

# The New Frontier of Governance in Africa

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## Abstract:

This article examines Africa's good governance agenda since the early 1990s, tracing the emergence of the ideas of democracy and self-governance in the region. As a point of departure, the paper argues that self-governance as practised in Africa today is disconnected from the everyday challenges of the masses. The paper uses a social perspective approach to provide insight about self-governance in Africa. Centrally, it argues that in light of social, economic and political issues, the purpose of governance should be reframed in terms of service delivery. To achieve this, actors within the governance process, both in and outside government, must see their function primarily as rendering services to the citizens with whom they have a social pact. The paper acknowledges globalisation as the most important challenge that governments will have to grapple with in delivering much-needed development on the continent. Nevertheless, leadership in all spheres of society remains critical for improving self-governance for development.

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## INTRODUCTION

What is the nature of self-governance in Africa today? How has governance responded to the needs of the masses on the continent, especially within the broader context of democratisation? What ideas about self-governance on the continent are emerging, and what dilemmas are associated with it? These are some of the questions this paper seeks to address. However, before this can be achieved, it is necessary to clarify a few concepts that the paper will grapple with. Firstly, consider the term 'democracy'. Schumpeter (1947) defines democracy as the administration of elections: the process through which a community chooses its political leaders and entrusts them with the responsibility to help society achieve its shared goals. In a more liberal and basic sense of the term, democracy is the free exercise of one's fundamental rights – of thought, expression, association, movement etc. Thus, 'democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them' Schumpeter (1947, p. 270). The transition to a society in which the exercise of one's fundamental rights is possible is known as democratisation. Democratisation is thus a complex mechanism via which society organises itself politically, socially and economically to achieve a common good through elected or appointed representatives; the organisation of pluralistic institutional structures for creating a modern liberal state (World Bank, 1989; 2000).

Linked to the idea of democratisation is the concept of governance, which is concerned with patterns of rule in a society. According to Leftwich (1996), the concept of good governance can be understood in two ways. The first is that good governance 'consists of a set of rules and institutions (a legal framework for development) and a system of public administration which is open, transparent, efficient and accountable' (p. 15). Such a system provides a favourable environment for the private sector to play a leading role in the development of a state. However, this component of Leftwich's definition is narrow and limited to administrative or managerial processes. The second way to conceptualise the notion of good governance is to equate it to democratic governance. This meaning is much broader than the technical definition, combining technical 'efficiency' and democratic politics. In this view, the essential ingredients of a state where good governance is at play include: 'competitive party systems, regular free and fair elections, an independent judiciary, a free press and the protection of human rights' (Leftwich, 1996, p. 16).

As it is elsewhere in the world, the question of what democratisation is, is a contested issue in Africa (See Shivji, 1990; Ake, 1993 and 2000; Gyimah-Boadi, 2007; Abrahamsen, 2000). Africa has, in recent years, experienced a new wave of democratisation. In much of Sub-Saharan Africa, there was a rebirth of democracy marked by a popular sense of optimism, in what Ake (1996) has described as a 'second wave' of independence. This promised not only to end despotic rule, but also to alter the organisation of social, economic and political activities away from something reserved for the privileged petty bourgeois (Ake, 2000). This revival was necessitated by the dashed hopes of the masses following early post-independence governments and the Lost Decade of development of the 1980s (Adedeji, 1994; Sandbrook, 2000). The first wave of independence between the 1950s and the 1960s had, in fact, promised to expand production, allocate and distribute resources, and build social and economic infrastructure for a transformed society. However, this could not be achieved due to a number of factors that bedevilled the state in Africa (Sandbrook, 2000, pp. 1-25)<sup>28</sup>.

The new democratic wave was further shaped by the dramatic collapse of many Eastern European dictatorships (Jonah, 1998). Democratisation, in its conventional and formal usage, connotes political liberties, such as freedoms of movement, association, and expression; granting of universal adult suffrage; rule of law and respect for human rights; accountability of public office holders; the institutionalisation of 'formal' institutions that directly or indirectly work to promote democratic competition and shape governance and the internalisation of rules governing the exercise of power and power relations, among others (see Sandbrook, 2000, pp. 4-5). In sum, the democracy - good governance discourse argues that applying civil liberties to spheres of politics and the market will create the

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<sup>28</sup> Some of the factors that confounded the state included the lack of adequate institutional orientation towards development after independence, the attitude of state elites or public office holders, coercive state apparatus and rent-seeking politics among others (also see Meredith, 2005).

