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“Good enough governance”: Destroying kleptocracy as a path to poverty reduction and reform in post-conflict Africa

INTRODUCTION

On any list of fragile, failed or broken apart states, post-conflict African entities tend to predominate. Merilee Grindle (2004 and 2009) has created the concept of ‘good enough governance’ as a means to allowing developing countries to move on and achieve some level of development and poverty reduction. This paper focuses on ‘good enough governance’ with a focus on post-conflict states in Africa and most especially in West Africa. Given that achieving the World Bank’s 116 good governance targets (or the Economic Commission for Africa’s 83¹ goals) is near impossible for any African state, let alone one emerging from a civil war², this paper asks what is the minimum short list of priority goals to allow a state to begin building peace and a degree of widely shared prosperity. How long will it be feasible to go on blaming colonialism for Africa’s current woes? Is China now the neo-colonialist in Africa? Leaving ideology to one side, is there a workable master plan for ending the situation where kleptocracy by the elite remains the norm because capturing the state is the one obvious path to wealth?

INDICES & MEASUREMENT ISSUES

This paper is not concerned with ranking which countries in Africa are best/worst governed. It is about thinking through the minimum requirements for a workable country, where women and men can go about their daily lives with a reasonable prospect of earning their living without fear of molestation or dispossession. To be clear, the governance discussed in this paper is what governments actually do for good or ill. Other organisations, such as private companies or NGOs have their own governance, and some would include civil society as a part of governance but the focus here is on what governments do, or equally often, fail to do. The term governance originally stems from a classical Greek word meaning “to steer as with an oar”. This is a useful thought to bear in mind when considering national governance and how the helmsman is going. In discussing governance in Africa it is difficult to avoid the many measurement issues associated with what is to be

¹ “Monitoring and Measuring Progress towards Good Governance in Africa: the UNECA Project” 2003 lists 15 indicators of political representation; 16 institutional checks and balances; 18 indicators of the effectiveness and accountability of the executive; 19 indicators of human rights, law enforcement and the rule of law and 15 measures of economic management and corporate governance. Surely 2 or 3 of each would have been enough? However, unlike World Bank and many other good governance indicators, the ECA indicators include information on whether a state’s citizens consider themselves to be well governed.

² Since 1970 some 33 out of the 53 African states have experienced internal wars. In 1996 14 were experiencing wars simultaneously.

measured and even more important by whom³. Overall our preference is for measures which are based on the views of the citizens of the country concerned, bearing in mind that this raises difficulties when comparing one country with another. Indeed it would be an interesting experiment to ask Africans which other African country they would most like to live in - judging by migration figures the answer would be South Africa - either for its standard of living or for its standard of governance.

Even on such an apparently straight forward issue as whether a country has a stable government, there is frequently the difficulty that the capital can remain calm with business conducted as usual, whilst distant regions rarely see anyone from the government but see fighting on an almost daily basis. Thus Uganda, which is generally classified as stable, has experienced the depredations of the Lord's Resistance Army for over two decades but no one, probably not even Kony himself, has ever expected it to overthrow the government in Kampala. Ghana has experienced a series of small wars in the North (including the Guinea Fowl War), but is still thought of as being a peaceful place, perhaps because it has survived a series of relatively bloodless coups.

To quote the World Bank "Unfortunately, internationally comparable quantitative data on various dimensions of governance is scarce, particularly for small, and poor, countries".

Too much of the writing on governance in Africa is written by outsiders with a minimal understanding of the local cultural context. This is understandable, a free press is rarely allowed to flourish where governance is poor. Citizens can only protest about bad governance or vote out corrupt leaders if they know what is going on. Such information depends upon a free media, but many African governments are notorious for imprisoning journalists and having expansive laws which curb the freedom of the media. Ethiopia is an excellent case in point.

There are also issues as to how far donors should move beyond working with the government to support the opposition. "Support is often concentrated on formal institutions and 'traditional' areas of intervention such as election support, public sector management and service delivery, while support to civil society organizations in order to foster free and fair political processes, domestic revenue mobilisation or job creation lags behind ... engagement with non-state actors and legitimate (sic)

³ See Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay 2008 "Governance indicators: Where are we, where should we be going ?", World Bank research observer 23 (1): 1-30. For an example of a counter World Bank view see William Church, the Director of the Great Lakes Centre for Strategic Studies, explicitly attacking "World Bank Governance Report Blunders in Central Africa"(2006) for ranking the Central African Republic as being more stable than Rwanda or Uganda. He also took issue with indicators which showed Rwanda in decline whilst World Bank country studies showed it to be improving. For Regulatory Quality, the Heritage Index and the Bertelsman Transformation Index showed improvement whilst Global Insight's Business Conditions Index showed a decline.

local organizations to strengthen state-society relations remains a challenge for development partners”⁴.

