THE AUSTRALASIAN REVIEW OF AFRICAN STUDIES
VOLUME 39 NUMBER 2 DECEMBER 2018

CONTENTS

Articles

Australasian Review of African Studies, 2018, 39(2), 198-221
http://afsaap.org.au/ARAS/2018-volume-39/
https://doi.org/10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2018-39-2/198-221
AFSAAP 2018

Africa and the Rhetoric of Good Governance

Helen Ware
University of New England
hware@une.edu.au

Abstract

Judging by their public statements everyone in Africa is in favour of good governance: governments, public servants, business people, civil society, donors and other international organizations. There are two problems with this positive view. Firstly, there are as many different definitions of good governance as there are organisations, with the multiple verbal differences reflecting real variations in how organizations and individuals wish to see their worlds shaped. Secondly, for all of these players there are vast gaps between the rhetoric and the reality, depending on the political context, struggles over access to power and opportunities for illicit material gains. In the public shadow play, African Union (AU) and donor treaties and charters and national plans, programmes and laws rule the world. In the lived reality, daily faced by the masses, it is every one for them self and the leaders with the most followers beholden to them and the biggest Swiss bank accounts win. The cases of governance in Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Uganda are examined to explore the gap between rhetoric and reality, keeping in mind the real consequences for the forgotten villagers and slum dwellers of Africa who have never heard of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance adopted by the AU in 2007.

Introduction

Bad governance equals assassinations, sacking of villages, violence, poverty and famine. Good governance results in prosperous cities, cultivated lands and general prosperity. These accounts are not from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describing the Congo or North Eastern Nigeria. They are from a series of murals of Sienna, Italy painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti back in 1338-9 commissioned by the Council of Nine as propaganda for a ’wise ruler’. It would appear that nothing much has changed over the centuries.

It was a great relief to diplomats and aid officials when ‘governance’ became a term in common usage in the 1980s. Sitting across from a government minister and telling him (very rarely her) that his personal corruption and his government’s turpitude had reached unacceptable levels had tended to appear impolite, crass and even physically dangerous. Conversations about good governance, however, are much easier to negotiate, with both sides agreeing on the importance of having a goal to attain a certain level of good governance upon which the continuing flow of development assistance or international concessional loans will depend. As will be demonstrated below, both sides of the conversation may attribute very different meanings to the term and recipients of international grants and loans may be willing to commit to theoretical definitions which they have no intention of observing in practice. As in Mozambique and Uganda, the standards applied when handling donor money can even be much higher than those observed in dealing more broadly with general government funds or the revenues of parastatal businesses. Donors can cut off funds, the African public cannot.

What is included within the scope of the term ‘governance’ has varied in recent decades. In 1989, the World Bank argued that ‘a crisis of governance’ was the cause of the ‘litany of Africa’s development problems’ (World Bank, 1989: 60-61). Because of its restricted mandate which is supposed to exclude political considerations, at that point, before the close of the Cold War, democracy was not included as a requirement of good governance. In 1998 the then United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan summed up a decade of donor rhetoric, claiming that “good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development” (UN, 1998: NB# Only a consummate career bureaucrat could have inserted a ‘perhaps’ into that sentence). By the turn of the century, it was barely necessary to insert ‘good’ in front of governance.

In a recent text-book on the AU (Makinda, Okumu and Mickler, 2016: 72-74) after discussing governance at different levels from the village to the global system, the authors list various types of governance as “bad governance, cooperative governance, corporate governance, global governance and good governance, among others”. They argue that, although the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (the International Financial Institutions or IFIs) had begun to talk about good governance in the 1980s, it was not until 1999 that the IFIs broadened the definition to include accountability, increased popular participation in the policy making process, and the building of democratic structures. According to these authors, the IFI’s –

> version of good governance has also had undesirable features that have caused considerable pain to the African people and diminished the internal legitimacy of African governments. Their model of good governance has raised serious ethical questions. For example, is it morally acceptable for African policy makers to give export crops priority over food crops? Is it ethical for poor African states to spend large portions of their income on debt repayments while their own people are starving? Why should the new generations of Africans meet the cost of debts attributable to borrowers and lenders from earlier periods? There are no simple answers to these questions but democracy empowers the African people to raise them (Makinda, Okumu and Mickler, 2016: pp.73-74).

Whilst these are certainly valid questions, raising them as issues of governance, rather than of economic policy tends to confuse the issue as to what constitutes governance. Why not ask: 'Is it ethical for rulers to fund swollen overseas bank accounts? Is it ethical for governments to rack up vast debts importing military hardware from overseas?' (Japan privately asks the latter question during its bilateral aid negotiations). The final reference to democracy is also confusing, so long as Africans have free speech and a free press they can indeed raise such questions, as was evident in Mugabe's Zimbabwe. Indeed, in the age of social media it is difficult to stop anyone from asking questions and *Afrobarometer* data shows that in countries such as Nigeria and Gabon almost half or more of the population has access to the Internet (see Afrobarometer, 2013).

Much of the discussion which follows is principally devoted to the consideration of corruption as the most visible and most commonly agreed element of bad governance. In 2002 the bureaucracy of the AU told their members that they estimated that 25% of the GDP of African states amounting to US $148 billion is lost to corruption every year (OECD, 2014). It is also said that the money sent overseas by corrupt leaders amounts to half of foreign debt and exceeds the amount of foreign aid to Africa (Lawal, 2007). No politician or dictator ever rejoices in being called corrupt. Clearly there are linkages between the form of government and the level of corruption and other undesirable features of poor governance. However, the evidence that democracy delivers more effective or more honest government is much less clear cut than many of the proponents of democracy have argued. This is demonstrated by the contrasting cases of China and India, or the natural experiment of Nigeria under different military and democratic regimes. Often African voters only get to choose between very corrupt party A and even more corrupt coalition B (Ayitty, 2011).

