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# Political Insecurity and State Failure in Contemporary Africa

Dr. Fatile Jacob Olufemi

Afegbua Salami Issa

&

Adejuwon, Kehinde David

Department of Public Administration

Faculty of Management Sciences

Lagos State University, Ojo

Lagos State, Nigeria

## Abstract

*Africa was forced into modern state making through the processes of imperialism and colonialism, processes that marginally integrated African states into the international political economy, primarily in the interest of the colonizing states as victuallers of raw materials for industrial production and markets for the same. Successful decolonisation implied the transfer of political power to a political elite that was born and bred in colonial practices, structures, ethos and, invariably, interests. The African state is a victim of high level corruption, bad governance, political insecurity and a cyclical legitimacy crisis. The continent's authoritarian leadership faced a legitimate crisis, political intrigues and profligacy. While the political gladiators constantly manipulated the people and the political processes to advance their own selfish agenda, the society remained pauperized, and the people wallowed in abject poverty. They use state power for wealth accumulation led to a 'sit-tight' mentality, made politics a violent zero-sum game and sowed seeds of discord amongst the component parts of the states by politicising ethnicity and religion. This invariably led to weak legitimacy, as the citizens lacked faith in their leaders and by extension, the political system became insecure and by extension resulting to state failure. The paper probes the sources of political insecurity in the continent. It explores the logic that underlies an equilibrium in which governments employ force to protect rather than to predate and in which citizens engage in productive activity and refrain from military activity. The paper concludes that the poverty of the state, the prospects of wealth from predation, and the fears arising from competition from office increase the likelihood that states will fail and political order break down.*

## 1. Introduction

The profile of the post-colonial states of Africa is characterized by political disequilibria. Several decades after independence, Africa still faces huge political and humanitarian challenges. Several countries are stricken by war or serious insecurity and instability; the shadow of genocide looms over central Africa. While natural and man-made disasters threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of Africans, both continental and international structures for peace and security and the delivery of humanitarian assistance have so far failed to prevent enduring crisis across the continent. Much of Africans' hopes of new models for 'African solutions to African problems' have suffered severe setbacks in the last few years (Alex, 2004).

Specifically, the political environment in Africa is a theatre of violence, conflict and war for primitive accumulation through the power process, amongst dominant forces with the inevitable consequence of political crises identifiable within the space of the various recently experienced assassinations galore (Adejumobi, 1991). Though political killings are prevalent in every political system across the globe, but the degree in Africa marks the difference. America has the most developed democracy in the world, yet it had its fair share of suspected politically

motivated killings. On the list in this regard were John F. Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King. In India, Indra and Rajiv Ghandis had their lives snuffed out of them by assassin's bullets. There were also Awwal Sadat of Egypt, Patrice Lumumba of Congo, Acquino of Philippine, Olympio of Togo to mention but few (Olaopa, et al 2009: 158). A thorough examination of the African political history has shown that the continent up till today has witnessed several political crises. African governments leave their citizens insecure and exposed to elements both natural and man-made.

The history of the various African countries is full of political unrest and of insecurity, of dry periods, hunger, etc. When examining the history of the territory, which is today called Africa a succession of unstable polities, all with its exploitation of the common citizens/ordinary people, based on slave economies, on war and violence, appears. Political insecurity in Africa owe much of its cause to internal factors, however the interpenetration of internal and external factors especially geo-political and economic interests of the international community constantly play a significant role in undermining the very processes and institutions that are expected to nurture democracy and to instill a sense of stability for societal development in Africa (Anthony, 2008:3). No wonder Houngnikpo (2008:1) described African situation thus;

Despite its wealth, Africa remains the poorest continent, in spite of decades of economic assistance; Africa enters the 21st century with many of the world's poorest countries. The human conflicts and insecurity in Africa only vindicate those who predicted chaos and anarchy on the continent. Achieving peace in a few instances would be a tremendous breakthrough that would help to promote confidence among both Africans and their international partners. However, much more serious consideration of how to prevent future conflicts is necessary. Although democratization has allowed governance to emerge as a new paradigm denoting an association for securing the common interests and promoting the common purposes of the individuals who are its members, Africans continue to experience all kinds of hardship. To their dismay, democracy has yet to provide a sense of security by changing fundamentally their living conditions. African leaders, democratic and autocratic alike, continue to define security in terms of the survival of their regimes.