CHANGE THE PRESIDENT

Deciding on the minimum level of change necessary to improve a country's governance, the need to start change at the very top is often only too self-evident. Donors spend a great deal of time, money and effort working to help to improve governance in African countries. However, introducing new laws, new systems and new offices to combat poor governance and corruption has little point if the Head of State is actively corrupt and overrules any attack on his/her cronies and promotes their own ethnic group regardless of skills or honesty. In the past, surrounded by sycophants and opportunists “like pilot fish swimming around a shark” many African Presidents such as Mobutu Sese Seko, Moussa Traore or Houphet-Boigny have run their countries as their private estates⁵. Acting under “constitutions without constitutionalism”⁶, there has been a club of Presidents or a Presidential brotherhood of corrupt leaders who refuse to criticize their peers. As Akokpari warned in 2004, concerning “The AU, NEPAD and the Promotion of Good Governance in Africa”⁷: “The natural proclivity of African leaders for condoning bad governmental practices of their peers as a way of insulating themselves from future criticisms, is a cautionary signal that high expectations on the APR (African Peer Review) as a catalyst for good governance may be misplaced”. There was a time in the 1970s when Benin had a rotating presidency with three leaders taking it in turn to be in charge of the national coffers. This was one way of securing a level of honesty.

The African leaders' scorecard or the African Presidents' Index combines findings from the Mo Ibrahim Index (15%), Democracy Index (15%), Press Freedom Index (15%) Corruption Index (15%), Human Development Index HDI (5%) and National Media Group (NMG) political Index (35%). The NMG Index takes into account how the leader took power; whether they have extended or broken term limits; investment in infrastructure; food security; democratic space; creative public policy and effectiveness of execution; globalisation initiatives and the extent to which a leader invests in nation building (East African Magazine 2010-11). The individual elements of this index (especially the inclusion of the HDI which measures outcomes irrespective of governance) can easily be debated, but its broad findings are very clear and reflect African views on African leaders.

Only five African Presidents score an A, but twelve lead countries which are defined as being off the bottom of the alphabetical scale and in need of intensive care and

⁴ OECD 2011 International Engagement in Fragile States: Can't We Do Better, OECD Paris. pp. 14-15.

⁵ P.A. Nyong'o 1992 “The failure of one party rule” Journal of Democracy 3 (1): 90-96.

⁶ H.W> Okoth-Ogendo 1991 “Constitutions without constitutionalism: Reflections on an African paradox” in I.Shiva (ed) State and Constitutionalism: An African Debate on Democracy, SAPES, Harare pp.3-25.

⁷ Nordic Journal of African studies 13 (2):243-263.p.256.

nine head countries which are scored even below that as being moribund. Looking at the scores of individual presidents, it is remarkable that none of those who rank A are Muslims but 3 out of the 6 worst are Muslims).

One simple problem with bad presidents is that they stay on too long. At the extreme, Gaddafi had led Libya since 1969; Teodoro Obiang (Equatorial Guinea) and Jose dos Santos have held power since 1979, Paul Biya has been president of Cameroon since 1982, the year when Mubarak also came to power. This is a cause and effect relationship. Corrupt presidents want to stay in power so that they and their dynasties can continue to enjoy the fruits of their corruption. Additionally their families and allies, as in the case of Mugabe, are often desperate for these national figureheads to stay, least the whole corrupt structure come falling down with the departure of the national figure-head. This is why Mo Ibrahim has established a fund to provide \$200,000 a year plus other advantages to African Presidents who have the virtue to retire. Unfortunately \$200,000 is less than a week's pocket-money for most corrupt dictators.

The year before he died, after he had retired as President after more than twenty years at the helm, Julius Nyerere said that for him the most important element of good governance in Africa was a time limit on the term of presidents, which could not be changed by any incumbent president with respect to his/her own term of office!

STOP THE WINNER TAKES ALL SYSTEM: DECENTRALISATION ?

Just who becomes President matters so very much because the President and his clique have absolute power over almost all of the state's resources. Almost any moves towards sharing and or decentralisation would be welcome even though local authorities are not necessarily any more honest than central ones. However, decentralisation poses special problems where, as is commonly the case, resources are not spread evenly around the country. Across the West African coastal states rainfall, and agricultural returns, increase as one moves South, at the same time that the proportion of Christians tends to rise as the proportion of Muslims declines. As a consequence, these countries are frequently ethnically and religiously divided with a poor Muslim North and a richer Christian South. Thus, even before the inclusion of inequities stemming from the uneven geographical distribution of valuable minerals, sharing formulae to protect less well-off regions are vitally needed but very difficult to negotiate. Again, as with all potential checks and balances, one inevitably returns to the excessive power of the President – who will simply overrule and/or ignore any check that goes against his/her personal interest.