Thinking of developing regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, there can be three main reasons for a lack of good governance. Firstly, both politicians and government officials can be enmeshed in a whole system of corruption where a proportion of each petty bribe passes up the scale to the point where applicants are regularly prepared to purchase supervisory positions for cash on the black market. Secondly, corruption and poor governance may flourish as much out of ignorance as out of greed. Whilst the practical value of governance training would appear to have been greatly over emphasised by Western donors, there may still be a need for training in basic accountancy skills so that people can see where the money has disappeared. In an interesting precedent, parts of Indonesia used to display in white paint on a green board outside the village secretariat just how much public money had been received for the school, the clinic and other public services and what the expenditure paid out had been for and to whom. Thirdly, politicians and officials may be quite honest but the government and the country are just too poor to provide even minimal basic services. Is it corruption to ask for unavailable petrol money before the ambulance can set off to the village to pick up a woman in obstructed labour? Is it corruption for the Police Band to ask to be fed before playing for National Day Ceremonies at foreign embassies? Is it corrupt for a school teacher who has not been paid for three months to ask parents for a donation before teaching her class?

The question also arises whether in the case of governance the pursuit of the ideal is not sometimes the enemy of the pursuit of the good. Merilee Grindle (2007) has argued very effectively that the aim should be to secure 'good enough governance'. In a more literary style Wole Soyinka has argued:

> African dreams of peace and prosperity have been shattered by the greedy, corrupt and unscrupulous rule of African strongmen. One would be content with just a modest cleaning up of the environment, development of opportunities. health service, education, and eradication of poverty. But unfortunately even these modest goals are thwarted by a power crazed and rapacious leadership who can only obtain their egotistical goals by oppressing the rest of us (Soyinka, quoted in Calderisi, 2006, p.77).

Definitional Issues

Gisselquist (2012) has provided an invaluable review of the usage of the term 'good governance' in which she identifies seven core components used in working definitions: democracy and representation; human rights; the rule of law; efficient and effective public management; transparency and accountability; development as an objective and a varying range of economic and political policies, programmes and institutions (see also Thomas 2010). The OECD (2009) found 17 distinct definitions of good governance. Any critical reader will soon find that major multilateral organizations such as the World Bank or the UN agencies adopt a broad range of definitions of governance from time to time and from author to author. World Bank definitions range from "the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs" (World Bank 1989: 61) to the "traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised" (Kaufmann et al. 2009:5). The World Bank's (2009) publication of *Worldwide Governance Indicators*, which has been cited 9,333 times, presents six aggregate indicators: voice and accountability; political stability and the absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; the rule of law and the control of corruption. It should be noted that the indicator for political stability and the absence of violence makes the relationship between peace and good governance tautological, you can't have one without the other. There have been many criticisms of the World Bank Governance Indicators some of which have been summarized by Carmen Apaza (2009). A somewhat biased defence has been provided by Kauffman, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010). It needs to be understood that the indicators are based on perceptions obtained from surveys of firms and individuals, the assessments of commercial risk rating agencies, non-government organizations and multilateral aid agencies. The data cover more than 300 variables with information provided by more than 30 organisations. With respect to the specific measurement of corruption, no distinction is made between administrative corruption usually entailing small bribes demanded by government officials as encountered on a daily basis by the general public, and political corruption carried out on a mass scale by high ranking leaders and politicians, stealing millions to deposit in Swiss Banks and/or taking over public enterprises as their own.

Osborne's (2004) paper on 'Measuring bad governance' adopts a quite different view of what constitutes good governance since it is actually devoted to discussing the impact of allegedly 'bad/good' economic policies, clearly an area where views vary across a wide spectrum as to what bad policy actually is. He demonstrated that the radical reformers of the 1980-84 period were all in Africa and countries who would later be seen as economic success stories: Botswana, Mauritius and Uganda. Niskanen (1997, p.464) had approached the issue from the opposite direction, asking what form of governance will produce the optimal form of economic policy in terms of maximizing average incomes. He demonstrated that an autocracy or 'stationary bandit' "on any other basis than the interests of the autocrat" will produce the worst economic policy. However, acting in the opposite direction to autocracies, democracies produce better policies the longer their time horizons.

Giving the People a Voice: *Afrobarometer*

Transparency International (2016) using *Afrobarometer* data from 43,143 interviews across 28 countries estimates that nearly seventy-five million people in Sub-Saharan Africa paid bribes in 2015. The *Afrobarometer* online data analysis facility provides a fantastic range of data on issues relating to governance from its national surveys. In 2016-18 these covered Benin, Botswana, Burkina, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In some cases people are being asked for their perceptions as in 'has corruption been rising or declining ?'; but in most cases they are being asked for their personal experiences as in 'how often do you get your news from the Internet?' as 47% do in Mauritius but only 7% in Uganda. In the area of corruption there are a vast range of questions from 'what proportions of parliamentarians and traditional leaders do you think are corrupt?' to 'have you provided a bribe to a policeman (a) to pass through or (b) to settle a legal problem'. Intriguing questions arise as to just what the answers mean. Why do Tanzanians and those from Cape Verde consider they have the least corrupt parliamentarians? Why does Kenya have more active members of civic organisations than any other country, whilst Gabon has one of the lowest rates? Why did Zimbabwe, still under Mugabe, have the lowest proportion strongly favouring choosing leaders by elections versus other methods? Why would Cote d'Ivoire have the highest proportion favouring democracy? How far is the fact that 21% of Nigerians with no schooling and 44% of those with post-secondary schooling have considered emigrating - a vote of no confidence in a government, which 74% praised for its efforts to address the problem of armed extremism. Finally, do African governments, whether notionally democratic or not, take any notice of such polls?

