



'The future of Governance in Africa: *Is a new concept of governance the key to accelerating the prosperity agenda?*

High-Level Policy Dialogue, September 29-30 Accra Ghana

Concept Note

Over the last two years a ground-breaking consensus emerged - not just amongst academics and practitioners, but also amongst Member States - that development and peace are not only inextricably linked but utterly inseparable. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and Goal 16 in particular – emphasize that development, or lack thereof, is both a driver of conflict and an impediment to peace. Furthermore, in response to the *Report of the Secretary-General's Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture*, in April 2016, the Security Council (SC) and the General Assembly (GA) adopted parallel resolutions on 'sustaining peace,' which acknowledge the inherently political nature of conflict prevention efforts, and effectively eliminate the distinction between post-conflict peacebuilding and other forms of prevention, including development-related endeavours. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General (SG), Antonio Guterres, has since made conflict prevention broadly, and sustaining peace specifically a cornerstone of his emerging vision for his term as SG, declaring in his first address to the Security Council in January 2017, that "prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority".¹

While ground-breaking in light of the highly fragmented and often divisive nature of the Member State dynamics, this consensus is preceded by extensive efforts – over many years - on the part of UNDP and other UN entities, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society and a diverse range of other stakeholders to actively prevent conflicts, reconcile societies and foster social cohesion in order to create contexts where sustainable development and stability can flourish in countries across Africa. But the question is: To what effect? The continent has witnessed a wave of democratic transitions, and some impressive development gains, but the 'Africa rising' narrative is increasingly being questioned. The continent has undergone change but, it can be argued, that change has not been transformational. 'Democracy' is outwardly, reductively and, therefore problematically, overly symbolized by the 'ballot box' i.e. elections alone, but political processes are far from transparent, inclusive or participatory; and growth has been anything but broad-based, creating inequality-fueled divisions that divide rather than restore the social fabric. Indeed, governance, across all the common indicators² - safety and rule of law; participation and human

¹ Guterres, Antonio, Secretary General, Remarks to the Security Council open debate on the "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace", 10 January 2017.

² Ojielo, Ozonnia and Kaye, Josie Lianna



rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development – is lagging. This paper, therefore, serves as the Concept Note for a High-Level Experts Roundtable event due to take place in Dakar in September to explore the contours and dimensions of a new form of governance for Africa – one which responds to African needs and realities.³

Why sustaining peace as governance?

This paper argues that, rather than suffering from a problem of *conflict* per se, the continent as a whole suffers from a problem of *peacelessness*.⁴ Peacelessness occurs in countries where armed conflict may or may not be present, and where there is an absence of political and social stability, an absence of equality and social justice, and an absence of mechanisms through which conflict – vital to the growth and development of any nation – can be channeled in non-violent ways. Peacelessness is not unique to Africa: according to the Institute for Economics and Peace, peacelessness cost the global economy \$1,350 per person in 2015; in 2012, it estimated that world peace was worth \$9.4 trillion, and just one year later that number had risen to \$9.8 trillion, which equals 11.3 percent of global GDP.⁵ In Africa, according to Gana Fofang,⁶ peacelessness has its roots in the heightened hopelessness amongst all but the elite populations of Africa; it's a dynamic fostered by an “abdication of the political class to assume responsibility for defining the futures of their people”⁷, and exacerbated by a generational dislocation between elders and youth.

What does peacelessness look like in reality? According to Fofang⁸, it is epitomized by one tragic image: if you put a boat in any port in Africa, the vast majority of people will get on this boat to go nowhere. Irrespective of the destination, their principal goal is one of *escape*. This is, of course, not simply an image but, rather, a reality: the last few years have been filled with stories of people drowning in the Mediterranean, starving in the Sahara or languishing in distant borderlands as a result of failed attempts to flee, but the phenomenon is perhaps more widespread than we could have imagined. It is not confined only to those fleeing conflicts and violence, but pertains to a population ‘en masse’ that would rather leave for the unknown than stay in their own home. The image and the reality is a profound statement of where the continent is and of the challenges that collectively ‘we’ – local, national, regional and international stakeholders – must address, especially when we consider that only fifteen or twenty years ago this phenomenon did not exist. The deep sense of disillusionment derives in part from un-met expectations: the language and dreams of the youth are simply not in harmony with those that claim to represent them. Increasingly, as elders continue to hold onto the legacy of the struggle for independence, and