CHANGE AT THE BOTTOM

The following two examples of improving governance from the bottom up come from South Kivu in the DRC and show what can be done even in the most desperate

circumstances⁸. In the first, in a village where armed groups manned check-points and extracted high levels of 'taxes' from the people, the local authorities, with the support of a Congolese NGO, managed to negotiate a deal under which the armed group would secure the area in return for a flat fee of 200 Congolese francs from each person using the road. Even this limited level of certainty led to increased traffic, which benefitted both those manning the check-points and the villagers themselves. In the second urban case, truck drivers who were incensed at having to pay \$3 per truck per month to park and getting nothing in return were able to negotiate that the parking taxes would be paid into a joint account requiring one local government official's signature and one truck drivers' union signature, with the expenditure only to be on road works. These are local African examples of improving governance from the bottom up: small advances which rarely appear in formal documents. However, despite the hopes of many civil society activists, there is minimal evidence of African grass-roots movements being able to constrain corruption at the top.

BLAME THE COLONIAL POWERS

Fifty years covers two generations and it thus it would seem plausible to argue that fifty years after independence African countries should no longer be able to blame their former colonial masters for their current plight. Speaking in 1998 Julius Nyerere admitted "the first generation of our leaders is fast being replaced by the second or even the third: most of these are better educated, relatively free from the mental hang-overs of colonialism, and have had the opportunity to learn from the mistakes and the successes of their predecessors"⁹.

It is easy to blame the colonial powers for the fact that international boundaries were rarely drawn with ethnic divisions in mind. It is much less obvious that there would be many cases where it would be possible to reach a consensus upon how to redraw boundaries so as to satisfy all local ethnic groups, including those who have blurred traditional boundaries through renting out land, hiring wage labourers from other ethnic groups (as in Ivory Coast) or intermarriage. There is also the problem that states based on ethnic boundaries would be likely to be smaller than the existing ones when what is needed is larger (richer, more populous) rather than smaller states.

There is a different argument that the colonial powers still continue to exercise a malign influence on their former colonies through their trading relationships but this case needs to be backed up with facts and figures for each former colony¹⁰. Blaming the colonial powers can also be a recipe for hopelessness and inaction which is the

⁸ Jennifer Smith 2009 Democratisation and Good Governance in the DRC: A Case Study of South Kivu Province, International Alert, London.

⁹ Nyerere October 1998

¹⁰ For a contrary view see Tunde Obadina 2010 "The myth of neo-colonialism" <http://afbis.com/analysis/neo-colonialism.html>. On French economic interests see Odile Tobner 2007 -Du Racisme Francaise, Broche, Paris.

last thing the continent needs. It would be better if more attention were devoted to good and bad aspects of traditional forms of government and governance in Africa.

In October 1998 Julius Nyerere, then in his seventies, gave a speech on good governance in Africa which has been cited above. When the topic had been raised in a meeting of the Global Coalition for Africa in the context of aid conditionality, Nyerere explained that this context and “the fact that this was an exchange between African Heads of State and officials from rich countries” “made me livid with anger”. He said that, just as Victorian philanthropists had only been willing to help the ‘deserving poor’ people who had demonstrated an acceptance of the social and economic status quo, this was now applied to developing countries requiring them to have “multi-party systems of democracy, economies based on the principle of private ownership and of international free trade and a good record of human rights: again as defined by the industrialised market economy countries of the North’. He defined this as unacceptable “neo-colonialism” but went on to add “Yet we cannot avoid the fact that a lot of our problems in Africa arise from bad governance. I believe that we need to improve governance everywhere in Africa in order to enable our people to build real freedom and real development for themselves and their countries”.

GHANA: STILL A GOOD EXAMPLE ?

When international figures are asked to name an African country with good governance, Botswana is almost invariably mentioned first. Actually, depending on the range of measures used, Namibia frequently scores best, South Africa usually outperforms Botswana and Ghana often matches it. Given that Ghana is located in a region of many intra-state wars and thus many refugees and has to cope with much more ethnic and religious diversity within the nation than largely mono-cultural Botswana, Ghana’s good performance in recent years is all the more remarkable. In the UNECA rankings Ghana has the best political system in Africa and the highest level of independence of media and civil society organizations¹¹. Some 85% of an expert panel of 100 leading Ghanaians considered that in Ghana public participation in political decision making is extensive/fairly, wide only 5% thought it was restricted to the ruling elite¹². Ghana and South Africa received the highest marks for any African country in the World Bank’s “Good Governance 2007 Report”. This Report includes comparative data back to 1996, but this is very difficult to interpret as Ghana’s indicators vary quite erratically from year to year and Governmental Effectiveness can improve whilst Regulatory Quality can decline or vice versa. Voice and Accountability rose by 2% since 1996 and by 10% just from 2005 to 2007!