Opinions differ as to the credibility of international corruption indexes. One has to wonder when the Heritage Foundation classifies corruption as "dishonesty and decay" (Miller & Kim 2016, p.62) . Ko and Samajdar (2010) present a good overall review which is generally positive in its conclusions. However, they argue for more information as to specific forms of corruption, as is certainly provided by the *Afrobarometer* data. They also note that generally the rich are more affronted by corruption than the poor. Trapnell and Recanatini (2017) discuss the conflict between precision and politics in constructing measures and argue the need for addressing both within particular geographical and institutional contexts. Razafindrakoto and Roubaud (2010) had access to data on individual experiences of petty bureaucratic corruption from 35,500 adults from seven francophone West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) and Madagascar. Most unusually, they also had data from a 'mirror' expert opinion survey (70% male) on the same subjects in the same countries which included information on the experts' economic views, which made it possible to infer their political views. What the comparison demonstrated was that overall the experts significantly over-estimated levels of petty corruption and that in general the more they favoured free markets, the more they over estimated corruption. The experts also significantly underestimated the extent to which the local people object to corruption. In no country did more than 11% of the local participants consider taking a bribe to be acceptable. The average was 4.5%. Yet the experts said that they believed that close to a third (32%) would find petty bribery acceptable. Perhaps the most disturbing was the high proportion of experts who though that 'their' under-served country had too many public servants (even experts tend not to recognise teachers and nurses as public servants) (Data from Razafindrako & Roubaud 2010).

Theoretically representing views across the continent, in 1999 the African Development Bank issued a Policy on Good Governance which defines governance as "a process referring to the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the affairs of a nation", and, unusually adds "and its relations with other nations" (African Development Bank, 1999, p.7). The Policy lists the key elements of good governance as: accountability; transparency; participation; combatting corruption and the promotion of an enabling legal and judicial framework. Although participation, a suitably vague term, is listed, there is no specific mention of democracy.

Criticisms of the Concept of Good Governance

The most engaged critics of the concept of 'good governance' are to be found in developing countries, especially those which are heavily dependent upon aid and therefore upon the judgements of aid donors. Many argue that judging aid allocations by these criteria results in aid conditionalities based on political criteria and imposes Western liberal models of democracy (Nanda 2006; NEPAD 2007: 3-4). As the case of Rwanda, discussed below, shows, this is certainly not always the case. As Andrews (2008: 380 cited by Gisselquist 2012: 1) argues, some donors appear to be using the term to back up a platitude 'like telling developing countries that the way to develop is to become developed' since their requirements of 'good governance' are only achieved by highly developed high income countries. The term has value as a catchy shorthand reference but it is very poorly specified. In some cases the lack of definition is deliberate since it allows each side of the aid bargain to use their own definition. Sometimes aid donors wish for political reasons to continue to assist governments with highly dubious governance credentials, so vagueness is helpful. Any country emerging from internal warfare or even transitioning from dictatorship to democracy is most unlikely to be able to demonstrate good governance credentials and so needs to be allowed a certain amount of leeway.

The Marxist and retired Tanzanian law professor Issa Shivji (2003) has argued that governance "is constructed primarily on the terrain of power" whereas much of the Western discourse eschews the discussion of power, instead presenting 'good governance', (as seen by Lorenzetti in fourteenth century Italy, discussed above), as a "moral paradigm, distinguishing between the good, the bad and the evil". Thus, aid conditionality by donors, which is held to be based on ill-defined good governance criteria, has become "a flexible tool in the hands of global hegemonies to undermine the sovereignty of African nations and the struggle for democracy of the African people" so that "the people are no longer the agency for change but rather the victims of 'bad governance' to be delivered or redeemed by the erstwhile donor community" (Shivji, 2003,p.3). It is clear whom Shivji holds to blame, but the implication that donors have not pushed democracy in Africa relies on a specific definition of democracy as a change which can only come from the people at the bottom:

> the land based producer classes and the urban poor together with lower middle classes would constitute the 'masses'. This is where, to use Lenin's phrase 'serious politics begin' – 'not where there are thousands, but where there are millions' (Shivji, 2003, p.9).

For Shivji the neo-liberal rhetoric of the donors which ignores the people and the "popular perceptions, customs, culture and consciousness … a living tradition of struggles where the old and the new, the progressive and the reactionary, jostle and struggle to attain hegemony" further "So long as neo-liberal politics and economics are incapable of addressing the real life conditions of the African people, they have little legitimacy. The 'good governance' discourse thus turns out to be profoundly a discourse of domination rather than of liberation and democracy " (Shivji, 2003, pp.9-10).

The African Peer Review Mechanism

It is often difficult to judge how far African regional mechanisms, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, dealing with issues of governance reflect 'African solutions to African problems' or the views of the donors who are their major funders. This is especially the case where the political leaders of the regional organisations are themselves outstanding examples of 'bad governance'. A specialized agency of the AU, physically based in MidRand, South Africa, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was established in 2003 within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The APRM, according to its web-site, is a tool for sharing experiences, reinforcing best practices, identifying deficiencies, and assessing capacity building needs to foster policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. Member countries undertake self-monitoring in all aspects of their governance and socio-economic development. African Union stakeholders participate in the self-assessment of all branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial as well as the private sector, civil society and the media (see the 2016-2020 APRM Strategic Plan - APRM 2016)). The APRM has four types of country reviews: a base review upon joining; a periodic review every four years; a review requested by the country outside the four year rotation and a review commissioned by APR heads of state when there are early signs of pending political and economic crises. Only 38 members of the AU are members of APRM, so this early warning system is not applicable to all AU member states. APRM has four focus areas: democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance and broad-based sustainable socio-economic development. APRM national reports are eventually made public. The current APR Forum Chairperson is Idriss Deby Itno, President of Chad. Former Chairpersons were, going backwards in time, Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia), two prime ministers of Ethiopia and Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria). This list of leaders is enough in itself to demonstrate the difficulties likely to be associated with any national self-review of governance.

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

On the sidelines of the AU Extraordinary Summit in Kigali in March 2018, newly elevated Zimbabwean President Emerson Mnangagwa signed the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). This move was welcomed by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (ZHR NGO Forum, 2018) but it would be interesting to know just how many Zimbabweans had any idea of what ACDEG might be or what the President was committing himself to:

> By signing this Charter, State parties pledge to develop the necessary legislative and policy frameworks to establish and strengthen a culture of democracy and peace. States parties also pledge to establish public institutions, which promote democracy and constitutional order (ZHR Forum 2018).