³ Two paper serve as background notes for the Conference: Ojielo, Ozonnia and Kaye, Josie Lianna, “‘Sustaining peace as governance’ in Africa: Time for a radical paradigm shift?” January 2017; and, Ojielo, Ozonnia and Kaye, Josie Lianna with Omuzuafoh, David; Ridley, Simon; and Tikum, Njoya, ‘Transforming governance in Africa: Is a new concept of governance the key to accelerating the prosperity agenda?’, March 2017. This Note draws upon both and serves as a summary.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ UN Resident Representative Coordinator for South Africa, UNDP High-Level Conference, Johannesburg, December 2016

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Gana Fofang, Resident Coordinator for South Africa, speaking at the UNDP High-level conference on conflict prevention, Johannesburg, December 2016.



political elites cling to power as their only life-raft, a whole generation of youth has lost faith in the ability of their countries to provide them with a future.

The state of governance in Africa

According to the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance⁹, the continent has experienced governance improvements over the past decade: out of the 37 countries to have demonstrated improvement in overall governance since 2006, nine have progressed by more than +5.0 points and, of these nine, five feature in the top half of the overall governance rankings in 2015. However, few countries have registered progress in all four dimensions of governance (safety and rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development) and, more alarmingly, 16 countries register a negative trend in overall governance. Even those countries that feature in high ranking positions (e.g. ‘the top ten’) demonstrate elements of fragility: countries such as Ghana and South Africa, for example, have registered significant deteriorations, and even Botswana showed a marginal level of governance ‘regression’. In fact, only three countries in the entire continent (Namibia, Rwanda and Senegal) have shown improvements across all four IAAG governance categories, while the other seven in the top ten have deteriorated in at least one of the four categories, and all seven have shown a decline in the domain of safety and rule of law. Consequently, over the past decade, the continent has only scored a one-point improvement since 2006 – from an average score of 49 to 50.

Indeed, while Africa’s political governance path has led to some notable improvements - 387 million sub-Saharan Africans now live in a democracy compared with 2.5 million in 1970¹⁰, for example - elections have in fact often served as a trigger for violent conflict rather than democratic progress: in the period 2013-2015, for example, according to the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IERPE), election results or processes associated with elections were the main source of protest reported. Furthermore, violence and conflict across Africa displaced more than 2.4 million people in 2015, and while the data is still being collected, it appears that these numbers will be even larger for 2016.¹¹ There are currently fifteen African countries mired in conflict, ethnic or religious insurgency, or experiencing significant ‘post-war’ violent conflict.¹² And, while term limits have been adopted in the majority of African states, as of 2014 in eleven of the twenty-four states in which term limits had been reached, the chief executive (and those surrounding him) sought to abolish them; in eight of these cases, they actually succeeded in doing so.¹³ Press freedom has recently seen the largest decline of any other fundamental freedom in

⁹ Mo Ibrahim Foundation, ‘A decade of African Governance 2006-2015, 2016 Ibrahim Index of African Governance Index Report, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2016.

¹⁰ African Economic Outlook, Chapter Five on ‘Political and economic governance in Africa’, AfDB, OECD, UNDP (2016), page 4. <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/outlook/political-and-economic-governance-in-africa>.

¹¹ <http://intlchristianherald.com/violence-conflict-across-africa-displaced-more-than-2-million-people-in-2015/>

¹² Ibhawoh, Prof Bonny ‘Peacebuilding and conflict resolution: essential ingredients for sustainable development in Africa’, 3rd International Conference on African Development Issues, May, 2016; Tandon, Yash, ‘Root causes of peacelessness and approaches to peace in Africa’, ISGN, 1999.

¹³ Bates, Robert H. and Block, Steven, Chapter 12, ‘The political origins of Africa’s economic revival’, in Eds. Zedillo, Ernesto and Cattaneo, Oliver, *Africa at a fork in the road, taking off or disappointment once again?* Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, 2015. Page 230.



Africa, according to Freedom of the World in 2015, to such an extent that it can be argued that only “three percent of Africans live in countries with a free media.”¹⁴

