

Review

Political governance and conflict management: why developing polities and the poor need a stronger state structure?

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Political governance and quality management are often contested concepts, meaning different things to different people; and often their meanings have shifted historically. The collapse of the governance system behind the iron curtain countries triggered an avalanche in international politics and instituted new governance and management system to fit within the evolving political dispensation of the 21st century. Even in the post-cold war era, the political sociology of the greater part of the continent began to acquire a mournful guise of repetitive failure. The reality, as the facts show, is one where the nature of society has failed to meet the requirements of the democratic and parliamentary models by which the New-States are supposed to function. We must appreciate that 50 years in the life of a nation is a short period. We should not expect Africa to accomplish within this relatively short period what took the currently democratic states to achieve. Even within this defeatist or pessimistic view, there is a reality of optimism of progress though slow that points towards increasing democratisation and eventual public participation in governance, as well as important modes for integration into global systems of information, technology, knowledge and commerce, bode well for the acceleration of African development in the 21st century. The demand for drastic changes in the state system within this short period may be asking too much. After all, what the old democracies exhibit today took them thousands of years to accomplish. Taking just a couple of examples, women in Switzerland received their rights to vote not long ago. Comparatively, African States have made tremendous strides in this area. Rwanda, a decade after the genocide, has the highest number in the world of women representation in parliament. This does not mean that the plight of women in Africa is resolved. Women are still marginalized in spite of them commanding almost 52 percent of the population on the continent. No one is advocating the adoption of a Rostow “*stages of development*” approach for Africa. The strides made so far by Africa are due to advances in science and technology, which enable the continent to move forward more rapidly than the West did. Africans are equally contributing to advances in science and technology – the Internet for example, which is an African invention. This paper addresses pertinent issues – governance and consolidating the democratic process - and why the people need a stronger involvement. Power belongs to the people. Democracy belongs to the people. The State must create the enabling and levelling playground for civil society to be an integral part of the governance process. The conceptual frame builds on system thinking approach and conflict management maintaining that participation, partnership and responsibility sharing provides the best way for building a Strong State capable of meeting its obligations to the people. Proactive strategies policy measures are advanced as the way forward to reconstructing and reconstituting a viable State that is first and foremost people-oriented, that is inclusive and with an open governance system that creates choices and possibilities for its citizens.

Key words: Democracy, consolidation, civil society, partnership, participation, responsibility sharing, conflict management/prevention, media, choices, inclusion and social justice.

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of poor governance

Since the attainment of independence half-a-century ago by African countries, even people of good conscience have dismissed the challenge posed by extreme poor governance as something too overwhelming, too vast, and too complicated to be solved. But with the growing impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and globalisation, backed with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become clear that the issue can be appropriately addressed given the political will. Not that ICTs per se is the panacea to good governance and poverty alleviation, but that it provides the pathway and knowledge on awareness creation empowering the people to make appropriate choices. The proper use of Internet depends on how literate the population is, availability and access to the gadgets.

Poor or bad governance implies that people cannot make their right choices in selecting and dismissing their leaders, being unable to decide their development process, mode of survival and way forward for future generations. They are unable to take the development process into their hands or be an integral part of it. Obviously, good governance flows logically from the concept of governance by which society seeks to provide a guide and direction to it through standards and norms embedded in the governance idea (Mohideen 1997). There is the urge to steer State and Society according to defined rules and procedures, and ensuing that governance in all its ramifications serves the interest of the greatest number of people in society through a collective, participatory endeavour.

In short, the continent is ridden with conflicts, failed or weak-states incapable of providing the needs of the people. At the same time, Africa remains the richest natural resources continent with most of its population living under squalor and abject poverty. No other continent has suffered human humiliation as Africa. For over 500 hundreds, it was subjected to human slavery. No one can accurately state how many people left the shores of the continent under the most inhumane conditions to build the new world with their sweat, labour and blood. Today, a new form of slavery has emerged, with the people voluntarily selling themselves into slavery. Independence failed to usher the kind of freedom and liberty currently practised in the developed economies and democratically constituted countries.

Given these setbacks, the people are chronically hungry (politically, economically and technologically) unable to access public institutions, or having access to health care, safe drinking water, education, lacking all necessary amenities and rudimentary shelter over their heads, even cloths to protect their bodies from the burning heat or biting cold weather, and to finally end the suffering of the poorest of the marginalised poor.

Perplexed, the people question themselves: how do we end bad governance? What can be done to ensure the implantation of good governance in the society? Above all, how do we sustain and consolidate it? These questions beg many others – how do we move forward in a concerted, unified and coordinated manner - and how can the rest of the worlds live up to their commitments of solidarity to the people? What then is Africa's commitment to democratic governance? Why has democratic governance evaded the people, or rather, why do the people evade democratic governance? What can they gain from treading the path of democratic governance? We know what they are loosing by not embracing the basic tenets of democratic governance, quality management and service delivery. What prevents them from articulating and aggregating their own form of 'orange revolution' that can better usher a state of sanity into the body politic of the society? But must we always imitate what others do or from our diverse identities articulate our own path?

To answer these million-dollar questions requires piecing together many factors from a historical perspective, and in light of present context with an eye for the future. What is needed for the country is a kind of shock therapy with the people playing the role required of them. That role implies handing power to where it belongs - the 'people'- as well as creating *equal opportunities* for all. People must be empowered and to use such power appropriately and responsibly for the common good of all. This necessitates the embracement of democratic governance. For now, there is a wide gap between the state and people leading to a break down in confidence building measures between the key stakeholders – state, civil society, private sector, the international community and the Diaspora in addressing the plethora of problems plaguing the African continent and the global community. What comes to mind is that of State formation at the time of independence, its structure and functional pattern. Both the input-output sides of the nation-state need to be x-rayed. Yet, not a single theoretical framework can provide answers to the many challenges facing the region and changes it has to undergo especially in this age of globalisation. A holistic approach is inevitable.