The Forum retained some concerns noting that under the Zimbabwean Constitution (Section 327), treaties are only binding after the Parliament approves them and their provisions have been incorporated into local law by means of an Act of Parliament. Now that Mnangagwa has been elected to office he should be constantly reminded of his obligations under ACDEG.

Donor Requirements: The European Union and the Security, Governance and Development Triangle

In Africa the European Union (EU), which is the most generous donor, uses a security, governance and development model. How this model is operationalized often appears to depend more upon European national interests and the internal politics of the labyrinthine EU bureaucracy than upon any African needs or wants (Bayoyoko & Gibert 2009). The EU approach is informed by the assumption that conflict and underdevelopment stem from state failure and so, in order to prevent future crises, state weakness must be addressed through significant institutional reforms which will allow the state to re-establish its authority through capacity-building. The European Commission (*no date*) defines areas associated with the root causes of violent conflict as: lack of legitimacy of the state; failure to enforce the rule of law; lack of respect for human rights; restraints on civil society and the media; lack of effective dispute resolving mechanisms in and between communities; ineffective economic management; social and regional inequalities and the geopolitical situation. The Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000 clearly links good governance and development so that human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law are defined as ‘essential elements'. A violation of any of these three elements may lead to a suspension of EU assistance and trade cooperation. Evidently donors' security, governance and development agendas do not always agree or move in the same direction. Military assistance was given to Guinea when it was attacked in 2000-1 without any requirement for transparency in Guinea's security system, and Rwanda and Uganda both continued to receive development assistance whilst their troops were openly supporting rebel troops in the Congo (Chataigner, 2001).

The EU Council had wanted to add 'good governance' to the list of essential elements, but the African, Carribean and Pacific (ACP) countries argued that the three elements covered enough ground and that 'good governance' was vague enough to allow arbitrary decisions by the EU. Thus, 'good governance' is a 'fundamental element' so that, with the exception of serious cases of corruption, a state with governance issues will be offered support and advice rather than threatened with suspension. Article 9.3 of the Cotonou Agreement defines good governance quite narrowly as "the transparent and accountable management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for the purposes of equitable and sustainable development" (Council of the European Union, 2000). A review of the Cotonou Agreement in 2008 suggested that "the question of governance is now much more of an active issue in CP-EU relations than at the time the CPA was drafted" (ECDPM 2008). It recommended a revision of the definition to promote ownership by ACP countries.

> The experience of the EC's 'governance initiative' over the past couple of years had also been somewhat negative as it had been perceived as too much of an EC-imposed exercise and not always well adapted to local circumstances and insufficiently based in dialogue with the ACP …. The EU is seen as increasingly directive and unilateral in its actions and in some quarters there is the view that there is hardly any partnership to speak of on the ground any longer (ECDPM 2008).

'Ownership' appears to require that Africans own what the EU has proposed, rather than any acceptance of 'African solutions to African problems'. The best way of understanding the differences between the rhetoric of 'good governance' and what actually happens on the ground is to look at individual country situations.

The Rwandan Case

Currently Rwanda provides the classic case of a country which has long attained 'good governance' as a solely bureaucratic achievement, but is still a country which is far from achieving 'good governance' if democracy and the observance of human rights are seen as required elements of the definition. If Rwanda had trains, Kagame would be the autocratic ruler who made the trains run on time. In other words, Rwanda ranks high on the World Bank's governance scale but very low according to most international NGOs. It is difficult to know what criteria the citizens of Rwanda themselves would apply as they live under a government where any criticism of the regime is most unwise unless the critic is ready to flee the country. *Afrobarometer* has reported that in Rwanda freedom of speech is so constrained that the pan-African nonpartisan research network cannot run a valid survey (Logan & Nyimah-Boadi, 2016). The government's national consultations allegedly revealed that a mere ten (very brave) souls publicly opposed the extension of the President's term in office (Vidal 2016). The President maintains that there is no need for opinion polls since he represents the voice of the people (Reyntjens 2016). In contrast, in neighbouring Burundi, even with the threat of civil violence in the offing, 62% of respondents were prepared to tell *Afrobarometer* (nd. - Burundi) that they supported term limits on their president who is equally autocratic but less efficient in persecution.

The pursuit of worthy goals

As the case of Rwanda demonstrates, it is sadly possible for a government to be effective and efficient but to have most undesirable goals. The IFIs require governments not only to be able to enforce their economic policies, say concerning tax revenues or the size of the public service, but also to have the goals these institutions deem appropriate before they are classified as having good governance. Swidler (2006) provides a fascinating contrast between Zambia with its poor governance but good AIDS hospice provision, and Botswana with its excellent governance - ranking higher than Italy and Greece on the Control of Corruption Index (see *GlobalEconomy.com*, 2016), but an insuperable barrier to providing hospices. Zambia had no provisions regulating hospices, whereas Botswana had a highly efficient regulatory system, which allowed local doctors to block anyone below the rank of licensed medical practitioner from taking blood samples, thus making hospices impracticable. In this case, it was better to have a free for all with no rules, rather than a well-regulated system which allowed the Motswana elite to enforce their own monopoly over service provision. Swidler (2006) quotes another example from Kenya, where the government had been efficient enough to be able to deny the provision of AIDS education materials to schools in areas which had voted for the opposition. Sometimes it may be better to have a governance system which is not effective in pursuing its goals, than to have one which is too effective in pursuing malign goals. Rwanda would have been much better off with a much weaker governance system.

