6. From Political Transitions to Good Governance in Africa: Resolving the Socio-Economic Roots of Insecurity in the 21st Century.

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Abstract:

Over the past two decades, African countries have experienced major political transitions that seemed to have checkmated the excesses of governments with authoritarian tendencies leading to aggravated security and development challenges. What has been the impact of democratic governance on socio-economic development and security in Africa, past and present? To what extent has the opening up of the political space impacted on the peoples' living standards in Africa during the same period? Understanding the impact of democratic administrations on the provisions of social and economic needs of the citizens will provide real insights into the roots of insecurity in Africa’s quest for national stability and protection of their citizens. The perspective of this paper is that one of the causes of escalating trends of insecurity and obstacles to the achievement of human security as well as guarantee of national stability is heavily, if not fundamentally, bad governance. We identify and interrogate substantive issues involved in governance styles which create the current socio-economic challenges, and serves as the source of human insecurity, in Africa. The paper identified good governance approach in tackling the...
raging menace of insecurity in the continent. Finally, the paper concluded that one important missing link in the current democratization as well as guarantee of security in Africa is the challenge of flawed democracy.

**Keywords:**

Democratisation, Political Transition, Governance, Democracy and Insecurity
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Introduction

Democracy returned to sub-Saharan African region in 1990s after almost three decades of authoritarian rule by the different shades of regimes that either overthrew or took over from the initial democratic administrations that the colonial powers handed the institutions of government to at the time of their departure from the continent in late 1950s until the mid-1960s. Since democratic governance returned to Africa in the 1990s, the nature of governance in the region has attracted critical debates by scholars and political analysts who were either skeptical about democracies in Africa or concerned about the negative impacts of their style of governance. It should be noted that governance challenges are causing rising concern from Cairo to the Cape because of the consequences of bad governance; manifesting in corrupt practices, which in turn, create aggravated development problems and throw up security threats to human lives in Africa. This state of affair consequently raises some critical questions about the complementarity of democracy and development in Africa. It also further raises serious concern about whether democratic government could survive and consolidate in the region where politics leads to deprivation and mismanagement of state resources appears to be taking firm roots over the principles of social contract responsibility, government accountability and transparency in governance. Finally, what is the explanation for bad governance in almost all the African countries? Or better still, what accounts for 'business as usual’ syndrome and how can this governance albatross be tamed and/or eradicated?

Stemming from the foregoing, we examine and analyse in this paper the challenge of democratic governance in Africa as it provides a framework for understanding and explaining the character and governing styles of the ‘range of political regimes’ (van de Walle, 2002) in the continent. Extant literature portrays socio-economic challenges in African countries and blame them on historical experiences, especially, colonialism and imperialism, thereby giving the impression that unless the continent radically disconnect from imperial and neo-colonial vestiges, development will continue to elude the region. But, the failure of contemporary political regimes to initiate and sustain sufficient socio-economic development capable of alleviating peoples’ survival in terms of wants as well as allaying their fears about living standards, constitute new and aggravated security threats not only to

1Hereafter simply referred to as ‘Africa’.
Theorizing Democracy and Democratic Governance

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent emergence of a ‘New World Order’ in the 1990s, no doubt, produced significant impacts on the world system. One distinctive effect is the worldwide resurgence of democratization; or to borrow the term used by Huntington (1991)², the ‘third wave’ of democratization. Evidently, African³ states were not exempted from the radical and transformative impacts of the post-Cold War era as previous autocratic regimes of military and one-party genre that had dotted the continent less than one decade after independence in the 1960s began to collapse. Overall, the wave of democratization that swept away authoritarianism in Africa was largely a product of pressures exerted on the states by internal and external forces (Agbu, 1996: 1-16; Osaghae, 1999:3-25)⁴. Importantly, the rapid, snowballing increase in the number of democracies in Africa brought to an end the era of dictatorial military, one-party civilian regimes and apartheid restrictive political system with authoritarian tendencies leading to aggravated security and development challenges in the continent. With the transitions to a semblance of civilian democracy,

²Samuel Huntington. The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1991; the coining of this phrase is attributed to Samuel Huntington, who observed that transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes occur in waves.

