

December, 2014

# Peace and Governance in Africa

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**Abstract:** While some are of the opinion that good governance thrives best in an atmosphere of peace, others overwhelmingly emphasise the natural peace-inducing potentials of good governance. From the latter brand of scholarship, good governance is a necessary requirement for sustainable peace. Unfortunately, the problems confronting Africa in this century are predominantly governance-related. African countries are poorly ranked on the global scale of governance indicators. The consequences of this include recurrent civil wars, genocides, and the proliferation of organised rebellions against the state. These have largely turned the continent into a region characterised by political instability. Thus, this paper examines the nexus between good governance and peace, focusing on Africa. In view of the enormous challenges that insecurity and crises have created in Africa, the paper recommends that African leaders must deepen democracy on a continental scale, demonstrate the willingness to combat and reduce corruption, build a strong civil society and consciously promote human rights and justice.

**Key words:** Peace, Good Governance, Security, Leadership, Development

### Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, human beings are faced with many problems (Barash & Webel, 2009:1). Several of these problems stem from the difficulty in achieving peace, stability and development. At the root of this difficulty, however, is the issue of governance (Bangura, 2011; ACCORD, 2011; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012). Whenever governance breaks down, a generative process of structural and

societal dislocation begins. This process transforms into violent conflicts, instability and underdevelopment, slowly but inevitably. Before this process degenerates, there are usually early warning signals such as sudden demographic changes, economic shocks, rising unemployment rates, destabilizing elections, a rise in societal intolerance, and an increase in the number of demonstrations, among numerous other

developments. At this point, responsible leadership must heed these warnings by immediately setting machineries in motion to correct the perceived governance errors. But when national leadership appears to be heedless, as has regularly been the case especially in Africa, then the prospect of structural and societal dislocation looms large. Although the above three inevitable outcomes of poor governance are intricately linked, the focus of this work is to analyse the nexus between peace/violent conflict and good governance, particularly looking at the conflict-inducing potential of poor governance in the African context and to suggest measures for deepening political governance in the interest of sustainable peace.

In Africa, conflict, injustice, as well as inequitable and unwholesome development agenda represent the “problems of peace”; put differently, these are burning issues that seem to make the attainment of peace difficult. The spate of violent conflict across the continent is particularly worrisome. Where violent conflicts have occurred, they have eroded the social system like in Rwanda and Burundi; hampered economic performance like in Sierra Leone and Liberia; increased the likelihood of disintegration like in Nigeria; and have created humanitarian disasters. Because these issues are also closely linked with political governance (as will be expounded later), the problems confronting Africa in this century are predominantly

governance related. In many circles, conflict is regarded as a characterizing feature of political processes in Africa (Adetula, 2006:388). However, peace is the prime value in contemporary Africa, the most valuable public good, but yet the most elusive (Francis, 2006:16). From West and Central to the Horn of Africa, the socio-political terrain has been tumultuous. The recent uprisings in parts of North Africa implies that no section of the continent has been unaffected by conflict. Due to its ravaging nature, these conflicts are overwhelming the capacity of African governments and the major regional and sub-regional authorities to maintain peace and security. Although these organizations have collectively and individually devoted enormous resources to resolving these conflicts (Antonio, 2001:72), little has been achieved.

The efforts at resolving these conflicts notwithstanding, the West and Central African regions have been subject to conflict-related dislocation and extreme violence. Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone are still embroiled in, or emerging from, extensive upheaval and destruction due to age-long warfare. The region has been characterized by a culture of impunity, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the continued weakening of the security sector, mass refugee movements and other forced displacement, inequitable and illicit

exploitation of natural resources, and violations of human rights, including the rights of women (UNICEF, 2005:1). Civilian populations were and continue to be subjected to massive human rights violations and horrendous atrocities, including rape, murder and torture. Millions have been displaced from their homes and thousands of children have been forcibly conscripted or abducted to serve in armies and militias. These armed conflicts have also created large numbers of households headed by women and/or children, who were subjected to the crimes of sexual violence that prevailed throughout the brutal national wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and, more recently, in Côte d'Ivoire (UNICEF, 2005:4).