The Liberian Case

Liberia has long been a country so corrupt that police routinely arrest street vendors, steal their goods and then demand bribes to release them from custody. In turn police have to pay bribes to their supervisors to get promotions or to avoid being appointed to the nether regions. Abuse of public office for profit is still not illegal in Liberia. In 2001 and 2002 President Charles Taylor personally controlled some US$200 million in annual business revenues, or between two and three times the entire budget of the government. He could do this because under the Strategic Commodities Act 2000 (Appendix 1), he had reserved to himself the "sole power to execute, negotiate and conclude all commercial contracts or agreements with any foreign or domestic investor for the exploitation of the strategic commodities of the Republic of Liberia". Corruption at the top was matched with lesser corruption down the scale and many of Taylor's associates were able to survive in office even after Taylor went into exile in Nigeria. Just one example was George Dweh, who had been a leader of the misnamed armed group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) who became Speaker of the National Assembly. When accused of embezzling $92,000, he took to the floor of the House and held members hostage till UNMIL soldiers intervened (Toweh 2014). Nationally, timber concessions awarded by successive governments covered 2.5 times the total area of timbered land in the whole country (Shearman 2010).

William Reno's (2008) historical review of corruption in Liberia asks: "Anti-corruption efforts in Liberia: Are they aimed at the right targets?" but what he argues is that: "Liberia's corruption problem is so intractable and so damaging to broader public interests because so many who are responsible for these problems also hold high positions in the state" (Reno 2008 p.390). Liberia illustrates 'criminalization of the state', where officials use public resources for private benefit by means of "existing moral and political codes of behaviour, especially those of ethnicity, kinship and even religion, and of cultural representations, notably of the invisible, of trickery as a social value, or prestigious styles of life, an aesthetic, whose capacity to legitimize certain types of behaviour is considerable" (Bayart, Ellis & Hibou 1997 p.15. In

Reno's view "there seem to be a critical mass of Liberians who see corruption as appropriate, or at least tolerable, not simply an exigency of poverty or disorder" (Reno 2008, p.404) with this attitude extending from the elite to the masses who benefit in some small way. Reno further argues that Liberia needs what Cameroonian scholar Axelle Kabou (1991) calls a 'cultural readjustment' to work to combat " the entrenched parochialism of social networks, the claustrophobic world of local solidarities, the grasping claims of family against any member who begins to become prosperous and the mistrust of people outside their own narrow networks" (Reno 2008 p.395).

Liberia was the site for a very unusual experiment to study corruption at the village level. The researchers worked in advance with an NGO which was distributing agricultural inputs to 'town chiefs' for distribution to village households (Beekman, Bulte & Nellesen, 2014). They were able to measure which chiefs stole what and found that just under half of the 44 chiefs in their study diverted seeds or agricultural tools for their own use. In Kpelle traditional culture stealing rice is considered to be especially abhorrent and the chiefs did not steal rice because they observed that taboo. Another form of corruption open to chiefs is to use the commandeered communal labour of villagers on projects for their own benefit, this was also common. It is often argued that such forms of behaviour, although defined as corrupt by Westerners, are part of African culture but in that case, why are at least the majority of chiefs honest? Indeed, the controversial author William De Maria (2005) wrote a paper "Does African 'Corruption' Exist?" reviewing African authors who see anti-corruption campaigns as a form of neo-colonialism reflecting a concept that is not applicable to Africa.

Liberia is certainly not unique in its attitude to corruption. Reno, (2008) discusses East Asian examples, but recognises that they are very different to Africa in part because much Asian corruption was at least associated with productive activities, such as those of the Korean Chobols, whilst African elite corruption so often represents no more than blood-sucking rent seeking. America has had great impact on Liberian culture in many spheres. In the USA Medicare and Medicaid estimate that 5-10% of their annual budget is wasted because of corruption (OECD, 2014).

The Republic of Liberia Governance Commission was the creation of the 2003 Accra Peace Accord as part of the efforts to attend to Liberia's problems following the fourteen year civil war which had led to the complete breakdown of democratic government. During the war "rebel factions took over government functionaries, appointed senior government officials and on many occasions brought in their own 'civil servants'. There are even political parties today that are offshoots of rebel factions" (Governance Commission, nd. *Overview*). The Commission was to formulate implementation strategies necessary to establish an inclusive, participatory, just and accountable system of government: a system based on meritocracy that promotes and adheres to the rule of law, manages the people's resources effectively and is capable of delivering basic services in a transparent manner. It also aimed at requiring "the honourable discharge of public duties without any expectations of personal reward over and beyond that to which a public servant is lawfully entitled". The Liberian Governance Commission's website (nd. *Overview*) declares that "poor governance had occasioned poverty, conflicts, corruption, and underdevelopment which led to instability … a circle of violence. Good governance prevents government breakdown which, if not avoided results in violent conflicts". Whilst it is difficult to establish how far such statements reflect significant donor inputs, it is still remarkable to see such clear statements set before the public at large. The donor-inspired government rhetoric is splendid, the performance in the market place much less so. The current Chair of the Liberian Governance Commission is Dr Amos Sawyer a controversial Liberian political science professor who headed up the interim Liberian government when peace was being re-established. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was Chair before becoming President of Liberia. The Commission published its annual review of government performance from 2013 concentrating on the delivery of education and health services so as to be able to monitor and evaluate actual government performance. This is clearly a less politically threatening area than looking at corruption in the government's business dealings.

Certainly the Commission is not without its critics. A group based in Atlanta, Georgia, USA has called for the disbandment of the Commission which they allege is staffed by "thieves and bloodsucking conspirators masquerading as leaders … gravy seekers, pseudo-progressives" (Jardia, 2016 p.1). Interestingly, although they strongly oppose the politics of the Commission staff, they still fully accept its diagnosis of the problems at issue and the need for checks and balances to keep the system honest (albeit whilst quoting Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Yeats's *Second Coming*) (Jardia 2016).

International praise for former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf presents a prime example of the donors' desperate need to have some African winners, especially female ones. A repeat nepotist, when challenged with appointing three of her sons to senior public positions, she replied that she did not know anyone else honest enough to appoint (Tran 2012).