³ ‘African’ refers to sub-Saharan African countries


democratic consolidation, but also to resolving the roots of insecurity in more profound ways that one extant literature is yet to capture. Our perspective in this paper corroborates Peter Lewis’ (2008) contention of Growth Without Prosperity in Africa to emphasize that the obstacle to resolving the issues of development and prosperity which are also the socio-economic roots of insecurity in Africa, are fundamentally governance challenge that is a product of the quality of democratic governments put in place in African countries, with the help of external donors. We argue that the failure of contemporary democracies in Africa to fulfil the goals of aspiration for democracy is largely a function of unresolved crisis of governance; the disconnection between the aspirations of those who govern and the citizens. This perspective is placed within the broad context of the debate about democratic government performance that puts emphasis on social contract theory; which places the responsibilities for the provision of political goods and ensuring security in the domain of government. Our conclusion in this paper is that, improvement in the substantive quality and governance of ‘the range of regimes’, which impacts negatively on security, is one important missing link in the current effort aimed at building developmental states and improving human security in African countries.

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scholars and political observers were optimistic that, for the second time, a major turning point in the post-independence history of African countries had come. In other words, the sheer number of countries that made the difficult transitions from full-blown military/civilian authoritarian regimes to kinds of multiparty democratic administrations offers some hope that the continent could still redeem itself, despite widespread pessimism, from internal socio-economic problems.

The model of liberal democracy has gained growing international currency over the past two decades (Bardham and Carothers, 2003; Leftwich, 2005) to become a “universal value” (Sen, 1999; McFaul, 2004) and ‘the only game in town’ (Linz and Stepan, 1996:15) because of its value for development. Despite the fact that scholars might have emphasized different aspects of democracy, there is a general consensus that the emergence as well as manifestation of liberal democracy which has some basic principles and attributes, namely: citizens participation in choosing their leaders; political tolerance; accountability; transparency; regular, free, and fair elections; control of the abuse of power; the separation of the powers of the executive, legislature and judiciary; guarantee of human rights; a multi-party system and the rule of law (Edigheji, 2005:3) stands out among others. Therefore, moving beyond procedural characteristics of democracy, it is necessary for democratic government to possess and imbibe certain attributes to be able to consolidate and achieve the purpose for which the people aspire and struggle for it.

The gap between achieving the purpose and the importance and the quality as well as the governing styles of democratic governments in place since the 1990s is gradually undermining peoples’ optimism. The spread of ‘illiberal’ democracies (Zakaria, 1997), the consolidation of ‘pseudo-democracies’ (van de Walle, 2002) and their performance crisis (Osaghae, 2007) as well as the increasing failure of government to fulfill its pre-election promises (Ojo, 2015) have eroded the value of, and confidence in the ‘newly’ emerged liberal democracies in Africa. Therefore, despite advances recorded in Africa’s political sphere with the conduct of multiparty elections across the

continent, the continent’s missed socio-economic opportunities are causing disturbing nightmare among scholars, political observers and even international democracy assistance donors from Cairo to the Cape.

Since the 1990s therefore, some scholars have been skeptical about the value of the ‘new’ democracies and therefore called for caution in assuming that the ‘new’ democratic governments in Africa would turn political, economic and social situations around. However, some other people within and outside the continent were optimistic that democratic governments have the potential not only to empower the states but also the capacity of states to confront social-economic challenges rampant in African countries. These skepticism and optimism converged at the critical points of antecedents of poor governance outcomes and contradictions inherent in the performance of democratic governments; which is popularly believed to be a facilitator of development. Accordingly, Munetsi (2011) concludes that most contemporary governments in Africa have so far failed to produce the much expected political goods in the continent. On our part, we argue that the failure of both the immediate post-independence political regimes and contemporary democracies in Africa to fulfil the goals of social contract is largely a function of unresolved crisis of governance; the disconnection between the aspirations of those who govern and the citizens. Our arguments in this paper are analyzed in twofold. First, regardless of whatever optimistic impression that the discourse about complementarity of relationship between democracy and development must have created, transforming the quality of political regimes in Africa is central to the resolution of the socio-economic development problems in the continent. Second, given the fact that the excesses of political leaders through the institutions of governance precipitates and accentuates socio-economic challenges successful panacea for these challenges as well as policy options to addressing the roots of insecurity must understand and reflect upon the current continuity in governance styles of contemporary democracies in Africa. These two arguments generate critical questions. What has been the impact of democratic rule on politics and security in Africa since the 1990s? To what extent


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has the opening up of the political space impacted on political and economic governance in Africa since the same period? Understanding the impact of democratic administrations on socio-economic development will provide real insights into the roots of insecurity in Africa’s quest for state security and protection of their citizens. Finally, what are the alternatives for resolving the socio-economic challenges in Africa, especially as the continent sails through the 21st century and at a time when the phenomenon of democratic consolidation continue to generate far-reaching academic and public policy concerns?

