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The Marriage of Governance and Development

VERNON DAMANI JOHNSON

It is our pleasure to inaugurate *The African Journal of Governance and Development*, a new voice in the evolving conversation regarding the fate of the African continent in this era of globalisation. The editorial team wishes to thank the University of Saint Thomas of Maputo, Mozambique for offering the opportunity to provide a new outlet for those wishing to contribute to our understanding of the human condition in Africa. This journal aspires to be a multi-disciplinary publication that seeks to bring researchers and governance/development practitioners from around the world to share social scientific knowledge focused at the intersection of governance and development. The journal aims to provide space for debating issues from an academic perspective, and for policy consideration as well.

What is the nexus of governance and development? Development in the broadest sense, encompassing economic, social and political dimensions has been the preoccupation of the countries of the global South since the end of World War Two. By development, we simply mean *the improvement in the quality of human life*. After the war, countries emerging from colonialism and many that were not such as China or Ethiopia, suffered from political weakness and material scarcity in comparison with the European descendant states from the Northern hemisphere. Development was what those latter states presumably had achieved and it was that comprehensive societal development which the South sought in order that their peoples might reclaim their sovereignty and their dignity. There has been uneven evolution across the south in the quest for development. Large parts of East and South Asia, and areas in Latin America are developing quite steadily over the last two decades, though significant areas of underdevelopment also remain in those regions. In Africa, strides have been registered in a number of countries toward stable democracy and sustained economic growth. Yet, a substantive and meaningful development still eludes far too many African countries, as widespread poverty remains a seemingly intractable problem in far too many places.

In the volatile setting of the Cold War from the 1940s to the 1990s, the rich capitalist and communist countries vied for allegiance from the southern countries. Each side had its model for development and eagerly exported it southward. The humanistic and idealistic narratives justifying each model were suffocated by the reality of Cold War competition. In that milieu, allegiance was more important than social development and dictatorships, which could keep countries in either bloc, were the order of the day. The Eastern model expired with the collapse of its progenitor, the Soviet Union, in 1991. The capitalist West had won the Cold War and Francis Fukuyama



proclaimed the “end of history.” (Fukuyama, 1992) This discursive turn foresaw free capitalist economies and free democratic polities the world over.

The concern over governance as a key component in development emerged by degrees across the 80s. Prior to that time, the World Bank, and by extension most leading international donors, focused on specific development projects, but were not concerned with the nature of national political systems or the broader societies over which they governed. The oil price hikes of the 1970s created balance-of-payments problems in every African country. It was in that environment that the African governors at the World Bank requested a study of the particular development problems faced by the continent. In response, the Berg Report was published in 1981. The report’s conclusions focused on three areas. First were domestic characteristics of African countries such as the “underdeveloped human resources, climatic and geographical factors and rapid population growth.” Secondly, shocks emanating from the global economy such as “recession, oil price rises and adverse terms of trade” contributed to stagnating economic growth on the continent. Finally, it cited failures in domestic policy-making in terms of technical expertise and “an over-reliance on government” as opposed to the market, “for resource mobilization and allocation” (Williams, 2008, p. 50). This is when the concern for what would come to be termed ‘governance’ begins. It marks the beginning of efforts by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to diminish the size of the state sector in development, while making it more rational and efficient in their functioning. The IMF-led structural adjustment loans of the 1980s were intended to move African and other southern countries in such a direction.

Across the 80s, additional shocks were applied to Africa by structural adjustments, but they rendered dismal results. Food production, export earnings and primary school enrollment had all declined during the decade, while external debt had risen. During the same decade “the Bank had doubled its lending to the region” (ibid., p. 70). Also in the 80s, four more special reports on Africa were issued by the Bank, culminating with one in 1989 entitled *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*. This tract posited that the centerpiece of Africa’s lagging development was a “crisis of governance” (World Bank, 1989, p. 60). By 1992, that thinking would be further honed in another report, *Governance and Development*. Governance was now being conceptualised as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”. “Good governance” was “sound development management” (World Bank, 1992, p. 1). Such management was manifested in the institutionalisation of the rule of law, accountability in public administration, transparency in the flow of information, and understanding and accounting for differing complexes of national cultures. In good governance, the role of the state or government, was central, but the two were not synonymous. Good governance entailed the government providing incentives for private actors, both for profit and non-profit, to invest

