes in Africa.

- [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/28/EGM\\_Joseph\\_Teye\\_ppt.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/28/EGM_Joseph_Teye_ppt.pdf)

Cross-fire questions:

- Definition questions:
  - What is your definition of urbanization? (If the definition of urbanization does not already include) What is your definition of industrialization/ modernization/ urbanization leading to positive growth?
  - Under what circumstances do you say does urbanization lead to industrialization and modernization?
  - What is your definition of education?
  - What does development mean to you in the orthodox sense? What are the differences and shared aspects between social, economical, and individual growth?
- Focus questions:
  - How does the your argument specifically affect West Africa as a region with 15 countries, instead of Africa as a whole continent composed of 54 countries?
  - What do you think of West African countries' socioeconomic infrastructure and its ability to impact the effects of urbanization?
  - How can urbanization negate the negative effects of conflict, especially in Africa where the frequency of such conflicts is a higher than some upper limits for proper development?

Script:

To begin this debate we will define urbanization as the widespread movement of populations towards urban areas, and away from rural ones. We strongly negate the resolution that the benefits of urbanization in West Africa outweigh the harms. This is because of the strain Africa's growing population puts on its developing economy, Africa's long history of internal

conflicts making it near impossible for countries to develop in an orthodox manner, and the potential despotism that can come with unregulated urbanization.

Contention one, West Africa's existing infrastructure cannot support urbanization. West Africa has an overall high rate of urbanization of the regions in Africa. However, this had led to a significant overcrowding issue. In 2010, 90 percent of Africa's population lived in only 21 percent of the land, close to half which live in languishing slums. A high proportion of the population in countries in West Africa lives on less than \$1.25 USD per day. According to the book "Housing Market Dynamics in Africa", "if these growth rates coupled with the rapidly expanding urban populations continue, it is doubtful that cities will have the institutional, infrastructural, and financial capacity to satisfactorily accommodate urban dwellers. The majority of new urban dwellers will therefore likely reside in slums and informal settlements. Hence, urban poverty and slum proliferation, which already characterize major cities continent-wide, will likely become even more ubiquitous under current urban development trajectories." The rapid growth in population will also put a strain on West African countries' social and healthcare infrastructure. Even in normal times West African countries' hospitals and public service are subpar compared to other developing nations, and when faced with a crisis such as COVID-19, the healthcare system nearly collapsed under the weight of the disaster. Combined with constant conflict and replacement of power, and you have a dysfunctional framework that can not support the current weight of the population, much less the prospect of larger and even heavier populations in the future.

Contention two, Africa's internal instability significantly inhibits its ability to make the most out of urbanization and fully use it to create more opportunities to grow. There are almost 19 currently ongoing conflicts in West Africa alone, and that is not to mention the conflicts in the past that have wreaked havoc on infrastructure and made it an almost impossible task to live peacefully, not to mention urbanize and grow. An example is the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria that began in 2009. More than 30,000 people have been killed in Nigeria's long-running conflict, about two million people have fled their homes and another 22,000 are missing, believed to have been conscripted. These conflicts also impede the progress of education, without which it would be impossible for urbanization to spur industrialization and modernization. Education is critical for development and helps lay the foundations for social well-being, economic growth, security, peace, and gender equality. It also provides the frontline of defense in tackling diseases such as Ebola and COVID-19, by teaching children about how they can protect themselves and their families. In order for education to be carried out in an equitable fashion, however, the country would first need to be in peace, without the constant fear of conflict and rapidly shifting roles. Such stability is all but a pipe dream for the countries of Africa, which has and will likely continue to suffer from such issues.

Last but not least, Africa's rapid urbanization creates more risk for despotism and corruption - which in turn, destabilize government and social infrastructure and can lead to internal conflicts. This is already the case in many of West Africa's countries, and it has led to numerous conflicts, many of which had a devastating impact on the country's social and

economic welfare, as described in contention 2. Even if urbanization occurs within an orderly society, it is impossible to completely prevent the entrails of human greed from creating opportunity for personal gain. Such was the case in the pre-world war US, where infamous organizations like Standard Oil or the Tammany Hall political machine garnered power until they were too big to be eradicated, then went on to dominate their respective spheres of influence.

In conclusion, it is not just hard, but impossible, for West African nations to succeed with urbanization under the current status quo. Urbanization is an irreplaceable step within a country's road to prosperity, however right now it would do more harm than good in West Africa. It would be much better if West African nations were to first concentrate on establishing peace before commencing industrialization and modernization, key to developing the nation as a whole. The benefits of urbanization pale in comparison to the problems it faces, which is why we strongly negate the resolution that urbanization will benefit West African countries in its current form.