¹¹ ECA 2006 Striving for Good Governance in Africa, Synopsis of the 2005 African Governance Report.

¹² UNECA 2004 Governance Profile of Ghana, ECA, Addis Ababa Figure 6. At page 15 it is also possible to see from the household survey that 61% consider that they get fair justice at traditional courts as compared with only 42% indicating the same for the government civil courts.

Given that Ghana has done so well, the question arises as to how long this can last, now that Ghana is blessed/cursed with oil wealth. Estimates show that Ghana could soon be reaping more than a billion dollars a year from just one site at West Point Cape Three. Using the oil revenue wisely was a major issue in the 2008 electoral campaign, and it is now up to President John Atta Mills to decide how far Ghana will remain honest. Even now, in late 2011, we have Ghana celebrating being the fastest growing economy in the world (13% up from 4% in 2009) and deciding whether to ignore the IMF's conditionalities in order to take out a 3 billion dollar loan ("on non-concessional but very competitive terms") from the China Development Bank¹³. Ghana's 2010 agreement with the IMF was that the country would only borrow \$800 million in commercial funds in 2011. Ghana's agreement with its own citizens, expressed in the Oil Management Revenue Law was that oil could be used as a collateral for loans only for up to 10 years, but now the non-compliant Chinese loan would be for fifteen years. Whilst the loan passed a special sitting of Parliament in August 2011, not one single opposition member voted for it. Unfortunately, in Ghana it is the President who decides. "It is a highly centralized political system with an excessively strong presidency. The president is the centre of all patronage and I think the pervasiveness of patronage politics in Ghana does corrode political institutions"¹⁴. If the President decides to deal with China and mortgage Ghana's future for fifteen years, contrary to law, he can do so. By the same token, it is admirable that Ghana's politicians and press at least know enough about the conditions of the loan to be able to debate them.

With Presidential elections due in 2012, it is interesting to see how the up-coming budget includes many sweeteners for the general public, including a funded National Health Insurance Scheme; a Single Spine Salary Structure; commencement of the Accra Plains Irrigation Project and 20 million free cocoa seedlings for farmers¹⁵. Yet the problem remains that the exploitation of oil and gas resources produces very few jobs for the many restless youths flocking into Accra, 80% of whom are stuck eeking out a living in the informal sector. Ghana is now turning out 30,000 tertiary graduates a year for whom only some 3,000 formal sector jobs are available. In this context, it is disquieting to see that the fastest growing area of employment in Senegal and Ghana alike is as security guards¹⁶.

SOMALIA: IS NO GOVERNANCE BAD GOVERNANCE ?

As Ghana/Botswana is to good governance so is Somalia to bad governance. Although Somalia ranks very highly among countries considered to have poor governance, there are also those who query whether 'no governance' necessarily constitutes bad governance. Extreme right wing American groups have poured over

¹³ Emmanuel Dogberi 2011 "Economists warn Ghana of risks, oil curse, Dutch disease as oil money flows" Ghana News 16.11.2011

¹⁴ David Throup of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, speaking at event on Ghana's future at the World Bank, Washington, 10 November 2011.

¹⁵ In 2011 Ghana's cocoa production has reached one million metric tonnes for the first time in history.

¹⁶ World Bank Youth Employment Study: Senegal and Ghana.

the fragmentary reports from Somalia hoping to find evidence that people can live without government, leaving everything including defence and law and order to the private sector. At the other extreme, proponents of governance from the bottom up, and of hybrid forms of government incorporating traditional structures, write the praises of Somaliland on minimal foundations of verifiable fact. Is a failed state just a country without effective governance ?

IS DEMOCRACY ESSENTIAL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE OR IS IT UN-AFRICAN ?

Ghanaians today appear to take democracy for granted, and reputedly have the most active civil society in Africa¹⁷ yet the country has only had a democratic government since 1993 (or 1996 depending on your viewpoint). The Western view of good governance is now built upon the assumption that democracy is an essential ingredient in the mix. Yet when the World Bank originally converted to the importance of good governance for Africa their basic requirements were “a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable and an administration that is accountable to the public”¹⁸ Recent events in North Africa (i.e.in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) would suggest that many Africans consider that democracy is essential, so the question remains as to why is it that democracy in Africa has had such a chequered history ? One answer lies in the role played by the military. An African leader who controls the military does not need to be a democrat and the military are unlikely to demand that their government be democratically elected.