**Democracy, Security and Governance: Conceptual and Theoretical Nexus**

Democracy is generally conceived as a process of choosing and changing political leaders, primarily through regular elections. A classical definition, in this regard, is that offered by Samuel Huntington who conceived a political system democratic, “to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population are eligible to vote” (Huntington, 1991:7). Larry Diamond (2005) also defined democracy ‘as a system of government in which the people choose their leaders and representations, and can replace them, in regular, free, and fair elections. These definitions tend to focus on necessary but insufficient barometer of democracy. Such a focus on elections and the electoral process alone has generated protracted debate against the backdrop of the tendency for the promoters of democracy to place faith in the importance of the rituals of elections as the core of democracy. There is an implicit assumption that elections would not just be a foundation stone but a key generator, over time, of further democratic reform (Carothers, 2002). Given the trend of and misgiving about the ‘illiberal’ tendencies of democracies in many parts of Africa, it is increasingly evident that the process of democratization entails not only the transition to formal democracy, but also the more difficult attempt to consolidate the process. Analysts have therefore found out that relying on mostly minimalist definitions of democracy cannot appropriately capture the spectrum of issues of Africa’s democratization. Rather attention should be given to the one that gives greater prominence to achieving important attributes such as accountability, rule of law and separation of powers and how to consolidate such substantive democratic government. Beyond consolidation, deepening the institutions of governance and their operational principles are also important because of the growing realization that democracy is the most appropriate framework for the achievement of social and economic progress. Hence, democracy must be perceived as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. Claude Ake even emphasized that the success of a ‘liberal’ democracy would be determined by the extent to which it places the masses (populace) at the epicentre of the democratization agenda (Ake, 2000). In other words, the success of democracy is best measured by the quality of its governance apparatuses; as it provides the framework through
which peoples’ aspirations for socio-economic development and other human development indices can be initiated, achieved and secured.

Because the term ‘governance’ means different things to different people, it is useful to use the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) definition of ‘governance’ among the many existing definitions of the concept. UNDP defines governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences” (UNDP, 1997: 2-3). Particularly implicit and important in the UNDP’s definition of governance is that the process of governance encompasses not just the state, but the private sector and civil society as well. In other words, all the three actors are viewed as critical to a complete process of good governance. The role of the state is viewed as that of creating a stable political and legal environment conducive to sustain democracy, while civil society institutions and organizations are viewed as a means of facilitating political and social interaction and mobilizing groups to participate in economic, social and political activities (UNDP, 1997). Another definition of governance, perhaps very instructive to the analysis in this paper, is the one offered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It defines governance as the use of political authority and exercise of political control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development (OECD, 1995:14). These broad definitions encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Kofi Annan gave a definition of governance which depicts the functions of a government. Governance, according to him, means ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration (cited in Weiss, 2000:797) 14.

The quality of democracy and governance styles of the government remains very germane in the analysis of how African states can achieve the essence and value of democratic government. Implicit in the aspiration of and struggle by African people for democracy is the desire for good governance. At the core of concern about democratic governments in Africa is their illiberal characterististics and governance styles; that is, the extent to which they possess and obey the rules and practices according to which government and state powers as well as authority are exercised (Kjaer, 2004) 15. In this regard, accountability and checks and balances; which are very important in the value chain of

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democracy-development project\textsuperscript{16} are not only a part and parcel of an effort to build stronger
democratic institutions, but also sets agenda for state capacity and empowerment for effective
service delivery. Therefore, good governance is the link between democracy and development;
indeed where good governance is missing, achieving the essence of peoples' aspiration for
democracy becomes very difficult, if not impossible.

This assertion challenges the explanations and justifications that place emphasis of achieving
security on the orthodox conception of threat to the state and at the same time underestimate the
importance of human security. The thrust in this paper subscribes to the idea that these two types of
securities: state and human security, are mutually inclusive; because, achieving national political
stability and state security largely depends on human security and vice versa. Against the tendency in
extant literature and among policy analysts which either underestimates or relegates to the
background, issues connected to the impact of governing styles of contemporary political regime sin
Africa (van de Walle, 2002) on human security, this paper presents the inseparable link between
socio-economic challenges and insecurity in the continent. The contention in this paper is that even
though some historical factors: colonialism and neo-colonial political and economic structures might
have had negative impacts on African countries’ economies, nonetheless, the political elites that have
been in-charge of governing African countries since the 1960s have failed to commence the process
of socio-economic transformation in the continent. The trend of blaming Africa's persistent socio-
economic challenges on colonialism and imperialism has, thus, become inadequate, unsatisfactory
and unhelpful in the discourse as well as quest for development in the continent.