The most common and destructive of all hindrances to stable democracy has been military coups that resulted in the supplanting and assassination of no fewer than fifty-nine heads of state in Africa between 1960 and 1979. This is not however limited to Africa as available statistics indicate that it has become a feature of many Third World countries (Hyden, 2006). To-date, almost every country in Africa is still haunted by historical injustices and oppressive structures that were bequeathed to the post colonial leadership. This is an aspect which informs the weak institutions of the state, flawed legislative systems and constant struggles for political power to the detriment of the well being of many nations, which could have moved on a path of development as part of modern societies. Ake (1995) locates the genesis of this problem in the inclement political and social conditions in the developing countries; this manifest in poor planning and implementation, lack of entrepreneurial abilities, the stifling of market forces, falling commodity prices, unfavourable terms of trade, poverty of ideas, the dependency syndrome, corruption and indiscipline.

Over the years we have been particularly interested by the role of instability and insecurity in the lives of rural poor people. For these categories of actors the facts are hard to deal with: the 'hardness of facts' has constantly been part of daily life (Hastrup 1993) of most inhabitants of the African continent. One could argue that society has been organized around

insecurity in the form of fluctuating resource availability and market prices for food, and oppressive political systems (De Bruijn & Van Dijk 1995).

Also problematic in the African context are the existing institutions of the state and how they function. Despite the existence of institutional frameworks that are supposed to guide processes and delivery on essential services, the continued weakening of these institutions, through political mechanisation and predatory nature of African elites, working in cohorts with external interests also contributes further to the undermining of stability in Africa. These tendencies exacerbate resources wars, ethnic rivalry, and more recently, the emergence of electoral violence as a characteristic of multi-party era elections in African (Anthony, 2008:3).

## 2. Conceptual Explanation

A conception of state failure or collapse has to commence with an understanding of what a state is, because 'a failed or collapsed state is characterised by what it is not' (Robert, 2005). Max Weber defines a state as 'a human community that successfully claims for itself the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory with determined boundaries – the notion of territory being one of its characteristic features' (Clapham, 2000). Machiavelli (cited in Arjun, 2009:68), in suggesting that states can and should endure if managed well, breaks with the notion that states mechanically rise and decline. He is the first thinker to mark the decline of a state as stemming largely from human error rather than purely chance or providence. In other words, Machiavelli is the first to identify the 'inevitable' decline of states as 'failure.' His 'blueprints' for the state-to-come indicates the inadequacy of the state that exists, indeed marks it as a 'failure.' (Arjun, 2009:70) Failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and bitterly contested by warring factions. In most failed states, government troops battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals. Official authorities in a failed state sometimes face two or more insurgencies, varieties of civil unrest, differing degrees of communal discontent, and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at groups within the state (Rotberg, 2002:88).

In the first sense, failure is understood in terms of the inability of state institutions to control actors and processes within a given territory. Rotberg (2008:74) maintains that 'failed states cannot control their peripheral regions, especially those regions occupied by out-groups...Plausibly, the extent of a state's failure can be measured by the extent of its geographical expanse genuinely controlled (especially after dark) by the official government.' It is important to remember, however, that control and failure should not be seen as absolutes. A 'failed' state in this sense of the term might successfully control some of its territory but not all of it. Sudan, for example, is commonly classified as a failed state yet it continues to exert effective control over large portions of its territory and can wreak havoc and terror on some of those individuals and groups who contest its authority in those areas. This suggests that viewing the phenomenon of state failure in absolute terms and through solely statist lenses is not always particularly helpful. Rather analysts need to appreciate the degrees of success and failure that can exist within a single state and recognize that so-called 'failed states' are usually made up of numerous (and often interconnected) zones where different sources of authority may dominate the local governance structures (Williams, 2008:2).

As a corollary of the state, the concept of "security" became prominent after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1642, and was defined primarily as the preservation of the state against external threats. However, the concept has recently spawned a contentious debate because new threats are forcing scholars and policy-makers to broaden their definition of "security." Historically,

security was simply equated with the defense of the state against foreign aggression, protecting a nation's territorial integrity, and maintaining the governing regime (Houngnikpo, 2008). At the core of their conceptual framework is the common belief that a state-centric approach to security was too narrowly focused and inadequate to address the needs of a changing world. Consequently, academics and practitioners unveiled a broader, more encompassing definition of security, arguing that security as currently envisioned often was at the expense of the citizenry—the very people that the state was charged with protecting.