Today Africa's governance issues and development economics are "*like eighteenth-century medicine, when doctors used leeches to draw blood from their patients, often killing them in the process*" (Sachs 2005). What this implies is the need for "clinical politics and economics" for a sick continent lying hopelessly in the emergency ward, and waiting for comprehensive political and economic surgery. As of 2005, the ideological slogan of "*seeking the political kingdom*" has yet to take strong hold. What has, however, implanted itself since the attainment of independence, is that of the comprehensive but destruc-

tive search of seeking the “belly kingdom” for the individual as ably elaborated by Bayart 1993. We need to go beyond governance and confidence building strategies to bring order, sanity, and progress and ensure sustainable development in the region. Blame can be placed on nation-state formation, and the attitudes of those who replaced the departed colonial lords. The people have their own share of the blame as well. All these factors in combination create a weak state and deprive the people from making their choices. Their fundamental human rights are constantly trampled upon. In the end, they are simply bystanders in the political chase game.

What emerged the morning after independence were institutionalised and even legalised institutions of centralised dictatorship and military rule limiting the political space for the citizens. This had serious consequences for the citizens who responded by retreating into a state of perpetual comma, passiveness and careless attitude. The hostility or sheer incompetence of the State has ensured as such. The underscoring problem in Africa about building democracy can be no more a matter of counting the number of political parties on the electoral scene than counting the quantity of angels on the point of a pin. The return to multiparty politics in post-cold war Africa even compounded the situation. At the beginning as dictatorial terror power found a new form, that of the new “multiparty” state proclaimed in the 1990s (post-cold war) had only fostered overnight a barrage of multiplicity of political parties: with most of these parties lacking the organisational and mobilising capacity that a political party is supposed to have. Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC – former Zaire), Benin and others could boast of over 150 to 250 political parties.

The return to multiparty political pluralism has so far not devised and upheld a State such as citizens will accept and respect as the valid pattern of governance and therefore worthwhile representative of their interests and protector of their rights. All through, governments ruined the economic, generated national dissension and instability, and engaged in massive rigging of elections with the attendant violence and insecurity of lives and property. The political sociology of much of Africa, after the 1990s, like in the 1960s has also acquired a mournful guise of repetitive failure. To a large extent, this is increasingly ascribed to the failure of persons (leaders) rather than of institutions. The reality as the facts have urged, points to the nature of society which has failed to meet the requirements of the parliamentary models by which the new nation-states are supposed to operate (Davidson 1992).

Africa’s march towards democracy in search for a new norm or form of governance has to a large extent undergone three important phases that did catch the eyes of sequences and analysis. The *first phase* started with the democratisation initiative and process began in

the early 1980s coming in the wake of the collapse of Soviet Union, (the end of the Cold War), backed with growing disquiet in many African countries. The disquiet was filled with much trepidation, uncertainties, and characterised by violence and turbulence. The *second stage* could be seen through consensus emerging in Africa on democracy and the ‘governance idea’. A combination of factors could be seen involving a broad spectrum of the society, political elite, urban civil society groups, academics, bureaucrats, the working class, unemployed, peasants together with other continental bodies saw the new initiative as a noble course to struggle for which began in the 1990s. Towards the end of the 1990s, a new norm of governance was no longer a façade, but an emerging reality on the continent. Important to note is that this movement did not mean total achievement of democracy as soon as broad social and political consensus was arrived at. The *third stage* is perhaps, the most difficult—the institutionalisation and consolidation of democracy—a phase yet to begin. Looking at the processes of setting the benchmark, the challenge is for the people to develop the necessary parameters as well as create the roadmaps on how to pilot, direct, assess and accomplish their journey towards political democracy and good governance. The genealogy and trajectory of the democracy and governance process in Africa should be one with civil society playing a critical role. After all, power belongs to the people: power that must be judiciously used for the good of all. The rise of “Civil Society” is indeed one of the landmark events in post-Cold War Africa following the return to political pluralism. Political governance, “national or global” is no longer the sole domain of Governments. The growing participation and influence of non-State actors is enhancing democracy, and reshaping multilateralism as well as contributing to conflict management. Civil society organisations are also the prime movers of some of the most innovative initiatives to deal with emerging national and global threats.

The setting

The paper begins by addressing issues related to the challenges of poor governance, how such a system impedes constructed development: and is not people-oriented. A system that fails to ‘*put people first*’. The next section takes up the conceptual framework, which builds on a ‘system thinking’ approach as an attempt to situate the plight of the people and State. It questions whether the nation-state system gave birth to weak state system or is one created by the incumbent leaders or reinforced by them? The issue of a strong nation-state outlines why it is necessary for such a structure to promote participatory governance as well as meeting its obligations to the people. The next section argues that extreme poverty and corruption constitute impetus restraining the practice and functioning of democracy.

Corruption and poverty in politics make politics a virus that kills the people, yet politics is the vaccine to reconstruct, reconstitute and reform the society sustainable in the interest of all. Some recommendations are put forward as the road map to building a strong state and empowering the people as partners and participants in development, sharing equal responsibilities as well. Could the road forward be one of 'breaking the rules - and strengthening the rules or what?

Conceptual base: a system thinking approach

As fundamental as the issue of poor governance and conditions for economic development are to the social sciences, there is surprisingly little consensus on what these causes and conditions entail. A likely explanation for this is that there is a disturbing lack of integrative knowledge on the subject of democratic governance and economic development. Generally, the worlds of academics from different disciplinary backgrounds have attempted to appreciate, situate and understand governance and economic development through different lenses of studies isolated or integrated. A multiple disciplinary approach is adopted. Foremost here is the "system theory" approach. Good political governance is defined as the sum of the institutions processes and policies that are conducive to human development and rights. Why democracy is not a perfect system of governance, it would be hard to argue that any other system provides the same success in protecting and supporting the political rights and economic rights of the people living within it. We have to understand good political governance as the furtherance of democracy and democratisation, and 'strong state or strong democracy' meaning the participation of all the people in at least some aspects of self-government at least some of the time.