**Democracy and Good Governance as solution to Africa’s Socio-Economic Roots
of Insecurity**

The discourse of security has profited little from the insight one might gain from looking at the
impact of human insecurity on national stability, while the field of development has largely neglected
the complexity of state security. The concept of security has become topical in Africa, as elsewhere,
since the end of the Cold War. The contemporary relevance of security emanated from a broader
appreciation that security goes beyond the traditional or conventional realist notion that places
emphasis on the state as the core beneficiary of security. Hence, since the end of the Cold War and
with the emergence of new forms of non-military threats to human well-being and survival, some
scholars have been pushing for a fundamental rethinking of the scope of security studies (Baldwin,
1995; Mearshiemer, 2001; Waltz, 2000).The imperative of rethink is against the backdrop that at its

\textsuperscript{16}Miliken and Krause, 2007 op cit.
core, security includes protection of the people from want and fear\textsuperscript{17}. Rajesh Basrur even argued that broad or complete security must necessarily encompass peoples’ security which should include a range of physical, social, economic and environmental needs that are best captured as ‘human security’ (Basrur, 2001). The conception of broad security is best described in the words of Lloyd Axworthy\textsuperscript{18}:

“It includes security against economic deprivation, an acceptable quality of life, and a guarantee of fundamental human rights. The concept of human security recognizes the complexity of the human environment and accepts that the forces influencing human security are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. At a minimum, human security requires that basic needs are met, it also acknowledges that sustained economic development, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity are as important to global peace as arms control and disarmament” (Axworthy, 1997: 184).

The end of the Cold War and the nature of violent conflicts has not only transformed the conceptual meaning as well as the importance of security but also brought to the fore different culprits and victims of ‘new’ threats to peace and security within national boundaries, which could spread in real times to regional and global arena. Because contemporary intrastate violent conflicts affects the citizens directly with profound consequences on their entire life cycle (Ukeje, 2005)\textsuperscript{19}, the individuals has become a units of analysis of growing prominence than the state in the considerations of security problems. The inability of governments to provide their citizens with the social and economic dimensions of security (UNDP, 1994)\textsuperscript{20} would make the citizens and inhabitants vulnerable to socio-


\textsuperscript{18} Lloyd Axworthy was former Canadian External Affairs Minister


economic wants and bring fears of personal survival unto the people (Alkire, 2003; Liotta and Owen, 2006; Gomez, Gasper and Mine, 2013) 21.

At independence, African citizens desired a better life, but they experienced negative benefits of political freedom throughout the post-independence period. This situation perhaps explains why post-independence administrations in most African states forcefully gave way for one-party and military regimes under the guise of corrective measure to governance shortfalls of the earlier political regimes. The dominant experience of African citizens and inhabitants from the 1960s to early 1990s can be summarized as follows: failure of the state and elites to address African development and democracy; crisis of autocratic rule, poverty and societal withdrawal; failures of structural adjustment programs; lack of internal opposition; democratic transitions with varied outcomes; and the endured disappointment arising from autocratic regime’s disdain for democracy, accounted for Africa’s socio-economic woes. However, in the late 1980s African countries witnessed a wave of competitive multi-party elections across the continent. Given the hostile socio-economic conditions prevalent in many African countries, the political transition from non-democratic to democratic government was interpreted as a new beginning (Zack-Williams, 2002) 22. For the Africans, as well as keen political observers, the period presents the continent with an opportunity not only to replace the autocratic regimes but to also checkmate the excesses of these regimes with authoritarian tendencies leading to aggravated security and development challenges. Thus, the quest for and struggle by African peoples for democratic governance were conceived as means to important ends rather than an end in itself; one that is aimed at establishing democratic governments with a material value to improve the quality of life of the people. Since the experiences of political transitions in Africa, what has been the impact of democratic rule on politics and governance in Africa?

No doubt, the post-independence African countries inherited weak and ineffective governance institutions, designed to serve colonial interests with little value for post-independence African states (ECA, 2009:245). This situation was aggravated by the impact of authoritarian rule in many African countries since the early years of independence; as it further undermined the already weak capacity bequeathed by colonial rulers. For instance, military governments undermined institutions of democracy, namely, the constitutions, political parties, the media and the judiciary, while the one-

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party political regimes were authoritarian in context and content of governance. Added to this domestic challenge was the external dimension to the problem of governance in Africa. Although, regarded as a panacea, the various economic and development prescriptions of the Breton Woods institutions (International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) in the 1980s, such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and external borrowing, also undermined the capacity of public institutions in health and education, as well as the civil service and public enterprises (ECA, 2005). In many respects, international technical assistance measures in support of capacity building in African countries were found wanton (Bar-On, 1997; Heidhues and Obare, 2011; Bar-On, 2013)\(^23\). Rather than ameliorate development challenges, many developing nations, including African countries, were indebted and in poverty due to the policies of IMF and the World Bank\(^24\). Consequently, poor African countries that became indebted as a result of bad governance, in the first place, were required to lower the standard of living of their citizens. Hence, external measures to help development project did not often lead to improved and sustained public-sector performance because they failed to apply the tools within the framework of mutually benefiting goals and also failed to link them to organizational and institutional developments.