necessary conditions for development and prosperity (Williams and Young, 1994; Sandbrook, 2000). It is within this context that the current state of self-governance in Africa and the innovations that have accompanied it must be understood. Moreover, the development failures observed within the African continent during the 1980s, coupled with the poor achievements chalked under Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), further pushed the good governance agenda on the continent. During this period, most Sub-Saharan African countries implemented economic recovery policies recommended by the Bretton Woods institutions in the hope of boosting their economies. However, very little success was achieved in most cases, bringing to the fore various factors that accounted for the economies' poor performance in spite of the huge capital injection from the donor institutions<sup>29</sup>.

This essay will begin by arguing that Africa's current self-governance has not yielded the desired results. At best, it has only widened the space for élite recruitment into partisan politics, with periodic elections serving as a platform to alternate political power between competing élite groupings. These conditions are deemed to still be present. The aspirations of the masses that propelled the pro-democracy movement have been dashed with the seeming inability of governments to create prudent solutions to the many challenges facing the continent. Secondly, it will argue that self-governance in Africa has been used as a means to legitimise the market system and to integrate African economies into global capitalist dynamics to further Western hegemony. Centrally, due to current social, economic and political events in Africa, governance practices on the continent should be reframed in terms of service delivery. The actors in the governance process must see their function primarily as delivering services to a third party with whom they have a pact. This argument stems from widely held critical views about governance in Africa and reflects the disillusionment expressed across many platforms. Moreover, the practice of self-governance as viewed from the service-delivery perspective will be more aligned to the needs of the masses on the continent. By recognising the challenges for governance in Africa posed by globalisation, economic pressures and internal and external social factors, the paper will briefly explore the principal dilemmas being faced. Thus, the article will proceed as follows: the first section will outline the analytical and conceptual frameworks of self-governance, looking at how the term has been applied to the region. The second section will discuss the main arguments surrounding the democratisation process in Africa after two decades, with regards to the prospects and expectations of African citizens. The third section will continue by analysing emerging dimensions of the concept of self-governance in Africa from the perspective of citizens and with regards to the teething challenges facing the continent's development agenda. In this section, it will be argued that for Africa's self-governance agenda to meet the continent's developmental needs, governance must be conceptualised and practiced as service delivery in a constantly evolving setting.

The fourth section will then examine some contested issues. The modern state is established on the ideals of a social pact as propounded by Hobbes (see Goodin and Tilly, 2008). Here, individuals give up their right to self-determination to the state (the sovereign) in exchange for the provision of their social, economic and political needs. These rights are foregone with the assurance that the state will reciprocate by creating an enabling environment for citizens to realise their potentials. Self-governance in Africa has, thus far, not yet met popular aspirations. The swathes of people struggling to meet their everyday needs in very harsh conditions want to see their elected and appointed servants working to help them find sustainable solutions. This, to them, is the desired outcome of self-governance. Finally, the concluding section will link the major arguments of the paper and end by noting that there is the need for a radical shift in the practice of self-governance in Africa. While globalisation presents important challenges that African governments will have to address in realising the goals of the continents' second independence, leadership at all levels, especially from political, social and economic elites, will be key to achieving this long-awaited development.

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29 Examples of some of the factors that hindered the successful implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs in Africa include; the lack of institutional capacity to carry out the adjustment reforms; lack of equipment and medication in government health facilities, the political cost of implementing adjustment policies, the roles and limits of states and markets in promoting growth and the allocation of transitional costs among others (see Nelson, 1990).

## SELF-GOVERNANCE: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The word 'governance' is ubiquitous and is used as a catch-all phrase for a broad range of challenges faced by governments. The term has become almost an obsession in current debates about development (Williams and Young, 1994). Bretton Woods institutions and donor agencies commonly render assistance to developing countries conditional on 'good governance' (Williams and Young, 1994). Changes in climatic conditions, extinction of wildlife and forest species and the outbreak of the Ebola pandemic in the Mano river area are all considered as issues relating to or stemming from governance failures. Acts of fundamentalism and insurgency by the Islamic State militants (IS), Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab in Syria, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Kenya respectively are all considered to relate to governance issues, as are the worsening electricity crisis in countries as diverse as Ghana and South Africa. Likewise, the worsening economic situations in Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger and Burkina Faso are pinned to governance, as are human rights violations in Gambia, Saudi Arabia and China. Furthermore, the concept of 'governance' is a central component of numerous academic disciplines, including development studies, security studies, economics, geography, international relations, planning, political science, public administration and sociology (Bevir, 2010). Each discipline uses the concept in a different and disconnected way. At the most general level, governance refers to theories and issues of social coordination and the nature of all patterns of rule.