In 1993 Claude Ake published a much cited article on “The Unique Case of African Democracy”¹⁹. He argued that ordinary people in Africa were clamouring to get away from “alienation and coercion” through a “second independence” in which they would actually get some political power. He also stressed that for current African politicians “democratization is less a commitment than a strategy for power”. He saw Africa as a “society which is still pre-industrial and communal and whose cultural idiom is radically different”²⁰. His core point was that people wanted economic democracy rather than one man one vote political democracy. In support, he quoted the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation²¹:

We affirm that nations cannot be built without popular support and full participation of the people, nor can the economic crisis be resolved and the human and economic conditions improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of the people. After all, it is to the

¹⁷ ECA Ghana Report

¹⁸ World Bank 1989 Sub-Saharan Africa from Crisis to Sustainable Governance, World Bank, Washington p. 60

¹⁹ International Affairs 69 (2): 239-244.

²⁰ This is changing, around 2000 Ghana ceased to have the majority of its workers employed in agriculture.

²¹ UN ECA E/ECA/CM, 16/11 Arusha 1990.

people that the very benefits of development should and must accrue.

Even by the standards of the UN, this is platitudinous mush. Ake goes on to claim that neither political parties nor single member constituencies suit the communal nature of African society. Even in 1993 Ake seemed to be harking back to an earlier age of “an essentially pre-industrial and communal society”. In the twenty-first century all African governments should be required to aim to meet the needs of both the educated and the illiterate, the urban elites and the rural poor - placing high priority on the aspirations of the majority of their populations who are under the age of 20.

Reasons why democracy may be seen as a strange foreign flower include the difficulty that many/most Africans have in accepting the idea of a ‘loyal opposition’. Much of traditional Africa was ruled by Chief-led consensus which found its “legitimacy in inherent collective wisdom, which is often expressed in secular myths; these procedures form a part of the moral conventions that are observed in the society. Their acceptance expresses an attitude that reiterates traditional ideals and ways of life. Dissent from a group or individual falls outside of this social moral code; it is disruptive to the community and cannot be considered legitimate”²².

The desire for consensus is very strong and has been much manipulated by modern African dictators to centralise power in their own arbitrary hands. Yet Kwesi Wiredu is still looking back to an Ashanti golden age in which people understood that crocodiles should not fight over their food since they all share one stomach: “Funtumfunafu denkyemfunafu, won afuru bom, nso woredidi a na woreko”. Remarkably Wiredu believes that “ultimately the interests of all members of society are the same, although their immediate perceptions of those interests may be different”. Yet he also argues that “Majority opinion is not in itself a good enough basis for decision making, for it deprives the minority of the right to have their will reflected in the given decision”²³. In his idealised view, discussion continues until “each representative should be persuaded, if not of the optimality of each decision, at least of its practical necessity, all things considered. If discussion has been even moderately rational and the spirit has been one of respectful accommodation on all sides, surviving reservations on the part of a momentary minority will not prevent the recognition that, if the community is to go forward, a particular line of action must be taken”. In contrast, many African appreciate the old joke about democracy being equivalent to two lions and one antelope voting on what to have for dinner.

When I was Australian High Commissioner to Malawi the long standing President: Dr Banda told me that opposition was, by definition, disloyal, and usually treasonous, adding the rider that human rights protections certainly did not extend to traitors.

²² Luis Villoro 2000 “On consensual democracy”, Polylog: Forum for Intercultural Philosophy, <http://them.polylog.org/2/fvl-en.htm>

²³ Kwasi Wiredu 2000 “Democracy and consensus in African traditional politics”, Polylog.

Banda's views on disloyalty would match those of most African Presidents. Looking back to the traditional chiefly systems (so much favoured by the proponents of hybrid governance), they allowed minimal space for change and no room for opposition. A young man who disagreed with his chief could choose between leaving to found his own village or violently unseating the current incumbent - otherwise he had to knuckle down and obey. A wise chief might choose to listen to multiple murmurings from the ranks but he certainly did not have to.