economic and social resources into social, economic and political development. The rule of law was seen as 'good' because it offered protection of human rights such as property rights and (hopefully) civil rights and liberties. Accountability and transparency were 'good' because they decreased corruption and induced a sense of fairness in government and business practices. The input of local actors such as ethnic groups, or development and environmental-oriented organisations was needed in order to allow development to be truly humane and sustainable. Democracy, while never officially called for by the Bank, was encouraged because it enhanced access of citizens to their governors and policy-making, and increased accountability in the political sphere. Good governance therefore, compelled partnership between governments, actors in civil society, and also international actors in a campaign to achieve broad-based social development.

Thus, a full-blown discourse on governance 'married' the longstanding global regime on development. The World Bank and IMF had typically played a leading role in framing the global conversation on 'best practices' in development and the donor community, including bilateral and multi-lateral lenders and non-governmental organisations, who embraced the discursive shift with open arms. Eastern bloc socialism had just collapsed and huge sections of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were now available for capitalist development. Many southern countries which had been socialist, or engaged in state-centric forms of capitalism, and were now pressured to adopt more open markets or risk economic isolation. Under the leadership of Ghanaian Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2000, the United Nations system committed itself to eight Millenium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015. Global partnership for development featuring good governance and poverty reduction was one of those goals (United Nations Development Programme, 2011).

In this new century then, a global consensus on governance and development comprising the dominant players in the global state system, and influential actors from the global economy and civil society, has emerged. Capitalist economies and democratic polities have spread rapidly around the world over the last two decades. Though there is uneven development across the global south, large regions of east and South Asia and South America have made great advances in instituting democracy and spurring market-based economic growth. From 1981-2005, poverty declined in many parts of those regions, but decreased only slightly in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2011). As the year 2011 began, over thirty of the fifty-three African countries had democratic, or partially democratic political systems. But as we watch the drama of the 'Arab Spring' bring transformation to the north of the continent, we might expect that balance sheet to change, however haltingly, along the trajectory toward good governance. All of these developments represent a vast improvement from 1991, when democracy was hardly known on the continent (Freedom House, 2011). Still, a vast swath stretching from Chad and Sudan east and south down the centre of the continent to Angola and Zimbabwe, resists democracy and to a large extent, remains underdevel-



oped. Angola is of interest here, because by northern standards, it is not considered democratic. And while Freedom House rates Angola as “not free,” it still concedes that the most recent national elections there “were largely reflective of the people’s will” (Freedom House, 2010). The Freedom House analysis illustrates the facile way in which good governance is implicitly associated with northern-styled liberal democracy. Angola is still recovering from the scars of a 27-year civil war. It is not an easy place to govern according to liberal northern dictates. Yet, the country has one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, and buoyed by its alliance with China, is plowing ahead with infrastructure and other development projects at a furious rate. Perhaps, by more local standards, Angola is being governed well. Our journal aspires to be a forum or a deeper discussion over what constitutes good governance in the African context.

Nevertheless, many of the states running down the heart of the continent are teetering, failing, or have already failed. They call attention to the international dimension of governance. Poorly governed states often fall into violence and civil wars, the impact of which inevitably spills across national borders. When these events occur, the international community is called upon to respond to minimise crimes against humanity and to make peace. The challenge of religious fundamentalism after September 11, and the quest to address climate change are other issues that hamper development, requiring international governance to be addressed seriously.