All the above stated conditions were largely prevalent in most, if not in all, African countries in the 1980s until 1990s when political transition began. Despite the political transitions that had taken place in the respective national political order, governance is, to say the best, bad and the political regimes are neither democratic nor autocratic. The pathologies of illiberal, corrupt and benevolent political regimes have had and continue to have far-reaching socio, political, and economic consequences on citizens’ welfare. Poverty has become entrenched, reflecting the resources wasted by corruption and distorted investment. Chronic fiscal drain, as a result of capital flight continues ultimately, to drive away crucial resources in terms of direct and indirect foreign investment. Furthermore, in the absence of state financial capacity and will to address public health problems, health issues: HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and new viruses (Ebola) will proliferate, as well as mutate across borders (USAID, 2002)\(^25\). In the fertile soil of mostly weak and fragile African states (Eghosa,


\(^{24}\) In effect, the IMF and World Bank which imposed debt repayment and economic restructuring policies required poor African countries to reduce spending on things like health, education and development; thereby made debt repayment and other economic restructuring policies the priority.

\(^{25}\) United States Agency for International Development (USAID), (2002) Foreign Aid in the National Interest. (Washington, D.C: USAID), Chapter 1: Promoting Democratic Governance. Available at:
2007), the feckless legal system, organized crime networks would easily take roots, threatening the rule of law and security through terrorism, piracy, fraud, counterfeiting, kidnapping, money laundering and trafficking in weapons, drugs and people (USAID, 2002). Within the national boundaries, African countries also experience crisis-prone polity with severe consequences on human security and their economies.

All these negative, illiberal and antidemocratic consequences are prevalent in almost all the ‘new’ democratic states in Africa. The Nigeria Niger Delta attacks on petroleum pipelines and the rampant cases of kidnapping for ransom are instructive here. The collapse of democracy in Niger, Cote d’Ivoire, Egypt and Zimbabwe, as well as the prolonged civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia are clear indications that countries could have competitive national elections and yet have government that is characterized by governance that fails to generate public goods and end up losing public confidence and legitimacy. Few African leaders have been able to deliver and sustain good governance in Africa; either by promoting the people’s welfare and restraining the abuse of power or by advancing the process of institutional accountability among the branches of governments. Even when some leaders are sincerely committed to reform, the absence of institutional mechanisms, or the existent of weak regulatory mechanisms to monitor and restrain abuse of power eventually degrades the quality and performance of governance. These mechanisms include an independent judiciary that enforces clear and predictable laws, an elected parliament that can check the power of the executive, and a civil society that can participate in making and implementing policy. Also, when governance is open to the scrutiny and involvement of a wide range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), interest groups, think-tanks and mass media, it is more likely to be transparent, public spirited and thus becomes human welfare compliant.

The thinking and the perception of promoters of democracy and development in Africa seems to be based on the assumption that democratic transitions in the continent are built on the foundations of coherent, functioning states. But in reality, many of the countries that were tucked under military/civilian autocratic regimes are not only trying to democratize but are also more fundamentally grappling with the task of building a capable state. This is because there had not been any fundamental changes in the character of the ruling elites in African countries, except for very few ones. What the continent has experienced is basically a change in the context but not in the content of political governance. In fact, in some countries, what we witness is the transition of old, unrepentant, recalcitrant but corruptly enriched political elites from previous autocratic regimes of their respective countries to contemporary political regimes. How then can countries in Africa or the so-called ‘new’ democracies ensure good governance in order to promote and sustain socio-economic

development in the continent? The democratization process should simply not stop at political transitions, but go further to the developmental and consolidation stages to become deeply rooted democratic, stable and prosperous national, regional and continental environments in Africa. The history of most post-Cold War new governments in African states has been characterized by monumental governance failures. After about two decades of political transitions, culminating in change of governments, most African countries’ political systems are still characterized by illiberal democratic structures whose governance styles are antithetical to development. These illiberal structures originated and developed from lack of institutional capacity building that are supposed to support and strengthen human and political institution’s ability to effectively design, implement and evaluate development activities according to democratic aspiration.