More specifically, governance refers to various new theories and practices of governing and the dilemmas to which they give rise (Bevir, 2010). Governance in all these different guises contrasts with older conceptions of the state as a monolithic and formal entity (Bevir, 2010). Several theories of governance, including policy network theory, rational choice theory and interpretive theory have all challenged abstract concepts of the state as a monolithic entity, interest or actor (Bevir, 2010). Instead, these theories have highlighted the processes and interactions through which diverse social interests and actors combine to produce the policies, practices and effects that define patterns of governing. Former British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, defines governance as 'embodying pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law and human rights, and market principles' (cited in Williams and Young, 1994, p. 85). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), governance is:

*[A] system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. It is the way a society organises itself to make and implement decisions - achieving mutual understanding, agreement and action. It comprises the mechanisms and processes for citizens and groups to articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. It is the rules, institutions and practices that set limits and provide incentives for individuals, organisations and firms. Governance, including its social, political and economic dimensions, operates at every level of human enterprise, be it the household, village, municipality, nation, region or globe (UNDP, 2000 cited in UNDP, 2009, p. 7)*

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), governance is the state's capacity to 'develop an efficient and effective public management process . . . [and] to deliver basic services' (USAID, 1998 as cited in Goldsmith, 2003, p. 27). For Kohler-Koch and Jachtenfuchs, governance is 'the continuous political process of setting explicit goals for society and intervening in it in order to achieve these goals' (Kohler-Koch and Jachtenfuchs, 2004, p. 99).

These diverse definitions emphasise four critical issues: first, that local society is the starting point for governance, even within the global context. Secondly, governance is seen as involving local and international actors from within and outside the public sphere, merging the state-society divide. Thirdly, governance is seen as relating to polity, politics and policy. Finally, governance is seen as a process of setting and attaining goals by society. This places primacy on the individual in a governance process held together by a social pact that is constantly being redefined to suit changing needs. This final emphasis is germane to Africa's current experiences of self-governance. By affixing 'self' to governance at the level of society, the term is understood to signify the process through which a

society articulates its goals and mediates differences through a set of collectively agreed upon institutions and procedures.

The self-governance movement that swept across Africa in the 1990s allowed societies to adopt institutions that would mediate their affairs and enable them to achieve prosperity. This was understood as a second independence that would liberate and unleash political, social and economic advancement for the people. The pro-democracy movement drew on the energy of the masses, whose hopes and aspirations had been dashed just a decade after independence, and, in some cases, had been worsened by authoritarian regimes (Ake, 1996). Two decades on and the same questions are being asked on the streets of Accra, Cairo, Lagos, Lusaka, Nairobi, Ouagadougou and Tunis. The popular slogans – that democracy was going to bring about development and ‘good governance’, ‘sanitising’ the state and ultimately leading to prosperity – seem to have dissipated. This, however, does not negate the fact that there has been some modest progress in African governance practises. At the procedural level, there has been a rise in the working of the rule of law, the granting of civil liberties, the affirmation and application of human rights and some modest gains in the levels of accountability and transparency.

The ideas of self-governance and citizenship are strongly linked to social concepts that promise the prospect of change. Citizenship can be understood as the notion of being a legitimate member of a society, whose duty is to protect the integrity of the state, and to ensure its sustainability for progressive development. On the other hand, self-governance is the practice of setting and attaining the mutual goals of society through a process accepted as legitimate by all actors involved. This process is not static: it is fluid and involves the constant redefinition of goals. Governance thus becomes an all-encompassing activity involving every member of society capable and willing to participate. With regard to the underrepresented, such as children, the sick and the aged, who lack the capacity to participate in the governance process, the majority have a duty to ensure that the interests of these groups are served. These concepts imply two main requirements, duty and reward, both of which are lacking in the African context. There is a need for a radical shift in the approach of actors in the governance process to make the current practice of self-governance benefit the masses and fulfil their desperate needs. This shift in thinking should stem from the idea that each actor in the governance process is a provider and consumer of services provided by another.