#### Rebuttals

- Pro contention: Africa has been growing ever since urbanization
  - Urbanization started in the 600 AD during the Saharan trade, what has happened since then? If you view Jamestown as the beginning of the US, then the US has existed and been growing for 415 years.
  - Access to pipe water not available to more than 2/3rds of poor or urban households across Africa and Asia-pacific
- Pro contention: Urbanization leads to greater democracy
  - Con rebuttal: The risks and assumptions that have to be made are presumptuous at best. It is more likely that democracy would devolve into plutocracy or puppeted autocracy than African nations coming out of it balanced (justice) and thriving (well-being). While it is true that corruption and urbanization exists in every corner of the world, rapid urbanization will exacerbate the problem.
  - Example: Argentina and the "Infamous Decade", Argentina was well off before 1930, but the Great Depression threw the urbanizing country into a coup d'etat and change of power. This caused a dramatic destabilization of socioeconomic stability and a reversal of the positive trend exhibited by Argentina before 1930. Today Argentina is still a developing country by many standards.
- Pro contention: Urbanization is good for the environment
  - <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/habitats/urban-threats/#:~:text=poor%20air%20and%20water%20quality,and%20demands%20of%20urban%20environments>.

- Pro contention: Urbanization has been successful in other countries, and has been key to becoming developed
  - Using cookie cutter statistics from already developed countries creates only a role model, and that is assuming that all prerequisites are the same and are met and that nothing will go wrong (Murphy's Law). If America was in a state of constant civil war, then there would be no way it can reach the state economic and social well-being it enjoys today.
- Pro contention: Urbanization solves social problems
  - Urbanization cannot progress smoothly with conflict, and it is these conflicts that cause urbanization to instead PRODUCE these problems and exacerbate them instead of solving them.
- Pro contention: Urbanization creates job opportunities
  - Informal or formal businesses? Exposure to corruption is significant for urban dwellers living and working informally. Corrupt practices in urban settings include, among others, co-optation of collective organisations of informal workers, dishonest schemes that embed opportunities for rent seeking into urban infrastructure and services, and forbearance as a mechanism to convert informality into private political or economic gain.
  - Not under West Africa's current economic climate. The Rick & Compliance Portal, powered by Gan Integrity, reports that West African countries experience a high degree of corruption, as well as complex and costly tax systems: businesses in Chad will spend on average 732 hours a year on tax filing, with a total tax rate of 63.5% of profits. One in four companies is expected to be asked for a bribe, gift, or facilitation payment when interacting with tax officials in Nigeria, and over half of Nigerians consider the tax authorities to be corrupt.
- Countries such as US went through urbanization
  - Peaceful and civil urbanization
  - US has Bill of Rights and upholds life, liberty, and property rights.
- Urbanization will improve quality of poor-world governments
  - Urbanization may improve the quality of poor-world governments, but more research is needed to draw that conclusion.
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- Urbanization can speed up civil reform
  - No civil reform is going to progress smoothly when people are at war with each other inside the country. Not only that, West African countries don't respect private citizens' life, liberty, and property as successful developed Western countries have.
  - A high proportion of the population in countries in West Africa lives on less than US\$1.25 per day

- According to the book, “Housing Market Dynamics in Africa”, “The number of slum dwellers in Africa continues to increase, in large part due to the accelerated pace of urbanization that the continent is experiencing. Indeed, more than 25 of the 100 most rapidly growing cities worldwide are in Africa (UN-Habitat 2014b). If these growth rates coupled with the rapidly expanding urban populations continue, it is doubtful that cities will have the institutional, infrastructural, and financial capacity to satisfactorily accommodate urban dwellers. The majority of new urban dwellers will therefore likely reside in slums and informal settlements. Hence, urban poverty and slum proliferation, which already characterize major cities continent-wide, will likely become even more ubiquitous under current urban development trajectories.”
- Foreign aid
  - Ron Paul, a distinguished retired politician from the US, once said, “Foreign aid is taking money from poor people in a rich country and giving it to rich people in a poor country.”
  - Donations from companies in developed countries only serve to stifle local businesses in West Africa, because nothing can compete against free.
- Urbanization can lead to better allocation of resources
  - better allocation -> more demand for environment. Without proper infrastructure however that demand can collapse the market and the environment, which makes the situation even worse than it already is.
- Urbanization will lead to less wars
  - 62 conflicts within West Africa (a majority of which is within the last century). If West Africa has been urbanizing long before the 20th century, then one must begin to wonder why it has not reduced the frequency of conflicts but has instead led to an increased number of them?