In the realization that the numerous political transitions in Africa over the years have had little impact on the politics and governance styles of their respective countries, some political analysts and observers of political and development trends in Africa have started to question the value and essence of democratic approach to solving the continent’s socio-economic challenges. African countries, saddled with many unresolved socio-economic challenges of the 20th century, started the 21st century with added political governance challenges. To address these challenges, the continent must tackle its human and institutional governance capacity deficits. The first step in tackling these challenges must come from Africa itself. If African countries are to forge ahead with their development visions, they must build their governance capacities. While African governments should be in the forefront of their capacity-building efforts, the cost could be so huge that they would not be able to achieve their objective without external assistance. Therefore, mobilizing the resources from both domestic and external sources is needed to finance capacity building and utilization. However, external assistance for capacity building should complement rather than compete with or substitute for indigenous initiative and effort.

The need for capacity building should be driven by demands for transparency and accountability in Africa’s democratic governance. The capacity deficit remains one of the major constraints to putting Africa on the path to accelerated growth and sustainable development. The capacity deficit manifest in lack of or inadequate regulatory institutions to checkmate governance excesses. Where these institutions exist, their incapacitation is the critical missing link in Africa’s governance and democratization process. Human development entails enormous socio-economic transformation which in turn, requires the building of appropriate capacities to ensure its achievement (Mohhiddin, 2007). African governments have launched capacity-building initiatives such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). APRM is a mechanism aimed at promoting the political, social and economic objectives of NEPAD. However, the obstacles to the realization of APRM objectives are too numerous to the extent that such objectives remains largely in principles than in substance. The African Governance Forum (AGF) recognized
that capacity is important to ensuring good governance and the delivery of services. What is largely absent is the commitment, on the part of African countries, to issues of capacity building for development and the building of the capable state. The realization should coincide with consensus and determination to address the capacity deficit of the institutions of governance so that they can deliver services efficiently, effectively, equitably and predictably. The unprecedented upsurge in and intensification of violent internal conflicts in most countries in Africa since the end of the Cold War is, in part, one of the clearest expressions of reacting to the challenges emanating from governance shortfall. This can be rightly termed, the ‘democratic challenge’ to human development in Africa.

Apart from the threats that democratic challenge pose to people within and outside the territorial boundaries of states; there is a legitimate fear that identity and resource-induced conflicts could undermine whatever modest political progress has been achieved in African countries at a time when national security infrastructures are so weak (and most states are becoming fragile tending towards collapse) as to allow consolidation of democracy. The imperative of democratic governance serving as the irreducible requirement for promoting socio-economic development in Africa cannot be overemphasized. It is important to state that the development, promotion and sustenance of socio-economic issues can only best be guaranteed under a liberal democratic government, where institutional capacity is enhanced for better performance. However, most parts of African countries continue to experience worsening socio-economic conditions compared to other regions of the world, despite visible advances in the political spheres since the 1990s. Intrastate conflicts such as civil wars, youth restiveness, ethnic and religious clashes and other violent crises continue to contribute to state fragility and political instability. Fragile and unstable polities with its consequential policy are in turn responsible for sustained underdevelopment and weak/fragile governments that are saddled with the responsibility of protecting their populations. Hence, the larger society is rendered vulnerable. These challenges to human development and democratic consolidation are linked to human and political factors (O’Brien and Leichenko, 2007). Socio-economic issue is discerned as a worldwide or regional public good. This explains why African democratic governments should commit human and material resources to encourage the development, formulation, and implementation of strategies, policies and actions to provide social and economic goods for all their citizens. How can this plausible goal of liberal democracy be achieved? What should be the role of the state as a primary provider of socio-economic issue, and in what significant ways have democratization made African countries capable or otherwise in advancing human development? It is within this framework that the quality of democracy that is capable of providing an enviable environment for the promotion of social and economic goods in African countries will be examined. There is a significant correlation between and among the quality of democracy, political stability, and legitimacy, and progress toward consolidation of democracy (Diamond, 2009). All of the democracies that have broken down since 1999 were illiberal and fragile. According to Larry Diamond, these troubled and fragile states also suffer from other problems as well. Generally speaking, such states
are usually poor and poorly governed, politically unstable with deeply polarized class, ethnic, or other lines of cleavage, and executive power is seriously abused (Diamond, 2009:2-3). Two tested and confirmed propositions about the quality of democracy and its performance are that ‘when democracies have higher quality they tend to perform better’ and also, ‘democracies last longer when they perform better’. There are considerable accumulations of evidence for these propositions. Liberal, sustainable and performing democracies are achievable through deliberate and consistent restraint on institutions of governance. Regulatory restraints will not only enhance the capacity of institutions of governance, but also checkmate the unwarranted and obnoxious discharge of their constitutional powers. These objectives of regulatory mechanisms, forms the analytical perspective in this paper.