Africa's self-governance must be reconceptualised in the framework of service delivery by actors at all levels. It must be seen as an open-ended process in which various actors are delivering services and collecting feedback. The feedback process helps in evaluating one's performance for improvement. The actors are both providers and consumers of a service, depending on their position at any given time within the process. For instance, the Interior Minister of a country provides services to the people by offering policy directions and providing administrative oversight. In doing this, she receives feedback from personnel in the field. Yet, she is at another time a consumer of services: for example, the security and protection delivered by police to the public. In light of the benefits and services that he or she will receive, each actor in the governance process makes an implicit pact to behave respectfully and dutifully toward others and his or her community.

However, it is important to note that the delivery of services in the public sector is not synonymous with profit-oriented service delivery in the private sector. For instance, the provision of public goods, such as public health insurance schemes by governmental agencies, as opposed to privately administered schemes, will not require the same operations process, although both arrangements are providing services (see Grint, 2010). Public provision addresses social defects by offering goods or services to a whole range of people with different needs. It is required of such a service to abide by the tenets of the social pact in addressing these needs fairly. Unlike public providers, private ones either offer tailor-made services to sections of the population or generic ones, allowing individuals to decide whether or not they are interested in signing up. This is a profit-motivated strategy, rather than one simply seeking to satisfy a social need.

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## SELF-GOVERNANCE AND THE DEMOCRATISATION AGENDA IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: TWO AND A HALF DECADES OF DISAPPOINTMENT

The early 1990s witnessed both the re-birth of democratisation through multi-party elections and the emergence of the so-called 'Good Governance Agenda' (Adejumobi, 2000). This transition was facilitated by both domestic and external forces. In particular, economic contractions at the domestic level, coupled with the overthrow of Eastern European tyrants in 1989, encouraged the spread of democratic movements in the Global South, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Sandbrook, 2000). More than half of the continent's forty-seven countries staged a total of fifty-four elections between 1989 and 1994 (Sandbrook, 2000). These transitional elections saw high voter turnouts, at approximately sixty per cent, and were largely considered free and fair by domestic and foreign election observers (Sandbrook, 2000). A total of fourteen regime changes occurred as a result of these elections (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Bratton, 1998, pp. 54-55). This set into motion the current practice of self-governance on the continent, within the democratisation and good governance discourse.

The past two and a half decades have seen Africa gradually shed the label of the 'ungovernable' continent, leading to the current 'Africa rising' discourse (see Shaw and Mackinnon, 2013). Never had Africa's self-governance agenda been of more importance than at the beginning of the 1990s, following the influential report by the World Bank (henceforth 'the Bank') titled *Sub-Saharan Africa: from Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, also known as the 'Berg Report' (World Bank, 1989). The findings of this commissioned work concluded that the malignant nature of the economies of African states was a 'tragedy of growth' (World Bank, 1989). The report further proclaimed that, above all, the litany of crises bedeviling the continent were part of a 'crisis of governance', seen as explaining Africa's economic troubles in the 1970s and 1980s (World Bank, 1989, p. 60).

Following the Lost Decade, African states had to contend with low levels of economic development, poverty and illiteracy, coupled with moribund or modest economic growth. To surmount the crisis facing the continent, the Bank proposed, as a form of policy recommendation, that improving governance was of crucial importance in stimulating the development agenda (Hyden, 1992). According to this line of thinking, there was the need to revamp ailing economies by creating a pluralistic state with accompanying institutional structures that would lead to a renewed political system conducive for private investment. 'History suggests', the report argued, that 'political legitimacy and consensus are a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and development' (World Bank, 1989, pp. 60-61). To buttress its conviction, the Bank cited Botswana and Mauritius, both 'effective parliamentary democracies', as the two countries with the best performing economies in Africa (Williams and Young, 1994; World Bank, 1989, p. 61).

The Bank's 'new' focus on governance dealt more explicitly with political concerns of legitimacy, participation, pluralism, a free press and human rights as the cardinals for renewing hope and jettisoning lost aspirations (Williams and Young, 1994). As has been acknowledged by much academic literature on the subject, this marked the watershed on the governance discourse on the continent. Neoliberalism as an economic and political ideology became the new order in imagining governance and development in the Global South. The focus on governance has been employed to justify the transition towards the free market era on the continent through the formulation of 'adjustment policies' aimed at eliminating or correcting debilitating economic and governance issues in Africa (Williams and Young, 1994).

