

African Politics and Policy

Newsletter
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Editorial

In a recent article Carlo Lopes, from the United Nations Economic Commission, suggested that all the problems that Africa is facing and has been facing in the last few years, are the result of inequality. It is the inequitable redistribution of resources and the absence of proper mechanisms, Lopes argues that leads to political conflict, civil war, violence and terrorism.

While there is no doubt that poverty and inequality are a dramatic problem for many African countries, while there is no doubt that they may exacerbate tensions, and while there is no doubt that more should be done to create more prosperous and more equitable societies in Africa, it would be unwise to consider inequality as the sole cause of Africa's problems.

Many African countries have problems because they have not experienced sufficient political development, because their governance systems have not been adequately institutionalized, and because they do not have responsible leadership.

Poor leadership and lack of institutionalization are not simply responsible for political instability but also for inequality, and efforts to reduce inequality without addressing the problems of inadequate leadership and political development are not going to eliminate the real causes of conflict and instability in the region.

To secure Africa's socio-economic development and political stability, more attention should be paid to promoting responsible leadership and proper institutional development. This is the challenge that the development community has to face.

Riccardo Pelizzo

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Democracy at risk?

The leader of the opposition in Mozambique announced that RENAMO is ready to seize power in March and is getting ready to rule the country.

Health

While many African countries have been praised for their success in curbing malaria, it was reported that Cape Verde experienced a large outbreak of zika. Analysts believe that zika virus could spread to the rest of the continent.

Constitutional changes and political will.

By Abel Kinyondo

The promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 was received with such fanfare and hope by the Kenyan public like nothing before. Apparently this constitution was supposed to usher Kenya into a new world of prosperity and growth; good governance and ultimately sustainable economic development. Freedom of expression, human rights issues that are enshrined within this constitution were also thought to potent enough to take Kenya to a whole new level of democracy. Aspects of devolution were supposed to take out powers from the historically supreme president a good indication that the dictatorship era begotten by the former president Daniel Arap Moi was dead and buried with the introduction of this constitution. Put it succinctly, the ratification of constitution in 2010 was billed as the most important political event in Kenya's history since its independence in 1963.

Almost 5 years after the ratification of the constitution, one wonders whether the change of constitution was worth the cost of making it. Indeed, in 2015, Kenya was ranked as the 139th country out of 167 countries on perception corruption index with most of the countries beneath it either in the state of war or under absolute dictatorship. There can be so many examples to give of corruption scandals in Kenya. For instance, recent corruption scandals have forced several Cabinet secretaries to resign after six months of public pressure.

The biggest devil in details though is the persistence of tribalism. As they say, Kenyans are first and foremost loyal to their families, then their clan (extended family), then their tribe. Member of the same clan or tribe often 'help' each other, even when it involves illegal corruption. Tribal influences have waned over the years, but are still strong particularly in politics. Kikuyus would always support President Kenyatta (a kikuyu) and Kalenjins (vice president Ruto). Meanwhile Luos support their tribesman Raïla

Odinga with Kamba supporting another opposition figure Kalonzo Musyoka. However one looks at it, tribalism seems to be running through veins of Kenyans and the change of constitution does not seem to alter that situation.

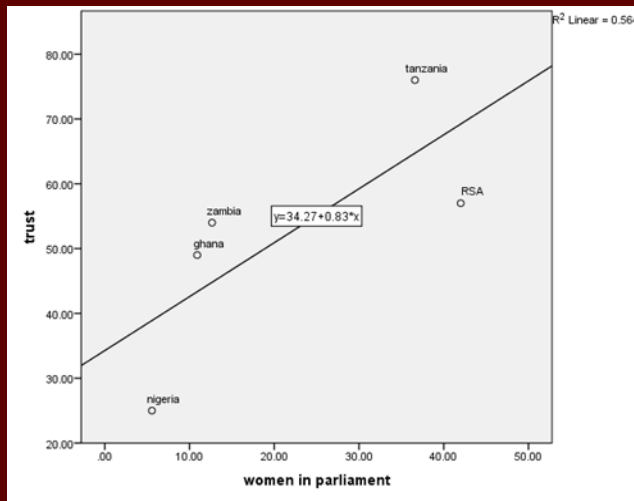
It should be noted that the introduction of the second chamber of parliament (upper house) in Kenya was meant to provide an opportunity for Kenyan parliament to scrutinize the government more robustly. However, bickering concerning which chamber is constitutionally more powerful than the other has left the parliament divided and ultimately less potent that it actually was before 2010. Similar issues have derailed the devolution process as senators, MPs and governors are in constant scramble for power rather than serving the public.