Without doubt, these conflicts that Africa has witnessed or is witnessing are largely governance-related. The recurrent civil wars, genocides, and the proliferation of organized rebellions against the state are largely induced by governance errors. As empirical evidence has suggested, the current political turmoil in the Northern region of Africa is intricately linked to the failure of political governance. The current insurgencies against the Nigerian State are also linked to governance issues. Election-related conflicts in Cote d'Ivoire between the political camps of Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Quattara and constitutional crises in most of Africa are other governance-induced

conflicts across the continent. To overcome this ugly situation, the issue of good governance must be given its required attention.

### **Deciphering (Explaining the Concepts of) Peace and Governance**

The authors of this article are aware of the fact that several works have been done to explain the concept of peace. The paper therefore does not have the intention to reproduce what others have written. Rather, greater attention is devoted to the concept of governance. By way of mentioning, the concept of peace is not amenable to easy clarification because the concept conjures myriad of images (Bangura, 2011:5). This difficulty notwithstanding, there are certain convergent points about the conceptions of peace in the existing literature. The concept does not merely connote the absence of war or violent conflict stemming from ethnic, cultural, religious, or political differences (Ibeanu, 2006:3; Bangura, 2011:5), but the simultaneous presence of social justice, harmony, and equity (Barash & Webel, 2009:4; Bakut, 2006:235). While the former represents negative peace, the latter implies positive peace.

Governance, on the other hand, has become a major issue not just in Africa but in other parts of the world. It is a concept that is hotly discussed and debated the world over. Today, there is a flurry of activities to better understand the social, economic and political imperatives that underpin

the nature and purpose of good governance (Aziz, 2008:3). However, in this chapter, the concept of governance is explained vis-à-vis good governance, particularly offering a flash of insight into the key attributes of the latter. This is because, as we believe, governance makes some sense when explained in relation to whether it is good or bad. What then, is governance? Governance is generally defined as the act of affecting government and monitoring (through policy) the long-term strategy and direction of a country. It refers to characteristics that are generally associated with a system of national administration (Weiss, 2000:795). As expounded by Besancon (2003:1), governance is defined as the delivery of political goods to citizens of nation-states. Again, Gisselquist (2012:4) submits that governance is the process through which power is exercised to manage the collective affairs of a community or a country. As a principle, it is bound to produce an everlasting impact on the rule of law, local and national institutions, leadership, and public administration issues (Bangura, 2011:5).

Good governance is defined as the contract entered into by the citizens and their governments in which the citizens expect returns from their rulers for the enormous power vested in the government (see Onyejekwe, 2004). To Besancon (2003:1), good governance results when nation-states provide a high order of certain political goods and perform effectively and well on behalf of their inhabitants. In general, good governance obliges the state to perform its functions in a manner that promotes the values of efficiency, non-corruptibility, and responsiveness to civil society. It is a principle that is largely associated with statecraft. Good governance guarantees the delivery of public goods in a manner that is responsive to public demands, transparent in the allocation of resources, and equitable in the distribution of goods (Gujarat, 2011). From the above submissions, any state desirous of a positive developmental change must deepen structural mechanisms that promote not just governance but good governance.

*Good Governance Parameters*

<i>Participation</i>	Participation could either be direct or legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. In a representative democracy, the interest of all, including the concerns of the most vulnerable in society are taken into consideration in decision making.
<i>Rule of law</i>	Fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. This requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.

<i>Transparency</i>	Information should be freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement.
<i>Responsiveness</i>	Institutions make earnest efforts to serve all stakeholders by responding to their requirements within a reasonable timeframe.
<i>Consensus-oriented</i>	Mediation of the different interests in a society to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved.
<i>Equity and inclusiveness</i>	Members of a society feel they all have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society.
<i>Effectiveness and efficiency</i>	While making the best use of the resources at their disposal, institutions produce results that meet the needs of the society.
<i>Accountability</i>	Institutions are accountable to those who will be affected by their decisions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

**Source:** *Adapted from Gujarat (2011) by the authors.*

Without the values described in the table above, there cannot be good governance. Looking at the peace-relatedness of these values, particularly the links with the positive connotation of peace, good governance represents an institutional guarantor of sustainable peace. The nexus between these twin phenomena constitutes the focus of the next section.