The Bank's interest reflected the broader context in which much of the debate on governance and democratisation took place in the late 1980s. The position of the Bank on governance coincided with the democratic wave of the 1990s (Adedeji, 1994). Economic crisis in the 1980s, stemming from global economic shocks, mismanagement by African governments, natural factors including low-levels of rainfall and drought, and biting macroeconomic stabilisation and liberalisation programmes promoted by the Bretton Woods institutions, heaped enormous burdens on the urban working and middle classes, and ultimately discredited authoritarian governments (Sandbrook, 2000, pp. 3-5). This led to the fall of many autocratic regimes, especially as 'their sustaining patronage resource base had diminished' (Williams and Young, 1994).

Good governance is a consequence of liberal democratisation. Proponents of the democracy-good governance philosophy in Africa have argued that its self-governance is based on the tenets of liberal democratic politics. According to this school of thought, constitutionalism and respect of human rights, a pluralistic society, accountability of institutions and persons, among others, are cardinal elements to ensuring the emergence of a well-governed and democratic state (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Frempong, 2007). The creation of liberal institutions was deemed crucial to address the predicaments of the continent through public and market reform. To this end, the public sector was seen as the appropriate sphere for setting the stage for much-needed development. Proponents of the good governance approach argued that this would allow governments to implement workable reform programmes and policies, legitimise market-led development by raising popular support and create the necessary conditions to boost foreign direct investment in critical sectors of the economy (Sandbrook, 2000). These reforms were aimed at fostering accountability of public officials and rendering the decision-making process more transparent, thereby entrusting confidence in the public sector for private capital to boost investment. International institutions further argued that constitutionalism would reduce neo-patrimonial politics, especially within the civil service, replacing corrupt practices with professionalism and probity. Yet, two decades on, the promises of the good governance agenda, which also led towards further 'integration' of African states into the global neo-liberal system, are yet to fully materialise (Abrahamsen, 2000; Shivji, 1990).

According to Shivji, the re-introduction of multiparty democracy has, at best, operated as a platform to widen the recruitment of political elites, while the vast inequities and the old practices of cronyism and patronage have remained (Shivji, 1990). Writing almost two decades later, Bob-Milliar (2011) argued that the politically active join political parties 'because of the selective incentives the parties dispense to their members and not necessarily because of the programmes political parties seek to pursue' (p. 2). According to Shivji, Western-driven democratisation seeks to reassert capitalist hegemony and encourage market - based development by co-opting authoritarian rulers (Shivji, 1990). In Robinson's view (1996), Western-style liberal democracy in Africa only furthers 'low-intensity democracy', or consensual democracy which serves simply to advance free market economic ideals, thus alienating the masses from a more radical form of democratisation that would re-organise the social and economic spheres of the state for needed transformation and development (Robinson, 1996, pp. 4-6).

Adding to the critique of the debate on democratisation, Saul (1997) has argued that democratisation in the developing world rests on a very 'narrow' definition, which originates in polyarchy and reduces democracy to a procedural exercise. Here, it is reduced to periodic competitive elections where organised groups vie for the popular vote, as demanded by civil liberties enshrined in constitutions (Saul, 1997, p. 340). This view is in sync with Ake's (1996) argument that democracy has been restricted to the political sphere and involves the replacement of one group of elites with another, both of the same stock, whose desire is to promote their sectional interest (Ake, 1996, author's emphasis). For Ake, liberal democracy will be relevant to Africans only if it is '...recreated in the context of the given realities and political arrangements which fit the cultural context in Africa' (Ake, 1993, p. 240). These arguments imply that the type of self-governance needed in the continent is a form of 'popular democracy' based on democratic empowerment of the public, as well as on the cultural values of African society. This would be achieved by expanding the political space for popular participation in a way that allows diffusion of political power throughout society and that can be used to alter unjust social and economic structures for a more progressive society.