In the end one wonders whether the change of constitution in Kenya has had any significant impact in the country if at all. That brings a question of whether the constitution or political will is important for a country to move forward. This can be understood in the context of recent events in Tanzania. Having failed to emulate its neighboring Kenya in changing the constitution in 2015, the country stuck to its 1977 constitution. However, the coming into power of the new president, Dr. John Pombe Magufuli has changed the political, economic and social scenario in Tanzania. Indeed, since November, 2015 when Dr. Magufuli took over the presidency, corruption has been tackled head on, governance improved, revenue collections increase, waste in government spending arrested just to mention but a few successes. What we therefore see in the two countries is a willing president who used an old constitution to the maximum in Tanzania, and a very impressive constitution laid to waste in Kenya. Given the two scenarios, one would not be far from the truth to say that political will and not the change of constitution is what can transform African countries.



Women and land rights

In a recent article Makhado et al. argued that women rights to land are crucial for rural development. This is critical because women constitute the majority of people in rural areas and represent the highest number of people working on the land mainly for subsistence purposes. However, the rights of women to access and own land in most African countries is still not proportional to what men enjoy. Customary laws and cultural practices are used to systematically deny women rights to access and own land. Eliminating discrimination in land is essential in order to redress the impoverishment of millions of women in the African continent. This review paper therefore advocate for equal rights in the allocation of land. It also provides insights and discussion on gender-based land allocation.



The importance of women in Parliament: evidence from Africa

In 2013, Pelizzo and Stapenbhurst noted in their Parliamentary Oversight Tools that the effectiveness with which legislatures perform their oversight function depends on the oversight tools that are at the disposal of legislatures, on the presence/absence of relevant contextual conditions and on the political will to exercise legislative oversight effectively.

One issue that the book neglected to address was whether and to what extent gender balance and the presence of women in parliament affects the effectiveness with which legislatures perform their oversight function.

In a note eventually published on the Agora portal, Pelizzo reported that the effectiveness with which legislatures perform the oversight function, measured on the basis of their ability to constrain the power of the executive branch, was directly related to the presence of women in parliaments.

Parliament with a greater gender balance are more effective overseers.

More recently, Kinyondo, Pelizzo and Umar (2015) suggested that the effectiveness of legislative oversight should be assessed on the basis of a broader set of indicators which include the level of trust enjoyed by the legislature.

If we correlate the data on the level of trust in parliament made available by the Afrobarometer with the data

able by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we find the trust of legislatures increases as the percentage of women in parliament increases. This evidence sustains the claim that a larger presence of women in parliament is highly beneficial. Parliaments with greater gender balance are more representative, are more responsive, are more effective in overseeing the executive and enjoy higher levels of trust.

The key policy implication for the international community is simple. Promoting gender balance in parliament is essential for increasing legislative capacity, performance and legitimacy.

Riccardo Pelizzo

Tourism in Africa

It is hard to overestimate the importance of tourism for Africa. Every year more than 30 million tourists come to Africa, mostly for business but increasingly for pure tourism.

Tourism provides direct or indirect employment opportunities to 12.8 million people and represents 2.8 per cent of the continent's GDP.

The success of tourism in the continent is to a large extent due to the fact that Africa is the world's leading destination for safari.

This finding has significant policy implications as it indicates that governments need to take proper steps to protect the wildlife from poachers.

Eritrea is preparing its world heritage list

On the 28th of January in Asmara, under the aegis of UNESCO, the Cultural Bureau of the Ministry of Education held the ceremony of implementation the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Eritrea. Withing the framework of the event, Eritrea need to prepare the world heritage list to preserve and promote the unique architectural heritage of Asmara, which involves the various forms of Modernism: Futurism, Rationalism, Novecento, and Art Deco.



Job Openings

The GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies / Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien invites applications from **Prospective Doctoral Students (Ref.-No. GIGA-16-01)** to join the programme on 1 October 2016

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African Art Exhibition

From February, 5 to April, 4 the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in cooperation with European Master Migration and Intercultural Relations, and Centre of interdisciplinary Research on Women and Gender, will present the inaugural show of the travelling exhibition titled “Kabbo ka Muwala” (“The Girl’s Basket”).

“Kabbo ka Muwla” project, which unites Southern and Eastern African artists, focuses on the problem of migration. The expression is the metaphor which reflects the spiritual and material luggage of migrants. This exhibition will also be presented in Uganda (Makerere Art Gallery in Kampala, April 14 – June 12, 2016).

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