**Nexus between Peace and Good Governance in Africa**

What is the nexus between peace and good governance? What are the different dimensions of this nexus? Without doubt, the concepts of peace and governance are intertwined. Where authors differ, however, is in the direction of the relationship between the two phenomena. While

some scholars believe that the presence of peace creates the enabling environment for good governance to thrive (Natukunda-Togboa, 2006; Galadima, 2006), others overwhelmingly assert the natural peace-inducing potentials of good governance (Bangura, 2011; ACCORD, 2011; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012). The authors of this chapter belong to the latter brand of scholarship. Although we agree with the former brand of scholarship in that an atmosphere of peace has the capacity to promote good governance, but it must be noted that the existence of peace does not naturally translate into good governance. It only creates the enabling environment or opportunities for good governance,

which responsible leadership must seize. However, history is replete with examples of countries that have failed to seize the opportunities for good governance which their periods of relative peace offered. Nigeria, Libya and Egypt are nations in Africa whose periods of relative peace did not translate into a sustainable regime of good governance, as the consequent unbroken chains of governance errors and/or predatory leaderships eventually precipitated rebellions and insurgencies against the states.

On the other hand, the entrenchment of good governance naturally guarantees peace, the same way weak governance results in a loss of state legitimacy and can ultimately lead to conflict. Good governance, albeit a worthy goal in itself, also attracts other positive outcomes such as peace and its resultant growth benefits. Where there is good governance, it represses governance-related issues such as injustice and inequality that may trigger violent conflicts. As argued by Bangura (2011:11), governance is a positively significant predictor of variation in peace. This implies that if peace subsists good governance also subsists and vice versa. A testament to this is the stability and growth in countries like Botswana and Cape Verde. They are countries enjoying relative peace and stability because of good leadership, clean government and empowered people (Koh, 2009:1). Again, almost all development institutions are

promoting good governance as an important part of their agendas (Gisselquist, 2012). This is in recognition of the fact that leadership commitment to the principle of good governance positively correlates with peace.

Regrettably, African countries are poorly ranked on the global scale of governance indicators. This explains why most of the violent conflicts that the continent has recorded are governance-related. A study of civil wars since 1960s shows that the most important risk factors were poverty, low economic growth and a high dependence on natural resources (Adetula, 2006:392). These risk factors, which largely explain Africa's incessant conflicts, are products of weak governance. To Gisselquist (2012), Africa is not only enmeshed in a crisis of governance, the situation also underlies the litany of the continent's developmental problems. African states have been criticized for their lack of democratic institutions and practices. These defects were exacerbated by the kind of political systems and constitutions that were in place in these countries, and by the continued violations of human rights throughout Africa (Antonio, 2001:64). Although the end of the cold war gave rise to the spread of liberal democracy around the world, including in the global South, Bere (2011:17) however observes that this wave of democratization often generated intra-state wars in impoverished, multi-ethnic countries governed by

authoritarian regimes like the ones in Africa.

Further recounting Africa's governance woes, Antonio (2001:68) posits that the continent remains the only region where social conditions continue to be of extreme concern. About half of the African population lives in absolute poverty, and hunger and malnutrition are widespread. Many diseases, including malaria and AIDS, threaten the lives of millions of people in the continent. Women and children are the most affected and most vulnerable to these diseases. Peace in Africa is regularly threatened by these issues. As argued by Adetula (2006:392), these issues create insecurity with respect to decent livelihood and human survival. They have not only reduced the ability of people to lead productive lives, but also exacerbated identity conflicts along communal, ethnic, religious and regional lines. Also, the misuse of power is manifested in arbitrary arrests and extra-judicial killings in many African nations, which create a massive displacement of millions of Africans. These continued violations of human rights and internal armed conflicts have caused the exodus of countless Africans as refugees to neighbouring countries (Antonio, 2001:69).