Failed states are insecure. They cannot project power much beyond the capital city, or control their national peripheries. Crime rates rise. Unable to establish an atmosphere of security throughout the nation, the faltering state's failure becomes obvious even before, or as, rebel groups and other contenders arm themselves, threaten the residents of central cities, and overwhelm demoralized government contingents, as in Liberia, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Congo, and Cote d'Ivoire (Rotberg, 2003:5). Discussions of state failure are essentially about the interrelationships between patterns of authority, political control and institution-building. Put another way, analysing state failure in Africa requires a keen sense of the shifting configurations of power on the continent and beyond. In most of the literature on the subject, the idea of 'failure' is invoked in two main senses, referred to in this essay as the failure to control and the failure to promote human flourishing (Robert, 2005).

The failed state problem remains an enduring policy issue. Failed states breed regional instability and regional failure, as the Sierra Leonean-Liberian-Guinean-Cote d'Ivoirian quadrangle illustrates so well. The Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan duo has a similar potential, particularly given next door Afghanistan, and the possibility that the Turkmen and Uzbek dictatorships will not last forever. The Australians and their Pacific Island allies acted in the Solomons to avert a similar cascade of destruction throughout the mini-nations of their region (Rotberg, 2003:8).

In most failed states, regimes prey on their own constituents. Driven by ethnic or other inter-communal hostility, or by the governing elite's insecurities, they victimize their own citizens or some subset of the whole that is regarded as hostile. As in Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire or the Taliban's Afghanistan, ruling cadres increasingly oppress, extort, and harass the majority of their own compatriots while privileging a more narrowly based party, clan, or sect. As in Zaire, Angola, Siaka Stevens's Sierra Leone, or pre-2001 Sudan, patrimonial rule depends on a patronage-based system of extraction from ordinary citizens. The typical weak state plunges toward failure when this kind of ruler-led oppression provokes a countervailing reaction on the part of resentful groups or newly emerged rebels. Another indicator of state failure is the growth of criminal violence. As state authority weakens and fails, and as the state becomes criminal in its oppression of its citizens, so lawlessness becomes more apparent. Criminal gangs take over the streets of the cities. Arms and drug trafficking become more common. Ordinary police forces become paralyzed. Anomic behaviours become the norm.

For protection, citizens naturally turn to warlords and other strong figures who express or activate ethnic or clan solidarity, thus offering the possibility of security at a time when all else, and the state itself, is crumbling. High rates of urban crime and the rise of criminal syndicates testify to an underlying anarchy and desperation. Failed states exhibit flawed institutions. That is, only the institution of the executive functions. If legislatures exist at all, they are rubber-stamping machines. Democratic debate is noticeably absent. The judiciary is derivative of the executive rather than being independent, and citizens know that they cannot rely on the court system for significant redress or remedy, especially against the state. The bureaucracy has long

ago lost its sense of professional responsibility and exists solely to carry out the orders of the executive and, in petty ways, to oppress citizens. The military is possibly the only institution with any remaining integrity, but the armed forces of failed states are often highly politicized, devoid of the esprit that they once demonstrated. When a state has failed or is in the process of failing, the effective educational and health systems are privatized (with a resulting hodgepodge of shady schools and questionable medical clinics in the cities), or the public facilities become increasingly decrepit and neglected. Teachers, physicians, nurses, and orderlies are paid late or not at all, and absenteeism increases Fukuyama, 2004).

Corruption flourishes in many states, but in failed states it often does so on an unusually destructive scale. There is widespread petty or lubricating corruption as a matter of course, but escalating levels of venal corruption mark failed states: kickbacks on anything that can be put out to fake tender (medical supplies, textbooks, bridges, roads, and tourism concessions); unnecessarily wasteful construction projects arranged so as to maximize the rents that they generate; licenses for existing and nonexistent activities; and persistent and generalized extortion. In such situations, corrupt ruling elites mostly invest their gains overseas, not at home, making the economic failure of their states that much more acute. Or they dip directly into the coffers of the shrinking state to pay for external aggressions, lavish residences and palaces, extensive overseas travel, and privileges and perquisites that feed their greed. Military officers always benefit from these excessively corrupt regimes and imbibe ravenously from the same illicit troughs as civilian officials. None of these designations is terminal. Lebanon, Nigeria, and Tajikistan recovered from collapse and are now weak. Afghanistan and Sierra Leone graduated from collapsed to failed. Zimbabwe is moving rapidly from being strong toward failure.