On the economic front, since the year 2000 - as a result of improvements in macroeconomic management and more robust trade policies - GDP has averaged almost 5 percent, with an average GDP growth per capita of around 3 percent;¹⁵ this growth rate combined with increasing productivity has led to a reduction in poverty from 58% in 1999 to 48.5 percent in 2010.¹⁶ However, “the absolute number of poor still rose from 377 to 414 million over the same period”¹⁷ – not least due to rapid population growth, for example – and levels of inequality, which remain extremely high.¹⁸ As outlined by Ndikumana,¹⁹ Sub-Saharan Africa is the only part of the world “where the number of poor people has continued to rise despite its GDP growth, and where income, gender and regional inequalities are not only stubbornly high but generally rising”.²⁰ GDP indicators, furthermore, remain silent on the issue of “who are the gainers and losers from the process of economic globalisation”.²¹ Lastly, despite efforts to improve the quality of institutions through the vast ‘governance’ project of decades past, with a view to enhancing ‘checks and balances’ that could foster greater accountability, critics argue that “[c]orruption, militarism, authoritarianism, clientelism, neo-patrimonialism or tribalism are all evidenced in some form or other from Cape Town to Cairo, and from Dakar to Mogadishu.”²²

What is holding the continent back from surmounting its governance challenges?

These governance challenges - and the need for a new transformative model of governance - can be attributed to five key trends:

- First, despite the elaboration of a sophisticated and comprehensive African Governance Architecture (AGA) of which the African Union (AU) is a part, **the AU is struggling to promote democratic principles and popular participation** as a result of institutional weaknesses, capacity gaps and low political will on the part of AU Member States. The AGA is embedded in the Constitutive Act of the AU, which makes reference to ‘good governance’²³ but there is no effective means through which Member States can be held accountable to this Act; and, through NEPAD, the AU put in place the African Peer Review Mechanisms (APRM),

¹⁴ McClure, 5 Governance Challenges for Africa, Freedom House, June 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/blog/5-governance-challenges-africa>. Accessed March 2017.

¹⁵ Zedillo, Ernesto, Overview, in (Eds), Zedillo and Cattaneo, (2015). Page 20.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Zedillo, Ernesto, Overview, in (Eds), Zedillo and Cattaneo, (2015). Page 20.

¹⁸ Constanza, Robert; Hart, Maureen; Posner, Stephen; Talberth, John, ‘Beyond GDP: The need for new measures of progress, The Pardee Papers, No. 4, January 2009.

¹⁹ As referenced by Zedillo, Ernesto, Overview, in (Eds), Zedillo and Cattaneo, (2015). Page 25.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ ActionAid: The state of the Nigeria state 2010 Report, Editors, Pam Sha, Dung and Hussaini, Abdu. Page 1.

²² Cubitt (2014).

²³ Gumede, Sabelo, ‘The challenges facing the recently established African Governance Architecture is likely to have a negative impact on the promotion of democracy, good governance and human rights in Africa, Institute for Security Studies, September 2011. <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/the-challenges-facing-africas-emerging-governance-architecture>.



designed to help ‘keep a pulse’ on situations across the continent.²⁴ However, political will is often lacking.²⁵

- Second, and linked to the above, is the **endemic emergence of ‘electoral democracies’ across Africa and the concomitant democratic deficit**. The good governance agenda has placed significant emphasis on a specific *type* of democracy, which has led to a preoccupation with elections on the one hand, and whether a regime is authoritarian or representative²⁶ on the other (with an evident preference for the latter). But elections do not produce democracy and neither do they necessarily enhance inclusive participation; furthermore, “elections have proven an uncertain mechanisms for guaranteeing the political accountability of political leaders”.²⁷ The pre-occupation with the elections has ‘hollowed out’ the concept of democracy, resulting in an internationally-endorsed process that confers legality without legitimacy, and which alienates citizens from a process that is meant to empower them.
- Third, Africa continues to experience a **crisis of state-society relations**, a relationship at the very heart of democratic governance. According to Christine Cubitt, Director of the Journal ‘Governance in Africa’, this crisis was identified by African scholars already in 1989 when consulted by the World Bank; the scholars underscored that governance is a “local political and not an administrative challenge”.²⁸ Indeed, state-society relations go well beyond the provision of basic services; they are concerned with creating trust and confidence in this two-way relationship. The lack of public participation in governance and the marginalization of civil society from the public domain is undermining the legitimacy of elected representatives.
- Fourth, many leading policy-makers, academics and practitioners agree that **some elements of the ‘good governance’ agenda of the past two decades may in fact be part of the problem**. Beginning with the detrimental Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), based on the “Washington Consensus” and moving towards a growing emphasis on the political causes of under-development, the good governance agenda has been marked by two major approaches. The first sought to restrict political interference in the markets, and fostered development strategies focused on liberalisation and privatisation.²⁹ The second focused on institutions,

24 Asmah, Emmanuel, and Lewis, Zenia, ‘Governance in Africa: Monitoring the pulse of the continent’, Op-Ed, Brookings, January 2011. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2011/01/27-african-union-asmah>.