Who is reporting the truth ? Donors as hostages

> *Elite corruption in Uganda constitutes an essential means of consolidating the present government in power. Political leaders have therefore shown little commitment to act to curb practices that could affect their political support. Instead, anti-corruption institutions have been influenced and controlled whenever they threatened to expose the corrupt ways of Uganda's state elites. Donors have also for many years been reluctant to use their substantial economic assistance to press the government to confront wrongdoing by state elites. They have not wanted to undermine a government which they have held up as one of the most successful in Africa in carrying out donor-sponsored economic reforms. But by giving large amounts of aid to a corrupt and quasi-authoritarian government, as well as being reticent in their public criticism of abuse of power and corruption, donors have abetted the actions of Uganda's leaders in weakening those bodies that could hold them responsible for abusing their public positions (Tangri & Mwenda, 2006 p. 101).*

The abstract above by Roger Tangri and Andrew Mwenda (2006), although franker than many, is typical of a growing literature debating the relationships between donors and corrupt senior politicians and officials in a range of political contexts (see the bibliographies in Reinikka & Svensson, 2004; Le Billon, 2008; and Reno, 2008). There are few outstanding economic successes in Africa and donors are very reluctant to bad-mouth the few plausible candidates that they can find.

The statistics show that, whilst donors rail against corruption, they actually give more money to corrupt governments (Alesina & Weder, 1999). This is not because of a desire to reward corruption, but because they believe that they have to support some governments for crucial foreign policy reasons, however corrupt they may be. Mozambique presents an interesting case in point (Hanlon 2004). In the 1970s socialist Mozambique was known for general integrity in public life, yet by 2002, the head of the Cape Town South African Institute of Security Studies reported that their studies showed that "Mozambique is very close to becoming a criminalised state" (Gastrow & Mosse, 2002 cited by Hanlon, 2004, note 4). The legal system was in a state of near collapse with court rulings available to the highest bidder. Money laundering and international drug dealings were rife. In two major bank scandals at least $400 million had been syphoned off in part by senior figures in Frelimo, the government party. Two people investigating the bank frauds, newspaper editor Carlos Cardoso (machine gunned) and the government's head of banking supervision, Siba-Siba Macuacua (thrown down the Bank stairs) were both assassinated in public and investigations of the murders were blocked from on high "to hide the class of untouchables" as Judge Carlos Caetano was reported as saying by the Government's own press agency (AIM, 29 September 2003).

Meanwhile just two months after the Macuacua murder, at a donor Consultative Group Meeting, Mozambique asked for US$600 million in aid and was given US$722 million, with the extra essentially being given to make up part of the bank losses (Man 2001). For the donors the problem was that they needed Mozambique with its growth rate of 8.4%, to figure alongside Uganda and Botswana as rare examples of economic successes in Africa. Hanlon (2004, 753) reports that he was told privately that, on instructions from Washington, USAID officials intensely lobbied the originally recalcitrant Nordic donor officials to accept that debt relief through the world Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC), which Uganda was the only African country to have received at that point, was more important than fighting corruption. The Mozambican public did not get to have any say in this decision.

For leading honest civil society Mozambicans, fighting high level corruption, their problem was that they were opposed to the rapid transit to capitalism with the associated privatizations and structural adjustment programs being required by the international financial institutions and the majority of donors. Thus, they were regarded as unreliable and excluded from the charmed circle of Mozambicans having regular dealings with the donors. For Mozambique it is very difficult to be able to accurately gauge the level of corruption and misgovernment. At a time when a senior Belgian aid official was writing that: "corruption, though not non-existent, is not institutionalised and the possibility for controlling funds earmarked for Mozambique is easy and transparent" (Guido van Hecken, quoted in Hanlon, 2004,748); Mia Couto, a local literary icon, was saying: "we live in a kingdom where those who lead us are gangsters" at the head are an elite using power "in order to enrich itself. They don't think of Mozambique, they think of themselves" (quoted in Hanlon, 2004, 748).

The tragedy was that big scale corruption was not endemic to Mozambique. Back in 1980 military leader Fransisco Langa committed suicide out of shame when caught embezzling funds meant for refugees. High level corruption had begun to grow as war leaders were being paid to accept the advantages of peace and it had built up further in the transition from socialism to capitalism. Petty corruption amongst teachers and nurses demanding small illicit fees for services rendered in government employment (for example, the equivalent of US$2 per birth for midwives) proliferated as their wages fell to just one third of 1991 levels by 1996 (USAID 2005).

The natural resources sector poses unique governance challenges

Corruption does not only vary by country and geographic region, it also often varies between sectors with natural resources being especially vulnerable.

> Natural resources are the biggest source of domestic public revenue in Africa: resource taxes averaged 40% of tax collected in 2008-2011. In Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Libya and Nigeria, resource taxes were the equivalent of more than 20% of GDP (Economic Commission for Africa 2018 p. 46).

There is widespread agreement that Africa's resource tax regimes are suboptimal and favour foreign investors. With corruption, as with the *Tang*o, it takes two sides to move - as in the payer and the recipient. In the mineral and hydrocarbon sectors it is particularly easy for foreign companies to exploit African countries due to knowledge gaps and asymmetries, inadequate technical skills and institutional deficiencies in a context of market volatility. Here is one area where disinterested advice from international experts can be exceptionally valuable. For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat used to provide specialist lawyers to advise small countries in such negotiations.

African authorities recognise that: "Many resource-rich African countries are struggling to establish the institutions needed for sustainably managing natural resources and to ensure transparency, participation and accountability" (ECA 2018: 73). The Resource Governance Index (*Resource Governance Institute*, 2017) which monitors the oil, gas and minerals sectors of 81 countries including 33 African states finds that poor quality of governance is one of the explanatory reasons why resource-rich countries have grown more slowly than non-resource rich ones. Only 20% of relevant African countries have carried out audits of their extractive industries. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which attacks corruption through asking companies what they have paid to governments and national entities, has 23 African members out of a total of 51 (including

Australia). In Guinea it led to the rescue of US$11 million missing dollars with US$9 million going to local communities for development activities. In Nigeria the missing amount was close to US $10 billion with US$2 billion being recovered for the Federal Government through EITI efforts (EITI, 2017). Whilst the EITI is an excellent initiative, it often relies on local civil society groups or the political opposition to be able to put pressure on governments to chase up missing funds. In Liberia, a plan to tell local communities how much revenue came from activities in their home districts encountered fierce resistance from ‘town chiefs’ who did not want their own corruption to become public knowledge. An in-depth evaluation of the impact of the implementation of EITI in Zambia found that it provoked a significant decrease in corruption but that the impact grew less over time, partly because there is no independent legal authority in Zambia which can enforce compliance at the company level (EITI 2017).