The system thinking approach underscores that, to impose artificial linear solutions on a complex social problem like governance, conflicts, and economic development, ignores the reality that bad governance, economic underdevelopment and conflict tend to have short-term benefits at best. Because the fundamental causes of a complex problem are not 'seen' or not attended to, the underlying causes of the problem tend to reinforce in the long-term, and there is increased pressure for decision-makers to apply symptomatic responses (Gueli, Liebenberg and Huysteen et al, 2005:6). The system approach helps to keep an eye on the needs of users in the system and the importance of having good feedback links from users to producers. In the context of Africa, users may refer to city society. We have embarked on short-term or stopgap approaches to addressing the fundamental problems of the continent. It is taken that conflict management democracy helps to manage conflicts among groups, keeping them within the boundaries of political dialogue and debate, and off the

streets.

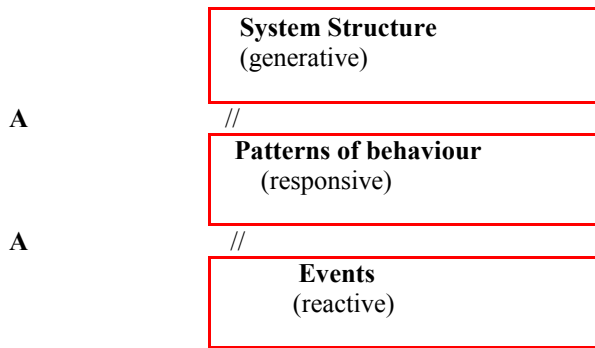
Together, these processes create substantial challenges for democratic governance, empowerment of the people, and economic sustainability. From a research perspective, it is vital to recognise and assess the interactions between state-building or state formation and globalisation together they influence vulnerability and resilience. Moreover, it is crucial to identify the synergisms between system change at the national level and globalisation, i.e. cases when the total effect is greater than the sum of the individual impacts. From a policy perspective, it is essential to acknowledge the contradictions that may result from efforts to address democratic governance and system change independently, and to identify the pathways that lead to greater and profound system change for the benefit of all.

A 'double exposure' framework can be deployed to analyse the interactions between democratic governance, conflict management, system change and globalisation, and their implications for sustainable development. The framework is construed on the understanding that both processes create uneven outcome (i.e. winners and losers) that contribute to growing inequities. These outcomes are to a large extent influenced by many interrelated issues: (i) differential exposure to shocks and more gradual transformations: and (ii) differential capacities to respond to these changes and challenges. Both exposure and response capacities are functions of the 'contextual environment' of democratic governance. i.e. the social, economic, political, cultural, institutional and technological characteristics of a nation, region, community and local household or social group.

"As such, system thinking gains much of its analytical power as a problem solving method from the fact that problematic patterns of behaviour can be identified, permanently eliminated, and replaced by more sustainable patterns. This is done by identifying the *leverage point* of a complex system. Leverage points are actions and changes in structures, which, with a minimum of effort, can lead to significant, enduring improvements within the system. The more structure is understood, the more likely the leverage points of a complex problem can be identified" (Gueli, 2005). Diagram 1 illustrates this. It is fundamental to understand the general properties of complex system to correct the underlying structural causes of particular problem.

Africa presents a complex political entity and its problems must be dissected sector by sector from a historical context, the present world order with an eye for the future. This calls for political dialogue between the various key players to establish an atmosphere of legitimacy, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and process approach, without moving beyond the obvious. They could contribute more meaningfully by elaborating on the role of civil society in the process on state construction and on the relationship to other bodies like the African Union (AU), New Partnership for African

Figure 1. System Structure and Leverage.



Source: Gueli et al. (2005).

Note: A = (moving upwards) = Higher leverage for enduring change.

Development (NEPAD), The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC) and many others. The achievement of these goals depends on consistency and coherence, leadership and responses from the people. Investments in people and infrastructure are required. The coherence requirements relate to the fact that human rights policy does not stand in isolation from other policy realms.

Whether positive or negative, the outcomes of ongoing processes of democratic change and globalisation will eventually alter the contextual setting and influence both exposure and responses to future changes. The interacting processes have important implications for sustainability (Figure 1). The double exposure framework emphasises the co-occurrence of both shocks and structural transformation related to the two processes, and identifies the pathways and dynamics of interaction (O'Brien and Leichenko 2005). In other words, for the continent to move forward, the key actors must tangle in a holistic and encompassing manner that should result in the empowerment of the people. The other alternative is for the people, the custodian of power, to seize power and to make the best use of such power. A kind of "orange revolution" could be necessary way forward.

Africa is caught within the trappings of democratic governance, conflict management and growing poverty. All these impact on the continent's participative role within the global world of the 21st century and beyond. How can African States create the enabling and levelling playground, building the necessary institutions for civil society to be an integral part of the governance and development process? The obvious question that comes to mind is that of the structure-functional nature of the nation-state. Whether the nation-state system that emerged after independence was one of 'putting the people first'. If or not, what were the contributing factors to nation-state failure?

It would not be wrong to begin with the point that the 'transfer of power' to the colonies, was above all, a 'transfer of crisis' or in short, it was an organised act of not 'putting the people and continent first'. The leaders failed in 'seeking the political kingdom' from the right perspective and for the common interest. This has resulted in the overexploitation of the people and continent. What this came to imply, in practice, was a resolute determination to oppose and prevent any development, whether political, technological or economic, which today undermines Africa's subordination to the global stage and the poor participation of its citizens in the development process. Not only that: the people are living in abject poverty in the midst of plenty.