²⁵ More recently, the AU adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which articulates an ambitious vision for the protection of democracy and human rights – but only 28 countries have ratified it.²⁵ Events in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Uganda, Swaziland and Malawi, to mention only a few²⁵, have only served to highlight the challenges facing the AU when it comes to democratic governance.

²⁶ Adetula, Victor, Chapter Two, ‘Measuring democracy and ‘good governance’ in Africa: A critique of assumptions and methods’ in Eds. Kondlo and Ejiogu, (2011). Page 17.

²⁷ Bratton, M. and Logan, C., (2014), ‘From Elections to Accountability in Africa?’. *Governance in Africa*. 1(1), p.Art. 3. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/gia.ad>

²⁸ Cubitt, C., (2014). An Introduction to Governance in Africa. *Governance in Africa*. 1(1), p.Art. 1. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/gia.ae>.

²⁹ Ibid.



believing that greater transparency, accountability and participation in institutions would necessarily lead to better governance. The problem with the first approach is that it wrongly assumed markets would be “self-correcting” and without negative consequences; but, the lack of regulation and excess liberalisation has made Africa vulnerable to global commodity prices fluctuations.³⁰ The second approach has been overly prescriptive, often creating institutional demands on Member States with limited capacity to deliver;³¹ by creating pressures that could only be met by looking for external support, critics suggest that this element of the ‘good governance agenda’ made states overly outward-looking,³² and too conformist to Western styles of democracy.

- Lastly, however, and to some extent a result of the aforementioned points, the **international policy environment is changing and becoming more receptive to innovative ways of approaching complex challenges**. For example, in response to the *Report of the Secretary-General’s Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture*, in April 2016, the Security Council (SC) and the General Assembly (GA) adopted parallel resolutions on ‘sustaining peace,’ which acknowledge the inherently political nature of conflict prevention efforts, and effectively eliminate the distinction between post-conflict peacebuilding and other forms of prevention, including development-related endeavours (such as governance initiatives). Furthermore, African states are increasingly looking inwards, as well as towards the east and south – in the context of triangular and “South-South cooperation” - for inspiration on how to address diverse crises, and the state is, in many instances, being placed back at the center of development. There are calls for less technocratic approaches to development, which focus more solidly on the quality of the relationship between the state and its citizens³³ - based on notions of democratic governance that are conceived on the basis of local ownership, support and knowledge.

High-Level Policy Dialogue

The Experts Roundtable event due to be held in Accra Ghana from 29-30 September will bring together leading policy-makers, practitioners, academics and representatives from bilateral, multi-lateral, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society organisations. It will seek to address six overarching questions and several sub-questions, as below:

1. To what extent are current governance models suitable for peace and development aspirations in Africa? What is working/what is not working, and why?

³⁰ Noman, Akbar and Stiglitz, Joseph, ‘Strategies for African Development in Good Growth and Governance in African: Rethinking development strategies’, Oxford Scholarship Online, May 2012. Page 19.

³¹ Grindle, M (2004), ‘Good Enough Governance: Poverty Reduction and Reform in Developing Countries,’ *Governance: an international Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* 17(4): 525–548.

³² Cubitt, (2014).

³³ Ibid.



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2. How can governance be conceptualised to have legitimacy and meaning for African political elites and local populations alike?
3. Why are some countries excelling while others are left behind?
4. How can we best identify and tackle these key differences to provide the development “boost” required to achieve Agenda 2030 and 2063?
5. To what extent is it possible to elaborate a “Governance Roadmap” and what ‘theory of change’ underpins this approach? (See attached paper on , ‘Transforming governance in Africa: Is a new concept of governance the key to accelerating the prosperity agenda?’ for more information).
6. To what extent is ‘sustaining peace’ relevant to the transformational governance agenda, and what does ‘sustaining peace’ as governance look like in practice?

Sub-questions

- How do we move from electoral democracy to inclusive political processes?
- How do you create elite consensus around the development agenda?
- How can we find solution to Africa’s problems of governance by looking inwards towards ‘African’ experiences and traditions?
- How can we foster the ambition, initiative and creativity required to push the continent towards its governance potential?
- How can the voices of women and youth be given more space in the democratic governance agenda? Why does women’s political and civic engagement continue to be significantly weaker than that of men, and what is required to address these gaps?
- What examples do we have of countries that have succeeded in fostering trust?
- To what extent is the country categorisation developed in the context of this concept note a useful basis from which to develop a ‘Road Map’ for governance?
- What capacities in each of the four country categories need to be strengthened? How can power within each of the four country categories better be distributed?

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