"Democracy is the product of continuous struggle, involving particularly the victims of the system"(Samir Amin Interview with Re-Public February 2009),

CORRUPTION, TAXATION AND THE RESOURCE CURSE

In "An upside down view of governance" (2010) the Centre for the Future State (CFS) at the Institute for Development Studies of the University of Sussex has presented an argument for what they claim is a new way of looking at governance. Others see it as another form of bottom up development. Based on a five year research study covering a range of countries, the authors come perilously close to arguing that corruption can be a good thing as they argue for the efficacy of local institutions in solving political problems such as the management of common pool resources. As an Ethiopian commentator pointed out: "what is not clear is the ability of such informal types of institutions to carry structural transformations which African countries badly need". He was also concerned that anyone can "cherry pick" good examples. "African leaders romanticize local institutions not on grounds of efficiency or equity but as an effective means to counter genuine demands for better governance. When donors call for reforms of formal institutions such as the judiciary we are aware that the benefits spread to a large section of society. As an Ethiopian the very thought of the all-knowing donors aiming to incentive and disincentive local elites is a nightmare I prefer to live without. Thanks. But No Thanks!"²⁴

In the case of Africa, CFS focus on "Tax bargaining and managing the resource curse". For them the essential feature of the resource curse is that governments and leaders who can exploit 'windfall' revenues from the export of oil, gas and mining products do not require that their citizens consent to pay taxes and therefore govern badly. Their sample African countries were Ghana, Kenya and Ethiopia.

THE DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility argues that development and 'state building' are endogenous processes, that state society relations are key to improving security and delivering public goods, that local perceptions of legitimacy are fundamental, and that donors need to be much more alert to the impact of aid (positive and negative) on local capacity and incentives for progressive change.

For countries with rich non-renewable resources there are four basic steps to wisdom and wealth: auctioning the rights to exploit those resources; charging a

²⁴ <http://chrisblattman.com2010/09/27/an-upside-down-view-of-governance>

significant level of resource rent tax; saving much of these revenues; and using the rest for productive investments with reasonable rates of return²⁵. Clearly all of these steps require an honest elite or some means of keeping a dishonest elite under control. [At one stage Tanzania under Nyerere required any government Minister who had two houses or even cars to demonstrate publicly where the money to acquire the second one came from].

DO AFRICANS WANT GOOD GOVERNANCE?

Long standing African leaders such as Mugabe enjoy making speeches that lay down the law that requirements for good governance are a nasty, Western donor imposition, a form of neo-colonialism. Given that so many African countries suffer from atrocious governance one is led to wonder whether this is because Africans do not care about how their governments perform or because they have very little power over their governments (they cannot choose to Change the President) ? Ordinary citizens are rarely asked what they think. Afrobarometer is a series of public opinion surveys across some 20 African countries which asks scientifically selected national samples of adults in local languages for their views on a range of political issues.

For example, in Uganda in January 2011, Afrobarometer asked a nationally representative sample of voters to select what they considered to be the most important electoral issue. Whilst improving public services such as education and health came first (27%), fighting corruption came second (24%) followed by maintaining order (20%). Whilst being asked to name only one priority is harsh, since the government should be able to deliver on all of the above, the emphasis placed on combating corruption is striking. [In a nation-wide sample most are clearly not concerned about violence in the North]. Whereas female voters prioritize the provision of services (36%), 30% of male voters chose corruption as the most important issue (the urban (41%) rural (14%) weights upon corruption are equally strongly divided). When it came to views on how well the government was already performing, two thirds thought delivery on education was good and a majority thought that health and the economy were well managed, but only a quarter felt that corruption was being reasonably addressed.

Ugandan respondents were also asked about their personal experience of electoral corruption. Almost one fifth had been offered bribes, usually money, in the great majority of cases from the incumbent party. When asked hypothetically what they would do if offered a bribe for their vote, three quarters replied that they would accept it but vote as they chose – only one in six said that they would actually refuse the bribe.

²⁵ Paul Collier 2008 "Five steps to sustainable governance in Africa" Interview with Council on Foreign Relations, 27 June 2008. Collier distinguishes between determining what are productive investments and actually investing in them as two separate steps.

In September 2009 Afrobarometer asked 2,000 Zimbabweans across the country about what they thought should be in their Constitution, providing fascinating insights into their views of the nature of good governance.

Large majorities asked for the following:

- Applying the law to all Zimbabweans including senior officials (86%);
- Ensuring all members of the House of Assembly are elected, not appointed (84%);
- Establishing courts that are independent of the executive branch (80%);
- Limiting the president to two terms in office (78%);
- Protecting the rights of individuals to freely express political opinions (77%);
- Ending unlawful detention (74%);
- Providing for the independence of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (73%);
- Protecting the rights of property owners against illegal seizure (72%);
- Restricting chiefs to roles in local government only, not central government (64%).