During the 1990s, democratising movements based on neo-liberal principles spread throughout Africa. The celebrated national conference held in Benin in the early years of the decade to gauge citizens' ideas on a new political order, as well as the many public fora organised by pro-democracy movements in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia, had a common theme of change for the common good (See Ake, 2000; Adedeji, 1994). For instance, in Ghana the campaign to overthrow the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) and create a democratic constitutional order was argued to be a way for all able and willing citizens to achieve their potentials in a progressive society (Jonah, 1998; Bofo-Arthur, 1999). Thus, the 1990s marked a radical change in state-society relations in a manner that was seen as serving the common good for all. The 'second wave' of

independence in Africa in the 1990s, underpinned by neo liberal tenets, promised not only an end to despotic rule but the reform of social, economic and political activities away from the preserve of a few privileged bourgeois (Ake, 1981). It was seen as heralding the revival of popular hopes, held in the 1950s and 1960s during the first wave of independence, that were crushed by the Lost Decade of the early 1980s (Ake, 1993). Despite the similarity of aspirations between the decades, Ake argues that:

*The differences in the second wave of democratisation are highly significant. Instead of the collective, it focuses on the individual whose claims are ultimately placed above those of the group. It replaces government by the people with government based on the consent of the people. Instead of the sovereignty of the people, it offers the sovereignty of 'law' and operates by repudiating the very idea of popular power making it inimical to people having effective decision-making power (Ake, 2000, p. 10; 1996a, p. 130).*

The neo-liberal policy reforms of the era have not put an end to the ills they sought to correct nor delivered the solutions promised by advocates. Sustainable high growth is yet to be achieved, a more coherent production system that effectively and efficiently utilises the abundant resources on the continent and rewards its population has not yet been established and little social progress has occurred. On the contrary, issues of underemployment, poverty and violent conflict, among others, have aggressively increased, further deepening the inequalities engendered by the Lost Decade.

#### THE NEW FRONTIER OF SELF-GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: GOVERNANCE AS SERVICE DELIVERY

Over the past 25 years, actors in the governance process in Africa have been critical of public policy and have increased their demands for service delivery. The populations on the continent do appreciate the tenets that underpin self-governance: the rule of law and respect for human rights and constitutionalism. However, they equally expect government to do more in meeting their general livelihood needs. An interviewee retorted '... [but] for how long should we wait to feel the impact of the so-called good governance in our lives?' when answering a question about his view of the state of governance in Zambia (Interview with Mulenga, 14 December 2014). Similarly, in a new report on NTV, a frightened resident in Maiduguri asked whether 'the Nigerian government, in the name of rule of law and human rights, will wait until after all residents are killed before it moves to crush the Boko Haram insurgency' (NTV News, August 2014). Residents also expressed frustration at the seeming lack of action from an increasingly ambivalent Nigerian government in response to the environmental contamination and depletion of livelihoods by multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta region.

In the Mano River countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea), residents are angry about their respective governments' handling of the raging Ebola pandemic. Likewise, citizens of Kenya wonder why their government cannot institute prudent policy measures to create a safe and secure nation and defeat the Al-Shabaab insurgency. The disgust is also expressed by residents in mining communities in rural Ghana, concerned about the environmental damage caused by illegal mining by foreign companies, with little response from state institutions; while in urban areas, citizens complain about erratic water and electricity supplies and the poor service provision from government and quasi-governmental institutions. Almost no day passes without citizens of African countries accusing their governments of reneging on their duties and making demands for their needs and interest to be served. The responses of the governments to these concerns relates to issues of capacity, rule of law, accountability and the nature of politics.

Politics on the continent has fast become a 'zero sum game' that shapes everything in society. While the political space has become the main arena for addressing development issues, it seems impossible for development issues to be championed while politicians focus on political games. The political sphere has been construed as the answer to the advancement of society, despite the fact that other spheres of society hold an equally critical role to play in the wellbeing of their citizens. Thus, the political arena in Africa has assumed the status of a wizardry machine that holds the magic wand to unleashing development.



Though the political arena is not the only forum through which governance issues can be addressed, it is characterised by a lot of violence. Violence is used to protest dissatisfaction with the way governance is done and as a response to acts of repression from the state. Partisan politics has become a form of 'aggressive participation' (Muller, 1979) as evidenced by the violent nature of many elections in Africa. This violence is of 'high-intensity' or 'high-intensity' in nature (Bob-Milliar, 2014 pp. 135-142). Low-intensity violence is 'localised spontaneous actions which are contentious, aggressive, confrontational, and violent' (Bob-Milliar, 2014, p.135), such as the kind witnessed in Ghana and Zambia. Conversely, high-intensity political violence is depicted by the 'the kinds witnessed in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya, and Cote d'Ivoire [which] are not comparable to those that occurred in Ghana or elsewhere in Africa' (Bob-Milliar, 2014). Widespread violence erupted after keenly contested elections in Kenya in December 2007, for example (Kagwanja and Southall, 2009). In Cote d'Ivoire, it was a battle between the armed forces and 'rebels' that determined the legitimate winner of the November 2010 elections. Countries such as Ghana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe have also witnessed pockets of violence during recent elections. This may be attributed to the seeming absence of programmatic and ideological political parties in Africa, or the unquenchable desire of politicians to engage in rent-seeking and patronage activities. The violent nature of partisan competition underscores the fact that partisan politics is interpreted as critical to enhance the general wellbeing of citizens.