Failed States provide only very limited quantities of essential political goods. They progressively forfeit their role as the preferred national suppliers of political goods to upstart warlords and other non-state actors. A failed state according to Rotberg, (2003:4) is a hollow polity that is no longer willing or able to perform the fundamental tasks of a nation-state in the modern world. Its institutions are flawed. If legislatures exist at all, they ratify the decisions of a strong executive. Democratic debate is absent. The judiciary is derivative of the executive rather than being independent. Citizens know that they cannot rely on the court system for redress or remedy, especially against the state. The bureaucracy of the state has long ago lost its sense of professional responsibility, and helps to oppress citizens.

Another indicator of state failure as noted by Rotberg (2002:87) is the growth of criminal violence. As state authority weakens and fails, and as the state becomes criminal in its oppression of its citizens, general lawlessness becomes more apparent. In most cases, driven by ethnic or other intercommunal hostility or by regime insecurity, failed states prey on their own citizens. As in Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire or the Taliban's Afghanistan, ruling cadres increasingly oppress, extort, and harass the majority of their own compatriots while favouring narrowly based elite. As in Zaire, Angola, Siaka Stevens's Sierra Leone, or Hassan al-Turabi's pre-2001 Sudan, patrimonial rule depends on a patronage-based system of extraction from ordinary citizens. Failed states cannot control their borders. They lose authority over chunks of territory. Often, the expression of official power is limited to a capital city and one or more ethnically specific zones. Indeed, one measure of the extent of a state's failure is how much of the state's geographical expanse a government genuinely controls. How nominal is the central government's sway over rural towns, roads, and waterways? Who really rules up-country, or in particular distant districts?

Failed states exhibit deteriorating or destroyed infrastructures. The railways rarely run, water supplies dry up, power falters, and other normal services vanish. Educational and medical facilities crumble literally and metaphorically. Literacy rates fall and infant mortality rates rise. AIDS overwhelms what little there is in the way of a health infrastructure. The poor become more and more impoverished, and battered.

### 3. Political Insecurity and State Failure in Africa

Governments of politically developed nations exercise legitimate authority within their territorial borders and in interactions with other states. Their authority emanates from the mandate of their people and is exercised with regard to the preferences of their citizens. This is because the appropriate institutions of governance i.e. the legislature, the judiciary, auditor generals, central bank, the press etc, in the most advanced countries, are well established, developed and independent. They are therefore effective in keeping governments within legal bounds in the exercise of their political authority (Moore, 2000). On the contrary, many African countries at independence either lacked these structures or were poorly developed. Without the necessary institutional and legal checks and balances, many African governments in the 1960s and 70s turned autocratic to facilitate the indefinite rule of the so called founding fathers of the most dominant political parties at independence. These African leaders, like their colonial predecessors, were intolerant of opposition and dissent. Political opponents were either incarcerated or eliminated through extra-judicial killings. Some countries even turned one party states and political activity was outlawed. Citizens of these countries lived in fear (Lupo, 2004).

Political insecurity is one of the most serious problems facing Africa. This is because the continent has remained largely underdeveloped despite the presence of huge mineral and human resources. Several decades after the end of colonialism, most parts of Africa is still fighting with problems such as high poverty rate, lack of basic infrastructural facilities in all sectors of the economy, unemployment, high mortality rate, political instability and insecurity of lives and property (Ikenna, 2009). A survey conducted in the 1960s regarding political situation in newly independent African countries revealed startling results. Quite a large number of countries within 10 years of independence had encountered attempts at the overthrow of the ruling government by a coup plot. The political insecurity of individuals or groups within these states as a result of such alienation has resulted in instability and in some cases conflict in some countries. Underdevelopment is another major cause of insecurity in Africa. In the mist of abundant natural resources most West African countries fall under the category of countries with the lowest annual GDP per capita in the world (Moore, 2000; Adebajo and Rashid, 2004; Apogan-Yella, 2005). The stability of a country in terms of physical security is necessary for economic development when considered within the context of inter-state rivalry and competition. However the relationship between security and development reverses when the sources of insecurity emanate from within the borders of a country.