They are constantly nagged or bullied by complacent persons and institutions that rightly call for "more democracy." There has been no inspiration in seeking ways of mobilising mass support for sustainable development. Such mass democracy that the people had paid their lives for became an exclusive or patent medicine meant only for the few. In alliance with the new governing authorities, the colonial powers promoted a simulacrum of the West's governing conditions that should bring some order to the chaotic scene. Africa through mismanagement has relentlessly relegated itself to the para-colonial status of "Third World" dependency or a socio-political wasteland in which nothing advances the people's cause.

Inherited or created weak-states

Whether by accident or design African nation-state turned out to be weak with numerous implications on the structural-functional pattern of the governance system. Weak states, (Jackson, 2002; Dauvergne, 1998; Migdal, 1998; Skinner, 1978) note: are embedded with and by unconsolidated or non-existent democracies facing serious problems of confidence, legitimacy and lack of authority. The confidence, authority and legitimacy crisis converge into very low political participation rates, the weakness and inability of the State to maintain social control, ensure societal compliance with official laws, act indecisively, making ineffective policies, unable to preserve stability and cohesion, unable to encourage societal participation in State institutions, inability to provide basic services, unable to manage and control the national economy, and retain legitimacy and confidence. In addition, they are characterised by external vulnerability to international actors and forces, which is the direct results of their internal fragility.

Hence the patterns of exclusive politics, political centralisation and alienation, and authorisation forms of governance so evident on the continent of Africa, constitute the root of internal conflicts and state of underdevelopment. These events lead to pattern of behaviour, and so the ruling elites and external forces have taken advantage to create a precarious material

base to establish hegemony. The absence of a grassroots grounded in a solid and independent economic base successfully led to the ruling elites to indulge in private accumulation of capital giving them an inherent and direct control of the state thereby transforming politics into a money making enterprise and material struggle. As noted by Fatton Jr. (1988) providing opportunity to build class power through the mechanisms of the State is the context of increasing scarcity. In short, as noted by Sklar (1979) *class relations in weak states are transformed from relations of production to relations of power*.

The system structure needs overhauling to give greater access to the people: to be an inherent part of the development process. The continent needs a generative and responsive system structure to ensure comprehensive feedback and involvement of the grassroots. Stronger involvement of grassroots gives the ability to adapt through feedback process. A state of chaos leading to instability has over gripped the continent because of the chaotic pattern of behaviour that fails to bring subtle changes in the system. Some may argue what seem to be a stable system under the colonial period, due to the kinds of interactions that emerged after independence, led to a general behavioural pattern of the people to a chaotic order system. There is neither a national policy nor active strategy to address the continent's malignant conflict structure. Therefore, conflict cannot be properly managed. The people are overwhelmed with poverty. Proactive public policy, carefully conceived and implanted, can facilitate and engender social harmony: can also be an instrument of social exclusion, discrimination and oppression with political instability and wars or conflicts as the outcome.

Given the collapse of government and fragmentation of the State, the collapse of the economic production and the public service, the erosion of the tax base, the continent's weak-state system is highly dependent on the access and exploitation of resources as a source of state income and survival. Weak-states are unable to provide economic and social security hence their citizens have little choice but to find alternative solutions in order to maintain reasonable levels of economic satisfaction. Two common survival strategies can be dictated. For the 'have' it has been the depletion of state fund through money laundry, corruption, embezzlement and fraud. For the "have-nots," it is total reliance on the informal sector and even ghost workers. In both cases they reduce state revenue and equally reinforce the State's inability to provide basic needs. No doubt a state of anarchy reigns. There seems to be no one in control: leading, of course, to the collapsing nature of African states (see Cornwell; Richard; Cilliers et al (eds.)).

Collapse would often go with conflict. Clearly, chauvinism, discrimination, intimidation, violence, and cultural intolerance are dangers to democracy. Mitigating segregation and fostering inclusion are key functions of

democracy. Therefore democracy and conflict management must proceed and in hand. Democracy is a system of managing social- conflict that arises from societal diversity using a set of agreed social rules. We need strong states to properly handle as well as avoid conflicts. A democratic system will enhance efforts to build capacity for consensus-building skills that feature negotiation, mediation and coalition-building capabilities.

Conflict prevention a healthy system of democracy with group participation or representation and influence in the institutions and policy decision of governance, helps prevent feelings of alienation and frustration:

Conflict management as a system for bargaining and negotiation, democracy helps manage conflicts among groups, keeping them within the boundaries of political dialogue and debate; keeping disputes within accepted arenas of negotiation and from escalating into damaging confrontation and violence;

Conflict resolution a process whereby issues are discussed, agreements arrived at and implemented;

Conflict transformation where long standing issues defy resolutions. The aim of conflict transformation approach is to change the underlying structural disparities in society.

Therefore, public policy, carefully conceived and implemented, can facilitate and engender social harmony. The direct involvement in policymaking of civil society groups and the private sector has yet to be strengthened. Presently citizen apathy is widespread, in part due high level of poverty (people are too busy trying to earn a living to be politically active), the high levels of literacy, and not least, the ideas of elections rigging keep crossing their minds. Why vote when the results are known before polling day. As such voter turn out in local and national elections is very low, generally less than 50 per cent. The case of Cameroon is very glaring in this respect. Participatory democracy is hampered by a weak-state formation. This also has a spillover effect on representative democracy. The people-directly or indirectly- are often prevented from exercising their civic responsibilities and in making their choices, which constitute governance challenges. The State is yet to penetrate into the people and the people penetrating into the structures, and output functions of these institutions.