Violence associated with politics is orchestrated by the citizens' dissatisfaction with issues of governance and development. People use violence to express popular discontent, for instance, in the form of protest marches or demonstrations, with the way governance occurs in their respective countries. Recent examples are offered by protests in Burkina Faso to oust President Blaisé Campoare, popular upheavals in Ashaiman, Ghana, to protest against the degraded state of roads, or the series of demonstrations in Malawi and Uganda against widespread corruption and human right abuses.

Participation in politics in Africa is premised on the cliché of 'what for what'? Engagement in partisan politics can be understood as citizens entering into a relationship of exchange with a party driven by the expectation of rewards, a mechanism which can undermine self-governance. According to Bob-Milliar (2012), the main reason why the politically active decide to participate in partisan politics is to secure their economic livelihoods and progress in society. People thus view their participation in partisan politics, whether it is voting for a particular political party or acting as a polling officer during general elections, as rendering services in exchange for a reward. And when rewards are not offered, the party pays the price of losing in the elections. Gyimah-Boadi (2007) contends that this expectation drives patronage politics, which are seen as undermining the practice of effective self-governance. Gyimah-Boadi's criticism does not seem to reflect the thinking of the masses. As reported by Bob-Milliar (2011) in an article analysing support for the popular National Democratic Congress (NDC) in northwest Ghana, the people of the region 'owe unflinching allegiance to the party because of the responsiveness to their needs' (pp. 456-466).

This view is not limited to the Upper West region of Ghana. Voter patterns in general elections in Ghana suggest that regions largely vote en-bloc for a particular political party on the basis of the inhabitants' assessment of the party's response to their needs (Morrison, 2004; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008). It is thus not surprising, as news reports suggest, that during a recent durbar (a gathering of the chiefs and people of an area), Nene Sakite II, the Konor of the Manya Krobo area in Eastern Ghana, openly declared support for the NDC's second term bid from the people of his area on the basis of the party's delivery of development projects to the region. The Konor noted that the region had missed out on projects for a long time (StarFmonline.com, 2014). Similar patterns exist across the continent. For instance in Zambia, a number of traditional rulers pledged their support for the Patriotic Front in the just ended Presidential by-election, citing on-going development projects as their reason for doing so. However, counter to Gyimah-Boadi politics of patronage argument, this should be viewed as providing services for a service.

Thus, when citizens vote, they expect their elected representatives to reciprocate their gesture by meeting their needs. These expected rewards may be both personal and collective, but, more importantly, voters expect a general improvement in social, economic and political dimensions. They expect public office holders and institutions

to implement policies that bring incremental improvements to their daily lives. They expect public institutions to render real time services to them. Their primary concern is not so much about the means of providing such public goods in as much as it does not lead to depriving others of their entitlement. For a change in governance to be realised, actors in the governance process must change how they view their role and act accordingly. Actors at different social strata, including the civil service, other governmental and quasi-governmental institutions, the private sector and the individual, must see their function in the governance process as rendering services in exchange for receiving others. For instance, the civil or public servant must see the office she occupies in any ministry, department and agency as providing services to the citizenry - her most valued client - and perform this function dutifully. In return, she is not only rewarded with improved conditions of service at the personal level, but with a secure and progressive society for all.

The notion of governance as service for a service does not imply that the liberal tenets such as institutionalism, rule of law, respect for human rights and constitutionalism upon which the current practice of self-governance in Africa rests should be abandoned: it suffices to say freedoms of movement, association and expression; universal adult suffrage; accountability; and the institutionalisation of 'formal' institutions remain very much relevant. However, the daily needs of the masses are rarely met by current governance structures. With the current 'Africa rising' proponents pointing to progress being made on the continent on the social, economic and political fronts, there are still monumental deficits in the areas of education, health, transport and communication, food security, peace and security, justice and equity in society among others. Efforts at meeting these needs are slow and there is a feeling, rightly so, among the populace that the current dispensation is for a privileged few groups of elites.