When analysing state failure in Africa in this first sense, analysts and practitioners would thus do well to reject a statecentric ontology in favour of a neo-Gramscian frame of reference, wherein the world is not simply seen as being made up of clashing states in an anarchic international system but, instead, is constituted by the complex inter-relationships between states, social forces and ideas within specific world orders (Ikenna, 2009).

There is no simple or single formula for understanding the causes of state failure in Africa. Nevertheless, the available literature on the subject often makes at least two relevant general distinctions. The first distinction is between states that fail because of a lack of relevant

capacities and those that fail to promote the interests of all their inhabitants through political choice, often with the intention of benefiting the incumbent regime and its supporters at the expense of another group within the state (Rotberg, 2003)

Chad is a good example of a territory that suffered from different regimes of exploitative polities (Kanem, Baguirmi, Wadai) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which are based on predatory accumulation (Reyna 1994). The civil war of Chad is part of successive periods of political instability. We must also not ignore the impact of the violence used by the colonial army and later administration to force people into a rhythm and life the coloniser could handle (Lanne 1984). The 20<sup>th</sup> century also marked important changes in land tenure arrangements, displacement and mobility of people, etc. Due to the impact of political insecurity scientific research has been virtually absent for almost two decades.

Weak states quickly become failed states, as the case of Cote d'Ivoire in 2002 demonstrates. In the aftermath of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny's death in 1993, his successors sought electoral success by appealing to majority southerners. They began progressively discriminating against northerners; consequently, the expectations of rough equity that had long held the country together vanished. The legitimacy of the regime in charge also vanished and Cote d'Ivoire, despite its decades of prosperity and success, and despite its ability to deliver many political goods, became ripe for failure. When elections were falsified and northern standard-bearers ousted, a countervailing movement arose and the state's monopoly of force was soon found inadequate. Failure came quickly, further deterioration being halted only by the arrival of French troops. The Cote d'Ivoire model of leadership error compounded with arrogance and corruption resulting in instability, extreme weakness, and subsequent failure, is readily replicable. Witness Bolivia and Nepal, and the less obvious but potentially disruptive cases of Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and the Central African Republic. Another, more unusual and distinctive, case is Zimbabwe, where one of Africa's most prosperous nations and most well educated populations has been transformed into an all but failed nation-state by the actions of an avaricious leader. In that country, the government no longer supplies political goods, but complete failure has so far been avoided by the absence of large-scale internal violence (Rotberg, 2003:5-6).

Brett (2006:13) captured the nature of state failure in Africa by explaining that we can only account for state failure in Africa by identifying the contextual factors that are involved in processes of institutional transformation rather than system maintenance. First, political and economic markets depend on the existence of communities composed of fully informed and autonomous individuals, but people can only acquire the appropriate "aptitudes and dispositions" and "self-knowledge and ... identities" when they are already incorporated into the practices that only liberal institutions make possible. Slaves, serfs, 'comrades' in command economies, and colonised 'subjects' who tried to practice possessive individualism, were quickly and painfully shown the error of their ways. Second, running the complex state apparatuses, political parties, pressure groups, media organisations, and educational and research institutions that sustain democracy is costly, and depends on the productivity of the economic system that has to finance them. Hence viable democracies are not just a function of appropriate rule systems, but of the existence of these historically contingent and contextual factors. These institutions do work in advanced societies where the necessary social, political, and economic capital exists, but the attempt to create them in societies attempting to develop new institutions generates fundamental

social conflict and structural weaknesses. It is these attempts that give rise to the problems now being addressed through theories of patrimonialism and primary accumulation.