Why a strong state?

Conversely, a Strong-State system which is the ideal form of democratic governance creates room and means for the State to involve the willingness and ability of a state to maintain social control, ensure societal compliance with effective official laws judiciously implemented, make effective policies, preserve peace and stability, encourage societal participation in state

institutions, providing basic services, managing and controlling the economy, high institutional capacity, has legitimacy, credibility and enjoying confidence from the people. The government embarks on a policy of *'inclusion' not 'exclusion'*. In short, the strong state is inclined to being *'human-oriented'*.

The poor and disadvantaged are empowered in the political, economic and social process – *"seeking the political kingdom"* with the trappings of *"belly kingdom"* being accessible to all. The wealth of the nation trickles down to the reach of all. The politics of inclusion creates equal opportunities for all to combat poverty. Poverty remains the greatest single threat to the continent's aspiration to democracy. Backed with a strong state formation, lies the possibilities of ensuring the linkage between the state, civil society and private sector. Through this linkage - participation, partnership and responsibility sharing - in nation building is assured empowering the poor in an integrated and sustainable way of addressing the poverty status of the country.

Human capital development is a comprehensive way to empowering the poor and all within the society. Given the state of global knowledge based economy, human capital development is essential to give added value to the rich natural resources potential of African countries. Here, science and technology, knowledge and education remain crucial. The processes of democratisation, development of effective regulatory institutions and governance and regulatory mechanisms at the local, national and international levels need to be at the core of development and globalisation. This is especially critical at a time when the power and influence of transitional corporations often headquartered in the developed polities, are rising rapidly. The most critical role for human resources development should relate to overcoming the wide scientific and technological divide that exist between the developed and African polities. For example, there are 2,700 scientific researchers per million population in the United States compared to fewer than 70 in Africa. Over half the population of Western Europe has access to the World Wide Web in contrast to less than 1% in Africa and Asia. The increasing privatisation and patenting of science and technology will further widen these gaps. This eventually weakens the people and state thus rendering the two more vulnerable in national and global politics. This gives rise to rethinking Africa's State- creation and development, with a focus on societal development through a concerted and innovation system.

There is a growing degree of inequities between the rich and poor nations and between the rich and poor within countries. For example, per capita GNP gap between developed and developing countries increased from 40 fold in the early 1980s to over 70 fold at present. Today one sixth of the world's population receives some 80 percent of the global income, while half the world's population lives in abject poverty on less than 1 USA dol-

lar per day. Of the 192 independent nation states in the world, over a third have a GDP of less than USA10 billion dollars in comparison to some 500 transnational corporation, each with a turn over of over USA10 billion dollars. The 1990s financial meltdown in a number of countries resulted in serious economic and social consequences, particularly in countries that lacked social safety nets and measures to deal with short-term impacts, especially on the poor. (Shah, 2005). Basic human and economic development indicators in Africa present a very bleak picture. In the past three decades or more, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) declined approximately one percent annually. Of the more than 39 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide in 2004, over 25 million (64%) were in Sub-Saharan Africa and 63% of new infections in 2004 were estimated to be in Africa. (UNAIDS/WHO 2004)

Bearing in mind that globalisation is the highest stage of scientific imperialism; the need for human resources development is imperative to prepare the people to acquire the necessary knowledge in transforming and giving added value to their natural resources. The State cannot alone accomplish this goal without forging solid partnership between other key actors, civil society and the private sector. Both scientific and traditional methods must be pulled together. The traditional will involve mobilising domestic resources and indigenous knowledge to link with modern technology and knowledge at the service of mankind. It would require a linkage between the people at home and the Diaspora.

Globalisation is not just about income and income inequality. It has to consider all aspects of human well-being. With African states coming from a weak technological base, and dependent on export of raw materials, increases their low status in global economy and debt burdens all have to be integrated into globalisation policies and processes that contribute to the pressing issues of eradicating hunger, poverty, and ensuring environmental sustainability and democratic governance. While such issues are recognised, there is a lack of commitment and means in the context of a global partnership for development. An intra-national consensus driven by collective decisions making is essential in a world of interdependencies and interrelationships. Empowerment of the people is needed to strengthen and give new impetus to the State, and for State to act in accordance with fulfilling its obligations to the people. This tripartite nature, role and function of the state creates the kind of political governance for conflict management and sustainable development and where people are inclusive and the focus for development.

That tripartite linkage can also be seen within the context of system structure and leverage of "events, patterns of behaviour and system structure." The importance is for each sector to interlink with others to produce an integrated whole without of course, loosing its independence and critical role-playing function. The same as

Box 1. Steering For Sustainable Transformation.

- **Transformation processes** self-organising and comprise human action. Uncertainty and ignorance about future system development and effects of interventions are unavoidable
- **Sustainability goals** based on criteria for long term viability of socio-economic system. Operationalising sustainability requires a delicate balance of multiple goals which are weighed differently by actors.
- **Capacities to influence** Transformation is distributed among many autonomous yet interdependent actors. There is no central control, but transformation is an emergent result of interaction.

Source: Voe (2005) Sustainability Foresight: www.sustainable-transformation.net.

the three branches of government [legislative, judiciary and executive] must maintain both interdependence and independence: work as checks and balances to produce a functional system based on the rule of law, justice, social equity, equal opportunities and progress. This balancing act or feedback loop maintains the implicit goal of the state system, while reinforcing feedback loops allow a system to set new goals—further improving the quality and living style of the people. The role of the media is fundamental in ensuring that political governance takes its rightful position in pushing ahead the empowerment of the power and in creating a strong nation state system. The freedom of the press and expression would lead to the democratisation of all African countries.