Africa has regressed virtually on all the parameters of good governance. Particularly catchy are the failings on the scales of rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency in resource management and public

service delivery, and transparency in administration. The fallout of these governance woes include decades of citizens' frustration which has now snowballed into an aggression against the states and economic underdevelopment. The resultant governance-related conflicts have taken immeasurable toll on human lives, living many dead, maimed and numerous others displaced either internally or in other nations (Mutunga, 2006:367). This is largely the situation across the continent, from the west to central, and from the horn to the north of Africa. To address these problems, several peace initiatives have been internally and externally generated; but because of their cosmetic nature, these peace initiatives have fatally bungled. The efforts have failed to recognize the fact that any attempt at resolving a conflict first requires an analysis of its root cause (Bere, 2011:17). In the case of Africa, governance woes lie at the root of the problem. The next section therefore offers practical measures for deepening governance in Africa in the interest of sustainable peace.

### **Deepening Political Governance for Enduring Peace in Africa**

In all climes of the world, weak governance does not only negatively impact on the delivery of a high order of public goods to the citizenry; it also precipitates conflict in the long run. Virtually all the known theories of social conflict agree with this submission. Structural conflict theory, realist

theories, frustration-aggression theory, economic theories, human needs theory, and systemic theory all situate their arguments on the premise of governance (see Faleti, 2006:41-54). Practically, the current uprisings in the Arab world, which have affected a number of African countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, represent a testament to the conflict-inducing potential of weak governance. The insurgencies against the Nigerian state by the Niger Delta militants and Northern 'Boko Haram' also point to the failure of successive governments in Nigeria to redress decades of injustice to these sections. The advanced and relatively more stable countries of the West appear to have recognized this fact long ago, hence, the massive investment in the promotion of good governance. Sustainable peace will be accomplished by a strong commitment to good governance manifested through the promotion of democratic principles, popular participation, human rights and the rule of law. Good governance is an essential stage towards meeting the objectives of sustainable and people-centered development, prosperity and peace (Antonio, 2001:68). How then do we achieve a deeper entrenchment of political governance or how can governance architecture be strengthened for enduring peace in the African context?

The first approach relates to the promotion of democratic governance on a continental scale. Currently, Africa is still not fully in tune with

political globalization which is anchored on the spread of democratic values worldwide. Some states are still not immune from military usurpation of power. Civilian leaders are deficient on the minimum scale of liberal democracy. Leaders still fancy the idea of *sit-tightism* even amidst popular call to relinquish power as revealed by the Ivorian and Libyan scenarios. In most countries in the region, election results do not reflect the wishes of the voters. Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal are some examples. Adogamhe (2008:1) rightly observes that correcting this democratic deficit requires attitudinal change on the part of African leaders especially a new orientation towards the consolidation of democracy and rule of law in the continent. Ridiculously, African leaders always equate electoral democracy with liberal democracy. To Kadah (2012:14), democracy requires more than free elections. Beyond elections, the quest for democracy and good governance in Africa often snags on structural problems, including state fragility, institutional weakness, tribalism and ethnic and ethnic discrimination among others. If democracy must be entrenched, these structural problems must be addressed.

Again, African elites must begin to demonstrate the willingness to combat corruption, beginning with checking of their corrupt behaviour. As a result of corruption, Africa has not only regressed economically;

human welfare, measured in terms of access to good health, education and quality standard of living, is also in limbo. Deep corruption negatively affects economic growth through certain channels such as decreasing the productivity of existing resources through lower productive efforts, degradation of the quality of resources, general misallocation of existing resources, reductions in investment in physical capital as well as degradation of institutions (Gyimah-Brempong, 2002:188). The frustration arising from this situation has produced a string of aggression against the ruling elites. The behaviour of the African ruling elite must therefore be guided by the interests of the governed. Rather than subjecting the masses to human horror as a result of the self-seeking decisions emanating from the policy domain, the overall welfare of the citizenry should be considered as a sacred policy goal. To institutionalise the above measures, African elites should begin to prioritise the proper management of public resources in the interests of the governed rather than monopolizing political power to effectively enhance dubious private wealth transfer.