The holding of competitive, free and fair elections by universal suffrage is a necessary, but not in itself sufficient, condition for liberal democratic government. Democracy is a system of government whereby the whole of society can participate, at every level, in the decision-making process and keep control of it (Boutros-Ghali, 2003). There can be no democracy without checks and balances among the institutions of governance. Steven Fish (2006) has developed an index of parliamentary powers that cut across the presidential/parliamentary distinction. Fish does find that the power of legislatures to checkmate executive governance excesses is crucial to democratic consolidation. In the absence of strong legislatures (and broader constraints on executive authority) elected executives tend to abuse and aggrandize their power, thereby diminishing the quality of democracy. Likewise, in polities with weak legislatures, political institutions drift and stagnate rather than develop and mature. As a result, citizens, through their elected and civil servants, find it difficult to control and exercise vertical accountability over the human and political institutions of governance. It should be noted that each of these consequences- weak constraints on the executive, abuse of executive power and weak legislatures- has been associated in the historical case study literature with democratic crisis and eventual breakdown. For instance, Ghana, Namibia and Benin, which have become more democratic since the 1990s are said to adopt stronger parliamentary powers in their constitutions.

There is a common, core problem in all badly governed democracies. That is, pervasive corruption. Corruption is a major challenge to governance, and indeed, development in Africa. It erodes the capacity of the state to deliver services efficiently, provide security and maintain peace, order and social stability. When deep-seated, corruption generates poverty and turns resource-rich countries into low-income, backward societies. According to Economic Commission for Africa’s report, many

27 Larry Diamond, 2009 op cit.
African countries are trapped in this cycle of corruption, poverty and underdevelopment (UNECA, 2009). Corruption usually affects its victims (in this case African countries) in three significant ways. First, it undermines the country's ability to achieve its desired socio-economic (like education, health, rural roads and electricity) and other development goals as resources meant for them are usually diverted for personal use. Second, it increases the cost of doing public business (governance), and third, it is a disincentive for foreign direct investment. Although, the pervasiveness of corruption, especially in African countries, has generated momentum to address the problem, to eliminate corruption, purposeful leadership and the rule of law are indispensable in the crusade. Within the countries, building a critical anti-corruption constituency in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and in the media and civil society is also important. Former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan once pointed out that corruption causes enormous harm by impoverishing national economies, threatening democratic institutions, undermining the rule of law and facilitating terrorism (Webb, 2005). Although, many African countries have ratified the AU Convention, their commitment to this document remains more in formal than substantive. At the national levels too, most of them have initiated and established anti-corruption institutions, but the missing link is the lack of political will to institute serious investigation, prosecute and punish the guilty. Rescuing African countries from the abyss of corruption will require reinventing the anti-corruption institutions where they are non-existent and strengthen them where they already exist.

A country’s constitution determines and spells out the distribution of political power in a democracy. The purpose and effectiveness of political power are products of the dynamic interplay of constitutional provisions, the political dispositions and capabilities of those managing the organs of government. Each of these organs is empowered to checkmate the other. Powers are separated to facilitate and ensure checks and balances. The principal objective of the check and balance is to ensure strict conformity to the provision of the constitution and to strengthen accountability and transparency. However, the tendency of the executive (with the power of the purse) to dominate the other two organs of government, usually frustrates the regulatory power of the two organs over the executive (ECA, 2009).

**Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion**

This paper presents analysis of endemic social and economic deprivation in most of the ‘new’ democratic societies in Africa as well as the role of democratic governments in creating these socio-