A strong State is needed to give the guided visionary direction that provides hope to the vast forgotten majority. Such visionary leadership should take and incorporate the following issues expressed in Box 1. There is need for the state to give a new direction with the present highly uneven playing field governed by the rulers of the powerful countries and producers who still provide or rely on enormous subsidies. Governments must enact a legal framework conducive to the appropriation of wealth that hitherto circulated in the public domain. Such externally generated pressure to pursue democracy is gradually weakening, while it is at the same time losing the material capacity to do so. The right to vote and to hold those in office accountable at the ballot box is a necessary element of democracy.

It is important for the State to embark on the pathway of enhanced representation – citizens becoming directly involved in policy-making, implementation and evaluation. The approaches are complementary; each seeks to improve the quality of democracy and they both have important ramifications for successfully managing conflict. Here, elections, legitimacy, accountability, and trust play important roles in institutionalising democracy and conflict

management. Without a viable system of elections, the transition to democracy remains incomplete and a weak-state emerges. The challenge for students of politics is to determine how the growth of supra-territorial social spaces is altering the activities and role of the state in contemporary history. We need strong-states in Africa and we need to empower the people to better sustain an emerging strong state in the region. Both the State and people must articulate initiatives that will contribute to harnessing the energies of the continent towards development and the eradication of poverty and tyrannical governance systems. Under the influence of globalisation the constituencies of the state have been changing.

Extreme poverty weakens democracy

The World Bank Development Report 1996 notes that the key to reducing poverty is resumed growth: Motloutung and Mears (2003) state: *“Poverty can also be reduced through the provision of public consumption goods and services for the poor, to create a social safety net for those bypassed by development process. Thus, the redistributive policies for income and asset transfers have to be developed to benefit the poorest of the poor in Africa”*. In all, poverty constitutes the single biggest threat to Africa’s aspiration to democracy. Ninsin (2001) contends: *“the weakening of Africa’s middle and working classes is part of a large processes of globalisation of poverty which is being engineered through the economic reform policies sponsored by the Bretton Woods financial conglomerates - World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as the imposition of the GATT and WTO agreements”*(Chossudovsky, 1998). Because of Africa’s weak position in the global economy, the reform policies have impoverished the majority of the population rather than ameliorating poverty. Poverty is now expanding not just horizontally across the lower classes, but vertically as well. It has now reached the ranks of the middle and upper classes” (Ninsin, 2001). The euphoria about the third wave of democratisation in Africa and the impact of globalisation wave show why the poor must be empowered.

People suffering from poverty cannot engineer and sustain democratic politics. Economic reform policies instituted by Bretton Woods’s financial conglomerates (World Bank, IMF, Western donors etc.) have politically disempowered the vast majority of the people. The State due to its undemocratic attitude uses coercive force to secure compliance with austerity it has imposed. For example, reduction of salary by 70% in 1994 and no increase in salary index since 1982 in Cameroon. In such a situation, one would expect a cycle of violence-resistance protest-violence, leading to agitation for regime change and political reforms. Strange enough, this has yet to take place in Cameroon. The Cameroon State is not one with a distributive State capacity that rea-

Box 2. Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Africa.

- Whether or not constitutional pact, which outlines acceptable rules of the political game, is agreed among the contending social forces:
- The degree of polyarchy within the pre-transition political environment:
- The level of Stateness – i.e. whether a strong or fragile state exists to modulate the political process.
- The emergence of a new world of partnership – public-private and civil society intercourse for democratic governance leading to sustainable development and quality living standard for all:
- Pushing forward an agenda of cultural difference and mix as people unite for a common goal.
- Creating a distributive state capacity system, which embodies “inclusiveness” not exclusiveness.

Source: Forje (2003) and Ninsin (2001) *The Quest for Democracy*.

ches all nooks and crannies of the society. Distributive capacity entails maximizing state responsibility for the socio-economic welfare of the citizenry, like Sweden, Norway and other socially oriented countries.

Mass poverty and disempowerment create a culture of dependence – hence the politics of the belly takes over. The State is able to control and manipulate the choices that the citizens have to make. At the same time, citizens lose their capacity to challenge and restrain the state. The state faces the same situation in relationship to the powerful economies and financial institutions. It only goes to show why globalisation makes African governments vulnerable to pressure to democratise because of their dependence on foreign capital. States dependency on foreign capital makes the poor even more vulnerable, making it vital for sustainable democratisation. Here Harbeson argues that success of democratic transition and consolidation in Africa depends largely on issues illustrated in Box 2.

Empowering the poor people means bottom-up since top-down approach does not work and will never work for a number of reasons: (i) the state and level of mock form of democracy as practised in the country: (ii) no one wants to leave power which expands the premises for corruption and poor governance: and (iii) absence of strategic ethnic accord to reinforce the peoples' belongingness to the nation. Turning to corruption, it takes two to tango. Thus we all at our various levels are responsible for the state of corruption and equally we are all responsible in the fight against alleviating this cankerworm destroying the society. The media is an important part of the democratisation process and in the general fight of the ills plaguing the society. Therefore, the force of the media should not be underestimated. With the growing impact of ICTs, much can be accomplished in the process of democratic governance and empowerment of the poor. Without this empowerment, the weak-state system would continue, so also the underdevelopment and marginalisation of the people. Basic human and economic development indicators in sub-Saharan Africa present a somewhat

bleak picture (HDR 2004). There are success stories in Africa today, yet the overall situation still calls for special consideration for the acceleration of the sustainable human development of the continent.