Though many challenges remain, we believe that neither Africa’s performance over the last two decades, nor its prospects for the future are as dire as they are often cast. There is some evidence that the northern hemispheric media is beginning to portray this message (*The Economist*, 2010). Most would agree that the way forward must include African inspired initiatives complemented by substantive partnerships from Africa’s friends in the global polity and civil society. Following the discourse on governance, research has elaborated on the policy initiatives and institutional directions that Africa must pursue in great detail in the new millennium. Northern scholars have written at great length in very technical terms about what kinds of cultural attitudes, state-society relations, state capacities and policies and donor initiatives are required to develop Africa. But there is a mood of frustration, because no-one knows how to make Africa advance more rapidly, or get it to adhere more strictly to the North Atlantic model of development in doing so (see Bates, 2001; Easterly, 2002, Collier, 2007). Some Africans have weighed in on the side of cutting African states off from foreign aid, largely because it helps to prop up corrupt regimes and allows them to avoid good governance practices (Ayittey, 1998; Moyo, 2009). But Ayittey also concurs with other Africans who believe that utilising indigenous African cultures and institutions is essential for good governance and development (see also Amadiume, 1998; and Maathai, 2009). Goran Hyden (2006) is a northern scholar who is also sympathetic to this view. This marriage of governance to development, like most marriages, is lively and contentious, and like the best of marriages, the

connection remains firm. It does not appear that there will be a divorce anytime soon. Our journal seeks to wade into the middle of that debate much like a therapist or a priest, as a mediator where the research of proponents of competing points of view can be heard.

We think that we offer the reader a stimulating set of articles tackling a range of issues pertinent to governance and development in this inaugural issue of *African Journal of Governance and Development*. Two articles examine the gulf between rational and humane policies, and the capacity of state institutions to deliver outputs and services pursuant to those policies. The informal economy is a big issue in urban areas of Africa, as people stream into the cities seeking to improve their futures. Traders who set up shop on urban streets can make significant contributions to the wellbeing of the population in ways not captured by the gross national product or per capita income data. Seroala Tsoueu-Ntokoane has examined the dilemmas faced by the Ethekwini Metropolitan Government (Durban) in regulating street traders in the way they access and use urban space. Tsoueu-Ntokoane observes that implementing a regulatory regime that preserves order on the streets and is also humane is a delicate balancing act, despite the good intentions of the metropolitan government. The disproportionate impact of poverty on women is well-known by policy makers and in academic literature. Sithabile Ntombela and Harsha Dayal have taken a revealing look at the way in which this issue can bedevil even well meaning bureaucrats. They look at three South African government agencies who in one way or another deal with the poor. They find that, even when the agencies have a common understanding of the gender-poverty nexus, and even when they institute programmes to address it, that correlation is not easily diminished.

Two other articles are urging states to direct policies in completely new directions. This is particularly true for Pierre Matungul. He provides a survey of the prospects for biofuel production as a source of income generation for small-farmers in southern Africa. He assesses the potential as well as the pitfalls regarding biofuels and argues that the state must provide infrastructure and technical support for such a shift in agricultural policy to be successful. Rampoala Paul Mokhele analyses curriculum policy in rural secondary schools in South Africa. He finds that in the aftermath of apartheid, there was a great deal of attention to curricular content and to outcome goals, but there was insufficient attention to factors having to do with the delivery of the curriculum – things such as the relevance of the curriculum itself, educational resources available to teachers, the motivation and training of teachers, and the particular problems facing learners in remote, impoverished rural areas. Mokhele argues that greater policy attention must be given to these factors internal to the process of education delivery before we can expect better educational outcomes at the end of the day.

Maurice Oscar Dassah and Ndwakhulu Tshishonga give us a glimpse at governance from an international comparative perspective as they compare the economic community of West African



states to the southern African development community. After parsing the ways that the literature attempts to conceptualise and operationalise good and bad governance, they investigate the northern hemispheric origins of governance discourse and Africa's reaction to it. Finally, they employ the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance to compare the way the ECOWAS and SADC regions are performing with regard to global governance standards.

Our last offering is a recent speech delivered at Drake University (USA) by the former President of the Republic of Mozambique, His Excellency, Joaquim Alberto Chissano. He leaves us with a message of optimism about governance and development in Africa. The cup is not half empty. Indeed, chronicling events since the end of the Cold War, Chissano suggests that, given where Africa has come from, the cup is more than half full. Our journal wishes to become a willing receptacle for flowing debates on governance and development. We welcome you to join us in the coming years.

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