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28 In Africa, continent-wide and regional instruments have emerged to tackle the problem. For instance, the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AU Convention) was founded in 2003, and the Economic Community for West African States and the Southern Africa Development Community has developed regional frameworks.
economic challenges. The analysis hinges on the importance of human security based on a broad view that focuses on the living standards of the citizenry and the social contractual responsibilities of the state to ensure this human security. It has been argued that African states should perceive state security; and by extension, political/national stability as dependent on human security. In other words, the perception of ensuring security in Africa should transcend the narrow, one-way thought about the source of insecurity to national stability. Furthermore, our analysis has also emphasized that the source of violent conflict and its attendant insecure environment goes beyond the limited focus on the suspected greed as well as personal interests of the insurgent groups within and outside the state. Rather, conflict analysts should also consider the role of the ‘so called’ African democratic governments in laying the foundation for the festering of citizens’ disaffection which might transcend into group grievances that could ignite agitations and finally lead to violent conflicts as the state tries to suppress peoples’ legitimate demands from their governments. In a nutshell, The failure of most African governments to provide adequate public infrastructure and social amenities such as basic education, health care, and other social security infrastructure as well as other related human development indices could prepare the fertile grounds for the development of biases and lack of trust which would definitely ignite the escalation of resolvable issues to conflict situations. Beyond seeking external support for economic recovery in Africa, the phenomenon of democratic consolidation should be the goal of ‘new’/emerging democracies in the continent.

The quality of democracy; emanating from governance styles, is directly and proportionately related to the achievement of meaningful and sustainable development in any democratic society. The expansion of political space has fostered the growth of democratic governments in many African countries. Yet, the illiberal and corrupt tendencies of these political regimes creates fragile states which in turn inhibits the capacities of states to fulfil the pre-election promises of their flag bearers as well as the fulfilment of major goals and values of democracy. To consolidate democracy in Africa, many of the countries in the continent have constitutions that spell out the authority and powers of the organs of government. Many African countries have also established ombudsmen, auditor-general and parliamentary investigative committees to combat misadministration. However, the capacity, autonomy and performance of these regulatory and anti-corruption institutions are seriously impeded by executive and high level authority’s intervention in the administration of these anti-graft agencies. In a few African countries, the judiciary has demonstrated the will to address corruption. But in most countries, the judiciary does not exercise real independence, and its ability to fight corruption is weak. This weakness could be linked to the benevolent procedure of appointment of the judges and chairmen of anti-graft commissions by the executive presidents. Despite constitutional reforms, the executive still dominate. Although the phenomenon of ‘big man’ in African governance may be fading, yet, the tendency of the executive to dominate continues in many African...
countries and such dominance also impact, in many significant ways, on governance generally, and especially on regulatory organs (anti-graft, judiciary and legislative).

Since the ‘third wave’ of democratization, other regions in the global South have been making headway in economic growth, but Africa seems to be caught-up in a development quagmire. During the first three decades of post-independence years, most African countries were marred with inept economic policies exacerbated by unfavourable IMF/World Bank lending programmes. Politically, the excesses of authoritarian regimes resulted in protracted civil and ethnic wars, institutional collapse, and destruction of civil society and governance accountability. Socio-economic and other human security indices was at its record low with most African countries at the bottom of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index. Over the past two decades, African countries have experienced major political transitions that seemed to have checkmated the excesses of previous authoritarian governments. Accordingly, citizens’ expectation was aroused as a result of sharp rise in the number of democratic governments in the continent. The citizens’ ultimate desire has been to harvest the most gain from the restructuring of political, and by extension the economic power of the state. However, the quality of the ‘new’ political order in African countries continues to hinder economic growth as their governance style portend the business-as-usual syndrome, of the collapsed authoritarian/autocratic regimes, at the detriment of sustainable political and economic development. The perspective of this paper is that the obstacles to the achievement of development and guarantee of socio-economic and other human security issues are heavily, if not fundamentally, political.

The development, support and sustainability of regulatory institutions, with political will and enhanced capacity, devoid of executive influence, have been the missing link in the important complimentary relationship between political governance and sustainable socio-economic development in African countries. Such regulatory mechanism will make the organs of government more accountable and transparent. Regulatory institutions (anti-graft) and mechanisms (Africa Peer Review Mechanism of African Union) have been put in place to enhance state capacity and promote good governance in Africa. These measures were developed to ensure public trust in government and state legitimacy. However, clandestine and subtle measures by the executive arm of the government, especially the President, are always utilized to frustrate the anti-graft institutions29. Hence, it has always been very easy for the three arms of government to collaborate, while the process of checks and balances that could promote good governance appears to be working. If the dominant tendencies of the executive arm of government continue unchecked, it portends a gloomy future not only for

29 The President’s appointment of the Chairman of anti-corruption Commission and his exercise of the power of purse; allocation of funds for operation, subjects the Chairman to the whims and caprices of the President as well as makes the Commission to be at the mercy of the Executive arm of government.
democratic consolidation, but also the guarantee of socio-economic development in the continent. Also, the legislative and the judiciary organ of government should rise to the occasion of holding firmly to the tenets of democracy so as to achieve the anticipated goals of liberal democracy in Africa.

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