The new world of partnership

Political governance, conflict management and the need for empowering the poor call for a new form of partnership – State-Civil Society-Private Sector-Diaspora inter-linkages as a sustainable mechanism for addressing the ills plaguing society. It is through such concerted approach that it is possible to safeguard the integrity of policy-making process to protect the nation from real or perceived conflict interests, the importance of transparency and accountability and the ability of the people to be key actors in the development process can take centre stage. Citizens' groups have a critical role to play as partners, advocates and watchdogs, with the private sector doing normal business differently as partners in development. Building constructive relations [*state, civil society, private sector and international community*] is vital in sustaining the continents wave or quest for democratic governance and all that this entails with the key stakeholders. There has to be a level playground for the people to make their choices. These choices in the form of votes must be transferred to political power, But how fair is the electoral process and system in most African countries? How are votes transformed into seats? The governments so established, to what extent do they meet their obligations to the people?

There is need for other forces to act as checks and balances on the State. Here visionary leadership and a strong state system should bring civil society to playing a more active and coordinated role: to encourage Governments to provide a more enabling and cooperative environment for civil society and to foster debate about reforms of national and global governance, including deeper roles for civil society. Civil society should be proactive, not reactive. This kind of engagement with civil

society is necessary, because it is no longer possible for the state by itself to solve complex national and global problems, such as HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, ethnic strife and poverty. Thus the involvement of a diverse range of actors, including those from civil society and the private sector, as well as local authorities, traditional institutions, and parliamentarians, is not only essential for effective action on national and global priorities but is also a protection against further erosion of multilateralism. The changing nature of democracy calls for the incorporation of all- participatory democracy – as an instrument for conflict management including ensuring sustainable development.

The politics of 'exclusion' leads to weak states. Conversely, 'inclusion' paves the way for a strong state as a means of strengthening democracy, good management. The issue in question is that representative democracy is fine, but there must also be recognition that participatory democracy is now the trend. A very important and positive development trend is for States to promote participatory democracy as this strengthens democracy.

Framing the future: a proactive approach

After more than two decades into the post-cold war era that saw the re-birth of political pluralism on the continent with a difference, we need to re-examine the progress made so far. The democratisation wave certainly injected greater impetus - the call to order of dictatorial and military regimes systems: and to set out new guidelines for good governance. The challenge is not just to expand research, allocate more resources or develop new mechanisms of State-civil society inter-linkages (although these are critical): it fundamentally re-conceptualised the state of the field of good governance – putting the people first and getting them involved, and how the next decades and what tools and systems will be required to manage and prevent conflict.

At present the State is perceived with great suspicion. This puts great constraints and dilemma of power of the State. This antipathy to the State and to State power has a real basis, because states were organised historically against the people to defend the interests of property and privilege, and their institutional forms have always reflected this. The agenda for the State should be one of reform, to regain lost confidence, legitimacy and trust. Thus rethinking the State and making it to produce the right goods for the people constitute a major problem facing the State in Africa today.

An approach to governance that involves citizens in the work of their government enhances sustainable development and act as a mechanism for conflict management. Therefore, democracy and conflict management go hand in hand. In a democracy disputes arise, are perceived, debated and reacted to, rather than being resolved definitively. In short, democracy operates

as a conflict management system without recourse to violence. Mitigating segregation and fostering inclusion are key functions of democracy. Definitely, we cannot assume that the world of 20-50 years will replicate the way it does now. Therefore, some overarching questions for the next 25-50 years will include:

How will the people be involved in the governance system; including the place of traditional chieftaincy role in the state system?

What role will pressures for accountability, devolution of power, human rights and representation play?

To what extent will the currently marginalized group (women in particular) reach their optimal level of empowerment and be treated as equals in the nation-building and development processes?

To what extent will globalisation trend contribute to social violence and unrest, particularly in situations in which, vulnerable population segments in developing and transitional polities and economies lose access to employment, housing, security and adequate social safety nets so that States can accommodate national goals?

How will globalisation enhance the living standards of the people, improve on the governance system and quality service delivery?

How will the new information and communication technologies accelerate or impede the process?

Communication is a two-way street; citizens express their preferences to officials; officials describe and justify their actions. Communication is also inherent in citizens' right-to-know and the transparency of good governance institutions and processes. Communication is educative. Thus effective communication is an essential element of democracy and the cornerstone of civil society-government co-operation. The media was to play a more open and significant role by pointing the cameras to the hidden skeletons in the cupboards. Today, there exist greater awareness on people's rights and liberties. So far, practical applications of new information technology to reinvigorate direct democracy must be considered in transitional polities as a way of offering opportunities for citizen's participation and for collaborative decision-making should be encouraged. However, the existence of obnoxious and overzealous public officials and political leaders in wanting to uphold the old system is tantamount to the establishment of democratic governance.

The opening of the political space to accommodate all constitutes a great stride forwarding the process of conflict management. It should also be noted that not only the state is facing crisis. Political parties, too, are somewhat logged in the same situation. Political parties as agents of representation are also experiencing a severe crisis, which is manifested in increasing loss of confidence in them by the people, who consider them aloof and as an alien and professionalized sector that

Box 3. Collaborative Policy-making And Building A Strong State.

- Educating for democracy, highlighting the issues, procedures, and explaining the choices and constraints before the public;
- Highlighting the ways in which officials, administration, and civil society leaders can relate more effectively to the local media, especially in explaining the purpose, processes, and outcomes of collaborative policy-making; and
- Developing new communications strategies made possible by advances in information technologies, and in particular, considering how the Internet can be used to enhance participation in democracy and transparency in governance.

offers them no possibility of a shared future. Although progress has been made in terms of the holding of elections and institution-building, serious deficiencies remain in terms of the control that citizens are able to exercise over the actions of the State.

Among the roles that the media strategies play in facilitating collaborative policy-making and in building a strong state with the empowerment of the people includes (Box 3).