Leadership at all levels of society is vital, especially on the part of the elite class, if Africa is to indeed 'rise'. As citizens who have acquired the necessary knowledge in various disciplines from around the globe that is crucial to national development, elites should capitalise on their knowledge and exchange influence with other sections of society to harness the capacity of all citizens for development. The utilisation of their acquired knowledge must take place within the culture of the people they seek to serve. By this, they are better placed to elicit the cooperation needed for effective self-governance and development.

#### THE EFFECT OF GLOBALISATION ON SELF-GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

Globalisation in its present form presents a double-edged phenomenon. The present-day interdependence between states presents, more than ever before, both opportunities and challenges. There is a burning desire on the continent for development that will put African countries in their rightful place among the comity of nations. One sure means to achieving this is through the practice of effective self-governance that responds to the needs of the citizenry. However, the achievement of self-governance must overcome a number of dilemmas, the most fundamental of which is globalisation: the internationalisation and intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across national borders (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 8). Globalisation presents opportunities for the inter-borrowing of ideals that shape and sustain development and self-governance. On the other hand, it also presents a major obstacle. It hinders the ability of governments to make autonomous decisions in a highly connected global system where states are under constant pressure to conform to international norms. The advancement in communication technology, epitomised by the emergence of numerous social media platforms, has brought the world within reach with a click of a button. This advancement in information sharing has eroded the autonomy and independence of the nation-state in Africa more than ever before.

The seamless environment within which national governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental institutions make decisions is more likely to infringe on the choices and alternatives available to African governments. In an increasingly connected international capitalist system of unequal relations, African governments are faced with decision-making powers outside of their direct control. Their decisions more often than not are based on the pressures of international capitalist and governmental organisations and are made in order to gain acceptance within the international system, rather than to accomplish what is most necessary for the local context.

Nevertheless, globalisation has also empowered citizens on the continent with information from across nations. This has made it easier for them to mount pressures on their respective governments in demand for better delivery of public services for the common good.

## CONCLUSION

Africa's self-governance has made little progress toward meeting the needs and aspirations of the masses, even two and a half decades after the second wave of independence in the 1990s. The current practice of self-governance on the continent has mainly achieved three things. Firstly, continued Western hegemonic control under the guise of selected application of the good governance label to further their strategic geo-political and economic interest; secondly, a stronger integration of African economies into the world capitalist system for the development of the Global North; and thirdly, the legitimisation of politics within a few privileged elite groupings, who continue to benefit from state resources in furtherance of their own interest.

This paper has argued that there is the need for a radical shift in the practice of self-governance in Africa and how it is understood. Governance is the process through which a society articulates its set goals and mediates differences through a laid-down set of institutions and procedures collectively agreed on. It must be seen as the delivery of services within an open-ended process that allows for continuous feedback and improvement while the goals of society are constantly redefined. Actors involved in the process must play their respective roles and play them well. Self-governance as service delivery should not be viewed as synonymous with service delivery in the private sector, though they are both underpinned by the same principles. To this end, the tenets that underpin the current practice of self-governance are not in themselves negative, but there is a need to refocus how they are practiced.

Globalisation presents important challenges that African governments will have to address. Governments must work to achieve a balance between finding acceptance in the global system and adopting pragmatic policy approaches to solving the teething development challenges on the continent, especially in areas where such policy programmes may not conform to the frameworks of international organisations. A service-delivery approach to self-governance in Africa presents a more robust approach to meeting the monumental challenges of development confronting the state in Africa. This conception of governance better positions and orients institutions, states and persons in the governance process to offer effective services to the citizens. By this, states will be able to overcome some of the constraints posed by globalisation and enjoy a high sense of legitimacy.

For self-governance to address the peculiar needs of African societies, it must emerge from the daily realities of the people. This process must be shaped by those whose governance is at issue – the masses of the continent, such as illiterate people, the poor, and those struck by conflict, hunger and diseases. If this is steadfastly kept in focus and governance is approached as service delivery, then self-governance will be better enhanced and sustained for the common good. In this context, leadership at all levels, especially from political, social and economic elites, will be key to achieving the long-awaited development of the continent.

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