The Economic Commission for Africa’s fifth governance report was launched in May 2018 under the title of: *Natural Resource Governance and Domestic Revenue Mobilization for Structural Transformation*. The press release announcing the launch bore the headline “Managing Africa’s resources: Time to stop the ‘dig and export’ model, improve governance, create linkages” and reported that “a highly charged debate” had characterized the launch (*Tralac,* 2018). Unfortunately the press release only recounts the positive comments made on the Report, not the negative ones. The Report itself represents a wonderful mixture of sage, if ambitious, advice and obligatory incorporation of government propaganda (drafting the references to social and environmental impact assessments under Libya’s new Vision 2020 petroleum law must have been particularly challenging for those with a sense of irony). In itself, the Report thus provides an excellent example of the conflict between rhetoric and reality in African governance which is particularly acute for regional organizations which are ultimately beholden to national governments.

Towards a conclusion

This article does not aim at coming to a conclusion on a topic as vast as the relationship between the rhetoric and the reality of governance in Africa. Rather, it is intended to point to a number of questions which anyone examining governance in Africa needs to consider. These begin with how governance is being defined and what areas of governance are under consideration. Specifically there is a division between discourses and studies where governance is essentially being used as a synonym for the control of corruption; and those where the usage of the term extends from the economic area to the political arena and thus, almost certainly, includes a requirement for a democratic government as a condition for good governance. The significance of this expansion to require democracy and even ‘correct’ IFI approved economic policies has been little examined, especially in the African context. Another issue is, whose views of governance are to be taken into account and whether the views of international experts are being given too much weight as compared with the views of African citizens, especially at the grass-roots. There is also a vital need to consider the local context. Too many studies of African governance pretend that it is possible to discuss these concerns without taking a political stance. Yet, as the cases of Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda discussed above demonstrate only too well, everyone cannot be telling the truth. Accepting the views of one side, usually the government, who are defending the system, as opposed to those, usually in the opposition, pointing to multiple flaws, inevitably becomes a political choice. Each country, indeed each village (Beekman, Bulte & Nillesen, 2014) has its own governance reality. One approach would be to hypothesize a model of African governance, possibly based on AU pronouncements, and then examine how far individual cases match or diverge from the model. Finally, there are few areas where it is more important or more difficult to be able distinguish reality from rhetoric. As the equivocally placed former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf herself has stressed, people should be judged by what they do, not what they say. Signing up to international conventions means little (AU, 2007). Impartially trying leaders from both the opposition and the government’s own political party for syphoning off government assets, or inviting the people to vote on the extension of presidential term limits - these are the true indicators of good governance.

Bibliography

African Development Bank (1999). *Bank Group Policy on Good Governance,* OCOD.

Afrobarometer (2013). Africa connects: Mobile phones on the rise in Africa, Internet use inching up, 16 October, http://Afrobarometer.org/press/africa-connects-mobile-phones-rise-africa-internet-use-inching

Afrobarometer (nd.). Burundi, www.Afrobarometer.org/countries/burundi-0

APRM (2016) APRM Strategic Plan 2016-20, https://www.aprm-au.org/aprm-strategic-plan-2016-2020/

African Union (2007). *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,* Addis Ababa: African Union.

Alesina, A. & Weder, B. (1999). Do corrupt governments receive less foreign aid ?, *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Papers 7108* Cambridge MA: NBER.

Apaza, C.R. (2009). Measuring governance and corruption through the Worldwide Governance Indicators: Critiques, responses, and ongoing scholarly discussion.*PS January.*

Ayittey, G. (2011). War on African dictatorships, *Ethiopian Review,* http://ethiopian review.com/content/332222

Ayittey, G. (2012). Defeating Dictators, Speech given at the Oslo Freedom Forum. www.oslofreedomforum.com/speakers/george_ayittey.html

Bagoyoko, N. & Gibert, M.V. (2009). The linkage between security, governance and development: The European Union in Africa. *Journal of Development Studies, 45* (5), 789-814.

Bayart, J-F. Ellis,S. & Hibou, B. (1997). *La Criminalisation de l'etat en Afrique*, Paris: Editions Complexe.

Beekman,G. Bulte, E & Nillesen, E. (2014). Corruption, investments and contributions to public goods: experimental evidence from rural Liberia, *Journal of Public Economics, 115*, 37-47.

Calderisi, R. (2006). *The Trouble with Africa: Why foreign aid isn't working,* New York Palgrave Macmillan.

Chataigner, J-M. (2004). Aide publique au developpement et reformes des systems de securite: l'improbable recontre du Dr Jekyll et de Mr Hyde. *Afrique Contemporaine, 209, 23-49.*

De Maria, W. (2007) Does African 'Corruption' exist? *African Journal of Business Ethics,* 1:60-77.

ECA (2018). African Governance Report V: Natural resource governance and domestic revenue mobilization, ECA Addis Ababa.

ECDPM (2008). The 2010 Revision and the future of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement: Report of an informal seminar Maastricht, 4 July 2008. *European Centre for Development Policy Management,* Working Paper 85.

EITI (2017). Evaluating the impact of the Extractive Industries transparency Initiative (EITI) on corruption in Zambia. https://eiti.org/

European Commission (nd.). Check-list for root causes of conflict. http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/cfsp/cpcm/cp/list.htm

Farrington, C. (2010). Putting good governance into practice II: Critiquing and extending the Ibrahim index of African Governance. *Progress in Development Studies, 10,* 81-86.