While there are clear answers for promoting democracy in a diverse setting beset by the problem of ethnic politics, the issues raised illustrate how democracy can be conceived as a system for conflict management and of empowering the people. Functional democracy is a set of institutions and practices for conflict management and conflict prevention. It also calls for power sharing among the stakeholders – State, Civil Society and the Private sector equally involving inputs from the Diaspora. It should be noted that those in the Diaspora are enriched with knowledge most valuable to the society. Valuable knowledge that should be transferred back home in ensuing the development of the society. Presently, it has been discovered that people in the Diaspora transfer more money back home than do Western aid donors.

Where do we go from here? The way forward should be one of dialogue, partnership, participation and responsibility sharing as the most articulate roadmap for cultivating and sustaining a culture of democratic governance. The strategy today is to emphasis consensus and empowerment - power to the people and equal opportunities for all – and to urge the key actors both public, non-governmental systems and private sectors to work together for the common good. The empowerment of women becomes a must in the process. Power sharing leads to an integrative approach, it provides incentives for multi-ethnic co-operation, avoids using ethnic-groups as the building blocs of a common society. Rather, it seeks to build multi-ethnic political coalitions (e.g. political parties), to create incentives for political leaders to be moderate on living.

As democracy is not an event but a complex and continuous process, it is essential that its inception and development are properly managed and nurtured. It is hoped that the views set out will help in the process of promoting and developing democracy at all levels.

Empowering the people and ensuring a democratically strong-state provide the best options of ensuring sustainability. Expanding participatory democracy is important. Facilitating citizen participation in decision-making process can augment electoral democracy by helping to build trust and confidence and by managing or resolving disputes that cannot be arbitrated by elections alone. Political governance should set up a democratic system that ensures *government of, by and for the people*, not government against the people. The playground for peoples' choices must be widened, made level and with greater dynamics of citizenship participation.

Now that the world changes continuously, we need to adjust ourselves to be in line with it. In this regard, the essence of modernisation should be to satisfy the demands of social justice and economic competitiveness, traditionally seen as contradictory. There is need to renew the capacities of the state to address economic and social needs less as a provider, than as an enabler or promoter of opportunity, and we must champion a hard-headed multilateralism true to our values but sufficiently credible to harness and deploy Western power in a progressive form. The State must create the necessary enabling environment that ensures power to the people, equality, equal opportunities to all and development as the underlying reforms that combine justice and growth. Across the continent, democratic institutions and practices remain fragile and, in some countries, liable to reversal. Legislative, judicial, human rights, administrative, economic management and security institutions and skills need to be consolidated. Political stability, predictability and legitimacy need to be fostered as essential conditions for sustainable human development and poverty eradication. Partnerships between governments and civil society, as well as participatory decision-making, need further strengthening. Strengthening this decision-making process is a significant way towards conflict management. We need to begin as a first step to recognise existing state and governance deficiencies and the urgent need for promoting good governance.

Surely, first and foremost among the challenges facing African states is the clash between modernisation and tradition, and strengthening of governmental structures

Box 4.

- Innovative strategies to enhance citizen participation in the governance
- Mechanisms of negotiation, mediation and facilitation towards effective good governance, management of citizen participation efforts:
- Exploring the relationship between delimitation or failure of State governance institutions and the emergence of conflicts
- The need to overcoming local, national and regional xenophobia and intolerance:
- Fostering mechanisms for constructive State/Civil society interaction, including relations with press-media and the private sector, which can serve to diffuse potential conflict triggers:
- Decentralisation as a way of promoting democratic governance and expanding participatory democracy
- Infusion of conflict management/conflict prevention principles, tools and approaches into governance agendas and programmes:
- Promoting local and participatory democracy at all levels of society:
- Developing democracy within political parties as a key strategy to promoting democracy in the country
- The democratisation process should proceed with economic development
- Human capacity building is imperative in any form of democratisation process:
- Science and Technology should be an integral part in the efforts of nation building to give added value to the natural resources of the country.
- Using ICTs and other communication media systems to promote and enhance the democratic process in society

be more inclusive and institutional capacities to effectively manage development and the eventual road to a United Africa, without of course, losing its cultural heritage and indigenous values. Moreover, the challenges of transition will be faced with much pressure from the international community dominated by the West. Outdated practices and approaches, limited resources, corruption, limited experience of government-civil society partnership in policy-making and weak civil services all hamper the effectiveness of democratic governance.

Political governance is a clarion call for Africa to start building a progressive continent, a continent that cares for its people by “*putting them first*”. The State must now or never start working with the people, the private sector and other civil society organisations to solve complex development problems. Empowerment of the people and ensuring their maximum participation, partnership and responsibility sharing are the virtues for creating and sustaining hopes, security and certainty for the people.

Therefore, fostering inclusion, transparency, accountability, integrity and effectiveness are not only characteristics of the good governance to which everyone in Africa should be entitled; they are also essential tools for achieving sustainable development. There is need for a progressive agenda and a new national and international order. There is need to share power, to protect, empower and prepare the people for a better future.

In the final analysis, political governance, a strong state and empowering the poor, calls for the following issues to be adequately attended to: (i) the issue of political leadership with the capacity and capability to obtain ‘non-coerced, voluntary compliance which enables followers to

attain goals which they share with the leader (Cartwright, 1983; Blondel, 1987); leaders with the charisma and influence over the group behaviour and is targeted at the achievement of a set goals (Uhr, 2002; Blondel, 1987):

(ii) the kind of state system established at independence and how the state has functioned since then. Was the State-system designed to fail from the onset, which ended with what (Ake 1995) sees as justifying the ‘*criminalisation of the political dissent and the inexorable march to political monolithism*’: and (iii) the role of the global political system towards the continent. What has been the reaction and attitude of the West towards the political and economic transformation of the region? These and other related issues interact to set the environment for a weak-strong-state system and the concept of power and empowerment of the people within the state and how it sets the development agenda and path for the society. There are Some Recommendations as shown in Box 4.

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