This is strong evidence that Zimbabweans understand the basic requirements of good governance and want them for Zimbabwe. Fully 86% agreed that “we should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections” as opposed to “some other method”. In other words, the Inclusive Government is not considered to be ideal. This is the case even in a situation where security forces and party militias have created such an atmosphere of fear that 44% of those who were interviewed were unwilling to tell the interviewers whom they intended to vote for. Only two countries (out of 20) ie. Botswana (89%) and Liberia (88%) showed stronger support for elections than troubled Zimbabwe²⁶.

Most studies of African governance focus on Anglophone Africa but 86% of citizens interviewed across the capitals of eight francophone countries favour democracy (49% very strongly). At the same time 18% favour having a strong man as leader; 14% prefer that the army governs the country and 35% think that whatever the system the experts should decide what is good for the country²⁷. There were no significant differences in views on democracy between the different income groups. Despite 81% believing that democracy is better than all other forms of government still 31% believe that the economy does not work well in a democracy; 34% that democracies are unable to maintain order; and 47% that democracies find it hard to make decisions. Interestingly the respondents were also asked which of the following elements of democracy – free and transparent elections; freedom of speech and the press; choice of political party; equality before the law; freedom of worship and freedom to travel – they felt to be essential, 95% opted for all three. When it came to how far these ideals were seen to be respected, very few felt this to

²⁶ Afrobarometer 2010 “Zimbabwe: The Evolving Public Mood”, Afrobarometer Briefing Paper 97.

²⁷ Javier Herrera, Mireille Razafindrakoto and Francois Roubaud 2005 Governance, democracy and poverty reduction: Lessons drawn from household surveys in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, DIAL, Paris DT/2005-12.

be the case in Lome but more than 20% felt so in Dakar where the most positive view was found. Surprisingly, views in Abidjan were also quite positive but when the sample was divided between Northerners and Southerners 73% of Southerners but only 39% of Northerners believed that democracy was working well. On the competence of the government there was an even greater (82% to 40%) split. The potential for trouble could also be judged from the fact that opinions of the police were mildly positive for Southerners but strongly negative for Northerners.

Surveys of the general population, mirrored by surveys of experts across eight African francophone countries found that on average less than 5% of the population considered that officials taking bribes was acceptable and 90% considered that corruption was a major problem in their country²⁸. However the experts estimated that 32% of the population would find such corruption acceptable. Indeed, whatever the measure, the experts thought that there was more corruption and more acceptance of corruption than there actually was, with the more right wing experts expecting the most corruption. That those directly involved reported experiencing less corruption than the experts expected was not because the respondents were scared to share their experiences with corruption, because generally they were not scared to be very scathing about their governments.

GENDER ISSUES

The definition of governance often depends upon the use to which it is going to be put. An Overview Report on Gender and Governance defines governance as “decision-making by a range of interested people (or ‘stakeholders’) including those in positions of power and ‘ordinary’ citizens”²⁹. It is a matter of opinion and culture how far ‘ordinary’ citizens are in fact engaged in governance especially female citizens.

One measure of good governance is that everyone, including women, gets to have their say. A focus on good governance has probably created some space for African women to play a greater role in governance³⁰. Some African countries have now achieved very high proportions of women in political roles. Rwanda is now famous for having a parliament in which 49 % of members are female. Uganda has had an affirmative action policy for women imposed by President Museveni. As a consequence, a quarter of parliamentary seats and a third of council places are occupied by women. In her analytic study “When Hens Begin to Crow”³¹, Sylvia Tamale shows that just having women there is not enough, rather women have to develop strategies to circumvent traditional culture but still often have very limited

²⁸ Mireille Razafindrakoto and Francois Roubaud 2006 Are International Databases on Corruption Reliable ? A Comparison of Expert Opinion Surveys and Household surveys in Sub-Saharan Africa, DIAL Paris. The countries were: Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cote D’Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

²⁹ Alyson Brody 2009 Gender and Governance Overview report, Bridge, IDS, Sussex, p.1.

³⁰ A.M. Tripp 2001 “Women and democracy: The New Political Activism in Africa”, *Journal of Democracy*, 12 (3): 141-155.

³¹ Sylvia Tamale 2000 *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, Westview Press, Boulder. See also Anne Goetz and Shireen Hassim *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making (in Uganda and South Africa)*.

impact. Studies of the impact of women parliamentarians in Africa have concentrated on two questions: what policy areas women have focussed on with what success (principally HIV/AIDS and property rights) and whether women have succeeded in making Parliamentary procedure more family friendly³². There has been little research as to whether the participation of women makes for more honest politics. Certainly Presidents' wives are often considered to be even more corrupt than their spouses.