Gastrow, P. & Mosse, M. (2002). Mozambique: threats posed by the penetration of criminal networks, Paper to ISS Seminar 'Organized

Crime, Corruption and Governance in the SADC Region, Pretoria 18-19 April 2002.
Gisselquist, R. (2012). Good governance as a concept, and why this matters for development policy. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.
GlobalEconomy.com (2016). Control of corruption - country rankings, https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/wb_corruption/
Governance Commission (nd.). *Overview,* http://governancecommissionlr.org/page_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=MzIz
Governance Commission (2015) *Annual Report for 2013*, Monrovia. http://governancecommissionlr.org/doc_download/GC%202013%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf?a4705305cd27e04fb1f66830e7e0ef9d=NjI%3D
Grindle, M. S. (2007). Good enough governance revisited. *Development Policy Review, 25* (5) 533-574.
Hanlon, J. (2004). Do donors promote corruption? The case of Mozambique. *Third World Quarterly,* 25 (4)747-63.
Jardia, T. (2016). Disband the Governance Commission. *The Perspective, 23* July
Kabou, A. (1991). Et Si L'Afrique Refusait le Developpement? Paris: L'Harmattan.
Kaufmann, D.Kraay, A. & Mastruzzi, M. (2010). The Worldwide Governance indicators: Methodology and analytical issues. *Global Economy and Development* see also www.govindicators.org
Ko, K. & Samajdar, A. (2010). Evaluation of international corruption indexes: Should we believe them or not? *Social Science Journal,* 47: 508-540.
Lawal, G. (2007). Corruption and development in Africa: Challenges for political and economic change. *Humanities and Social Science Journal,* 2 (1): 1-7.
Le Billon, P. (2008). Corrupting peace ? Peacebuilding and post-conflict corruption. *International Peacekeeping,* 15 (3), 344-361.
Logan, C. & Gyimah-Boadi. E. (2016). Africa's largest public-opinion survey is under threat, but here's what you can do about it, *Washington Post, 9* September.
Makinda, S.M. Okumu, F.W. & Mickler, D. (2016). *The African Union: Addressing the challenges of peace, security, and governance,* 2nd Edition, London: Routledge.
Mans, D. (2001). Consultative Group Meeting for Mozambique, Maputo October 25 & 26, 2001, Chairman's Report.

Miller, T & Kim, A. (2016). *Defining Economic Freedom, Washington,* Heritage Foundation.

Nanda, V. (2006). The 'Good Governance' concept revisited. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 603,* 269-283.

Niskanen, W.A. (1997). Autocratic, democratic and optimal government, *Economic Inquiry,* 35, 464-479.

OECD (nd). Principal elements of good governance, Paris: OECD.

OECD (2014). The rational for fighting corruption. *CleanGovBiz,* OECD, Paris.

Osborne, E. (2004). "Measuring bad governance", *Cato Journal,* 23(3): 403-422.

Owoye, O & Bissessar, N. (2012). Bad governance and corruption in Africa: Symptoms of leadership and institutional failure, paper to First Global Conference on Public Policy.

Razafindrakoto, M. & Roubaud, F. (2010). Are international databases on corruption reliable? A comparison of expert opinion surveys and household opinion surveys in Sub-Saharan Africa. *World Development, 38* (8),1057-1069.

Reinikka, R. & Svensson, J, (2004). Local capture: Evidence from a central government transfer program in Uganda, *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 119 (2),* 679-706.

Reno, W. (2008) Anti-corruption efforts in Liberia: Are they aimed at the right targets? *Peacekeepin*g 15, 387-404.

Resource Governance Institute (2017), Resource Governance Index, https://resourcegovernance.org/analysis-tools/publications/2017-resource-governance-index

Reyntjens,P. (2016) The Changes Made to Rwanda's Constitution are Peculiar, Here's Why, *The Conversation* 21 January. theconversation.com/the-changes-made-to-rwandas-constitution-are-peculiar-heres-why-53771

Shearman, P. (2010) An Assessment of Liberian Forest Area, Dynamics, FDA Concession Plans, and their Relevance to Revenue Projections. A Report Commissioned by Green advocates, Monrovia, Liberia.

Shivji, I. (2003). The struggle for democracy. www.marxists.org/subject /Africa/shivji/struggle-democracy.htm

Tangri,R. & Mwenda, A. (2006). Politics, donors and the ineffectiveness of anti-corruption institutions in Uganda. *Journal of Modern African Studies,*44 (1), 101-124.

Toweh, A. (2014) Liberia: Scandal in Parliament; George Dweh Speaker of Liberia's National Legislative Assembly and 30 others have been

caught in a US$92,000 scandal and suspended indefinitely by the House, New African Magaine, March.
Tralac (2018). Managing Africa's resources: Time to stop the 'dig and export' model, improve governance, create linkages, 14 May, https://www.tralac.org/news/article/13045-managing-africa-s-time-to-stop-the-dig-and-export-model-improve=govrnance-create-linkages.html
Tran,M. (2012) Liberia's Jonson Sirleaf defiant over nepotism and corruption claims, *The Guardian,* 1 November.
Trapnell, S & Recanatini, F. (2017). Evidence, corruption, and reform: the importance of context-sensitivity, *Crime Law & Social Change,*68, 477-491.
USAID (2005) Corruption Assessment Mozambique, Final Report. Washington,DC: USAID.
Vidal, C. (2016) Rwanda: Kagame is in line to stay in office until 2034.*The Conversation,* 18 January.
World Bank (1989). *Sub-Saharan Africa. From crisis to sustainable growth: A long term perspective study.* Washington, DC: World Bank.
World Bank (2009). Governance Matters VIII Aggregate and individual governance indicators 1996-2008, *Policy Research Working Paper,* 4078, World Bank, Washington. The annually updated data is available at www.govindicators.org
Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2018). Signing of Africa Charter on Democracy progressive but …, Press Release 27 March. http://www.hrforumzim.org/press-releases/signing-of-african-charter-on-democracy-progressive-but/
Zimbabwe Parliament (2013). *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (No. 30).*