

# Introduction

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*Don't set sail using someone else's star  
An African proverb*

Given its abundance of minerals, human resources, good climatic conditions as well as its vast flora and fauna - we imagine an Africa brimming with vibrant economies girded by good governance; an Africa free from hunger and poverty and one that is in tune with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa however, despite the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, the vision of vibrant economies girded by good governance remains out of reach it would seem.

Kates and Dasgupta (2007) observe that '...the global number of people living below the poverty line of \$1 per day decreased between 1981 and 2004 from 1,470 million to 969 million and the percentage of the extremely poor fell from 40% to 18%. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, the numbers almost doubled from 168 million to 298 million, and the percentage of the poor stayed almost constant from 42% to 41%'. We ask, what is going wrong with Africa. We ask why, why, why, why Africa is lagging behind and in many instances even regressing leading others to postulate the hypothesis of 'Africa's exceptionalism'. Chitonge (2015: x) observes that 'some commentators have blamed the weak economic growth performance in Africa on the lack of adept leaders, poor policies, and the stunted nature of capitalism which has developed in Africa; while yet others have put the blame on trade, colonialism and now multi-lateral imperialism. Some have explained the African economic performance in terms of Africa's failure to emulate countries in Europe – and now Asia – in their quest for growth and development'.

Others blame poor governance, corruption, wars, poor leadership and debt to colonial countries, that never ends. We still ask again why, why, why, why Africa has got poor



governance, episodes of post-electoral violence and food insecurity, corruption, wars, poor leadership; and a mounting debt to colonial countries.

Warikanda, Nhemachena and Mtapuri (2017: xvii) attributes this squarely to slavery, colonialism and apartheid and add that “one of the weaknesses of ‘globalization’ is that it seeks to uproot Africans from their contexts and from their contextually defined propriety so as to place them in a realm of contextless agency and actions; contextless freedoms, liberties and democracies which do not pay heed to African struggles for restitution and restoration of what was looted by colonists and what is being looted by neo-imperial transnational corporations, that often show up in Africa as foreign investors when in fact they dispossess, exploit, loot and rob Africans of their resources”. We agree. Slavery, colonialism and apartheid were punctuated with terror, humiliation, subjugation and conquest which Africans still endure to this day. This with often with complicity of its leadership turning African independence to a hollow portico and facade. To a large measure in connivance and imbrication, the fascia has its roots in slavery, colonialism and apartheid. We argue that if political independence was one step towards that futuristic Africa, economic independence is a *sine qua non*.

We also believe that if one knows the problem, it should be easy for one to adopt appropriate solutions. Wars must stop. The export of primary commodities in their raw form should stop. There is need to beneficiate the mineral wealth, build infrastructure, promote savings, increase productivity in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors, conserve the flora, fauna and the environment; educate, train and re-retrain the youth to take advantage of the population dividend; equitably re-distribute land for social justice and food security; re-negotiate those deals that are unfavorable to the peoples of Africa; unashamedly repudiate paying any colonial debt and all agreements inimical to Africans and Africa; promulgate pro-African policies, integrate African economies, work towards the free movement of its people, services and goods, ensure political stability and



strengthen the African Union and all its organs and speak in one voice in this platform – an African voice. We still harbor some fears in all this chequered history and varicolored milieu.

We shudder to think of our beloved Africa, without its minerals, its forests and animals but with degraded land and environment and silted rivers. We leave to you to ponder for the present and future generations. The time is now to act and to do the right things. We will only have ourselves to blame. Therefore, good governance and astute leadership, however defined, are important if they encumber corruption and deliver on infrastructure that benefits Africans and their posterity in a stable and peaceful environment. Complicating matters for Africa, are wars and the emergence of religious fundamentalism. We are inspired by a growing crop of African academics and researchers keen on understanding and explaining Africa's complexities by developing a body of knowledge on African issues. It is through this body of knowledge generated by African researchers, on the continent and in diaspora, that we just might, incrementally, find African solutions to Africa's problems and challenges.

In his article **Samuel Odo**bo problematizes the issue of Boko Haram's internationalism and its implications on sub-regional security. He argues that authors have tended to underestimate the 'strength of ethnicity and religious fundamentalism as counter-forces to the spread of western democratic ideology'. He ascribes the emergence of the Boko Haram to poverty in the north of the country as compared the more developed South which is dominated by Christians as well as 'massive corruption in government and high-handedness and brutality meted on the local population by security forces [in the South]'. He opines that 'Boko Haram's internationalization represents an emerging and bigger threat to national and regional security which can only be contained through a combination of national, regional and global efforts targeted at not only physical combat but also eliminating the incentives that continue to feed its ideology, recruitment process,



radicalization and funding'. Mtapuri (2017: 127a) observes that 'Fundamentalism breeds fundamentalism. It is borderless and its excesses or some tenets of it endanger humanity instead of protecting it as happiness, freedom, self and collective affirmation, and self-actualisation – the destination of humankind – are foregone' under such circumstances.

In their article, **Ebenezer Oni, Nicholas Erameh and Azeez Oladejo** analyse electoral administration and regime analysis in order to provide a holistic view of Nigeria's contemporary democratic practice since 1999. They argue that while election administration is a compass for any democratic process, regularity of elections is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to pronounce the entrenchment of democracy but what is critical are values that underpin that democratic (electoral) process, the institutions, constitutional and legal frameworks in which civil society has a role to play.

**Samuel Mutukaa** tackles the issue of food security through an evaluation of a project in Kenya and found out that food insecurity is not only a consequence of lack of or inadequate rainfall but also a result of (in) effectiveness of county administrative and governance processes. He recommends scaffolding on best practices in administrative and governance processes to ensure both food security and project sustainability.

In their article, **Tinashe Sithole and Lucky Asuelime**, interrogate the role of the African Union with respect to post-election violence in Kenya. Delays in intervening by the AU in Kenya reflect its fragile coordination capacity and a propensity to protect the incumbent leaders. This failure by the AU to effectively manage conflict undermines its legitimacy. The reverberation of election violence in the 2017 had its seeds sown in unresolved issues from the 2007/8 period. Mtapuri (2017b) is of the view that elections predicate the future, the future of the people and nation and as such elections matter, equally for the past, present and future as a platform to learn and do better in the future by perfecting the electoral praxis.



The articles that make up this issue, have one thing in common – trying to find solutions for Africa by Africans – be it about religious fundamentalism, elections and food security. The Japanese and Chinese have earned their respect. The time is now for Africa to secure its future by turning those ‘resource curses’ to ‘resource blessings’ through home-grown solutions under-girded by our African-ness.

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