CHINA: THE DICTATOR'S FRIEND ?

In many ways China is bringing massive benefits to Africa. It has pushed up commodity prices and significantly reduced the cost of manufactured goods. China's currency policy is shifting some of the benefits of growth in China to Africa. But China also refuses to have anything to do with promoting good governance in Africa (or elsewhere) and is frequently most willing to work with the most criminal leaders, such as the President of Sudan³³. China essentially provides a "you do not need to go to jail card" for corrupt dictators by funding their dynasties including the necessary body guards and sweeteners to the armed forces. China's role in supporting dictatorship in Sudan and Zimbabwe is well known. China's involvement in supporting the Bongos in Gabon is equally toxic. During the Cold war African dictators played off the USA versus the USSR, now they play off China against the West and the International Financial Institutions.

Since dictators almost invariably can find alternative sources of funding (at whatever price to their peoples) what China does in situations of relative decency is in many ways more corrosive than their support to the Mugabes and al-Bashirs of Africa. China's current malign influence on Ghana has already been discussed above. The Zambian election of 2006 is another case in point. China is a major investor in the Zambian copper industry and a major aid provider. During the run up to the 2006 election, the Chinese ambassador warned that Beijing might cut off diplomatic ties if voters elected Michael Sata: an opposition candidate well known for a positive view of Taiwan, for objecting to China's poor labour standards and for threatening to expel Chinese companies, whom he called 'the infestors', from the country³⁴. This extreme heavy handedness, which would have been expected of Mao's China, is still the norm although usually not so publicly expressed. Following the 2011 election, Sata is now President of Zambia, and his first diplomatic chore was a positive meeting with a new Chinese ambassador³⁵. Beyond Zambia, China has bilateral aid agreements with more than forty African countries. The Chinese government created a \$5 billion fund to encourage investment in Africa and there are 900

³² In South Africa, sitting days avoid school holidays.

³³ See Joshua Kurlantzick 2007 *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*, Melbourne University Press. Chinese firms are the biggest investors in Sudan's oil industry putting in some \$4 billion p.91. China speeded up megaprojects in Sudan in time for the 10th anniversary of Bashir's coup to help his prestige (ibid. p. 54).

³⁴ John Reed 2006 "Beijing flexes its muscles in Zambian election", *Financial Times*, 5 September 2006.

³⁵ See Deborah Brautigan's blog : *China in Africa: The Real Story*. Professor Brautigan is also the author of *The Dragon's Gift*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

Chinese companies with investments there. China's Export-Import Bank is the largest source of loans to Africa, surpassing the World Bank, which means that the World Bank's views on governance have less salience than they used to. "China has not allowed any ... World Bank to impose on it some neo-liberal package of reforms ... Their strategy has not been a neoliberal overdose of deregulation, cutting social expenditure, privatizing everything under the sun, and jettisoning the public good"³⁶. It is remarkable that the ECA and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) state that "Development is impossible in the absence of democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance"³⁷. Yet peace is the only one of these four allegedly essential criteria which can be met by China, arguably the most successful example of development across the world.

Chinese influence in Africa is not simply a question of investment, some 10,000 Africans go to China each year for post-graduate training³⁸. There are also some 450,000 Chinese (mostly males) living and working in Africa. A 2006 BBC poll found that 68% of Nigerians and 59% of Kenyans believed that China plays a more positive role in the world than the United States.

CONCLUSION

This paper argues the case for aiming at a minimum set of governance goals and standards for post-conflict societies in Africa and then moving on to gradually ratchet up desirable performance levels. Stress has been placed on the importance of leadership at the very top³⁹. As a Sudanese, Mo Ibrahim very well understands this and is using his wealth to have the maximum impact in support of good governance. In comparison, China's potential for good in its dealings with Africa is matched by considerable potential for direct evil. The proverb that one needs a long spoon to sup with the devil is found in across the globe. Once again in countries with or without democracy, with or without significant natural resources, Africans are still finding it very difficult to access even a minimum level of good governance from their governments. The international community can best support good governance in Africa by working with principled leaders and also with those who oppose the unprincipled.

³⁶ Nigerian leader quoted in Barry Sautman and Hairong Yan 2007 "Friends and interests: China's distinctive links with Africa", *African Studies Review* 50 (3): 75-114.

³⁷ Kempe Hope, Director, Development Management division, UNECA, 2003 "The UNECA and good governance in Africa", Harvard International Development Conference, Boston, Massachusetts.

³⁸ Kurlantzick 2007 p.9.

³⁹ Inserting the name of any African President and the words 'good governance' in a search engine produces interesting results – Museveni's name produces no positive results.