More so, within the framework of the African Union, the activities of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) must be encouraged. The NEPAD is an AU strategic framework for African socio-economic development. Intended as both a vision and policy

framework, it has been hailed as the first development initiative created by Africans to foster socio-economic development and promote democracy and good governance (ACCORD, 2011:18). The whole idea of NEPAD is co-ordinated development rather than the haphazard country specific current economic planning and development which have put Africa in a bind, a kind of warp of regression and under-development (Olaopa, 2006:186). Judging by its primary responsibilities of eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable economic growth and development, and halting the marginalization of Africa in the global economic system, national leaders in Africa must work together to ensure the realization of these noble objectives. Also, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which is a groundbreaking initiative of NEPAD to promote economic governance, political governance, corporate governance and socio-economic development must be strengthened. Suitable environment must be created by leaders to enable the body of reviewers perform their functions effectively. Sufficient human, financial and technical resources should be provided to promote competence and the independence of the body must be guaranteed to enhance the integrity and credibility of the review exercise.

Furthermore, African countries must build a strong civil society and a vibrant private sector. Civil society

organizations can make positive contribution to the process of democratization; they can promote accountability and transparency of governments, international institutions and markets; advance the voices and concerns of marginalized groups; and promote human rights (Hall & Howell, 2010). African countries must guarantee a more open society to promote a strong public dialogue between the state and civil society groups. This will add to the democratic credentials of Africa and promote civil liberty, political rights and participatory decision-making. On the other hand, the private sector is not only responsible for increasing profit margins or achieving optimum growth, but can offer support for good governance through a number of initiatives such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), empowerment programmes, poverty eradication programmes, social development projects and contribution to the development of the health, environmental and education sectors in the countries and societies that they work in. It can also offer support for good governance through promoting transparency and sound business ethics, and embracing anti-corruption practices, accountability in corporate governance, fairness in commercial dispute resolution and the protection of intellectual property rights – and can engage in institution building, the creation or maintenance of social capital, and call for and support vibrant and active civil

societies and freedom of the press (ACCORD, 2011).

In an attempt to strengthen governance architecture across the continent of Africa, efforts must also be made to consciously promote human rights and justice. When laws that promote the sanctity of human lives are developed and strictly adhered to, they impact positively on good governance. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in Africa. Over one half of sub-Saharan Africans do not have access to safe water; jails are filled with political prisoners, many of them held without trial and victimized by torture; child labour is widespread; women are often deprived of the economic, social, and political rights that men take for granted; many workers are not only nonunionized but prohibited even from forming unions; censorship is widespread; and several millions of people are illiterate, chronically sick, without adequate shelter, and hungry (Barash & Webel, 2009:374). If governance must be deepened, the administration of justice must also be visited. Justice is considered by the people to be the highest civic value. Justice centres on how government and other citizens respect the dignity and inherent worthiness of each individual in the community. It is a naturalistic sense that asserts human beings can rise above self-absorption, a capacity to go beyond our personal interests and passions and to take into account the needs and feeling of others, and to be guided in the present by viewing the

long-term consequences of our actions (Hunter, 2008:50). Injustice is not only an affront to justice; it also represents the inverse of peace. The promotion of human rights and the reformation of the justice system therefore constitute a cushion against poor governance.

### Concluding Remarks

As conflict has become a permanent life threat and in some cases has reversed development in Africa, we cannot adequately underscore the need for laying a scientific basis for the formulation of policies (Natukunda-Togboa, 2006:81), that are deeply rooted in standard governance practices. It is in doing so that Africa can effectively address the peace challenges that confront it. If Africa must be freed from its vulnerabilities to violent conflicts, conscious efforts must be made by national governments to improve on the scale of good governance. To achieve, the measures suggested in

this chapter include: the promotion of democratic governance on a continental scale; willingness of the ruling elite to fight corruption; upholding and strengthening the activities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM); building a strong civil society and a vibrant private sector; and promoting human rights and justice. In addition, the process of establishing positive peace will require negotiation and cooperation. This would involve international institutions, national governments, nongovernmental organizations, and private businesses collaborating to build a world in which positive peace is a goal of policy making (Bangura, 2011:6). In essence, building positive peace (which connotes the presence of justice, fairness and equity) amounts to building good governance.

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