Failed states raise challenges both for the great powers concerned about what threats might come out of them and for the locals who have to endure life inside them. Indeed, it has been suggested that since 'the end of the Cold War, weak and failing states have arguably become the single-most important problem for international order (Fukuyama, 2004). Although state failure is not confined to Africa the problem is arguably more widespread, deeply rooted and pressing here than in any other continent. As noted by Rotberg (2003:8) that the state failure debate has initially mainly been driven by policy concerns. Weak, failing, failed and collapsed states—the most common adjectives used in this context—were considered, quite correctly, as sources of insecurity and instability beyond their own boundaries, creating more or less complex humanitarian emergencies. Every now and then, this debate has occasionally been pierced by a policy focus on rogue states, leaving sufficient overlap to classify, rightly or wrongly, some states as both failing and rogue. Incidents of state failure in the first half of the 1990s were predominantly analysed through the prism of the security dilemma as applied to the domestic arena.

It is possible to identify four main types of responses to state failure in Africa. First, there have been external attempts, often led by Western governments, to reassert the failing state's control over its territory. There have also been similar Western-led attempts to encourage Africa's failing governments to provide their citizens with human rights and basic public goods. A third type of response has occurred in relatively rare instances where international society has been willing to permit states to disintegrate and break into separate smaller units. Finally, there have been the responses of local Africans themselves. These have ranged from active participation in the struggle to rebuild and control state power to indifference and sometimes hostility towards the entire process.

During the early stages of the 21st century, Africa has provided many of the usual suspects on the lists of the world's failed states including Chad, the CAR, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe. In addition, Somalia is usually classified in a league of its own as having collapsed altogether rather than simply failed. Africa's leading status in these rankings is confirmed by four popular attempts to categorize different types of state failure, namely, the World Bank's Governance Matters data set, the Failed States Index, the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index, and Freedom House's annual surveys of political freedom.

The issue of political insecurity in Africa is also directly related to the migration and development question. The life threatening political and economic conditions in Africa contribute enormously to the massive exodus of both highly qualified and lowly educated populations in Africa.

#### **4. Governance and State Failure in Africa**

Governance is one of the key independent variables that explain Africa's underdevelopment. Consequently, ongoing governance changes in Africa polity and economy necessitate the building and sustenance of critical institutional capacities within and outside the state if they are to impact poverty alleviation and development (Olowu, 2002:1). Although democratization has allowed governance to emerge as a new paradigm denoting "an association for securing the common interests and promoting the common purposes of the individuals who are its members", Africans continue to experience all kinds of hardship. To their dismay,

democracy has yet to provide a sense of security by changing fundamentally their living conditions. African leaders, democratic and autocratic alike, continue to define security in terms of the survival of their regimes (Corry and Hodgetts, 1957:41). This insecurity dilemma continues to prevail despite democracy's strides and a great deal more will have to be done to change the paradigm on the continent.

That there is crisis of governance in Africa is real and tangible. It is obvious and clear, even to the deaf and blind as it is to the common and uncommon Africans. Governance is about the proper use of legitimate power and authority in the affairs of a nation or the people. The state is the primary structure of governance. The nature and character of the state and of its operators, actors and agencies determine the trajectory and quality of governance. Where and when there are negative turning points in the sequences of the use of power and authority, the nation experiences alienation and instability, and sometimes it experiences extreme trouble and grave danger (Oyovbaire, 2007:3). The African state, according to Ayittey (2006) has evolved into a predatory monster or a gangster state that uses a convoluted system of regulations and controls to pillage and to rob the productive class – the peasantry. It is common knowledge that heads of states, ministers, and highly placed African government officials raid the African treasury, misuse their positions in government to extort commissions on foreign loan contracts, skim foreign aid, inflate contracts to cronies for kickbacks and deposit the loot in overseas banks. The very people who are supposed to defend and protect the peasants' interests are themselves engaged in institutionalized looting

This governance issues according to Fagbadebo (2007:29) have produced a baneful structure in an environment that engenders instability in the political system as the people yearn for the elusive dividends of good governance. Since independence, security forces in most African countries have suffered because of poor governance. Often, political interference eroded their professionalism and led to ethnically or geographically biased recruitment. Other times, political leaders attempted to buy the loyalty of Special Forces at the expense of national militaries. Contrary to popular belief, military regimes in particular tended to undermine the effectiveness of security forces, while single party states demanded party loyalty over military professionalism. Frequently, military regimes paid relatively little attention to the role and mission of the security forces or their effective management. At times security forces were used as an employer of the last resort, resulting in large but poorly-educated and ill-trained military establishments. Given an almost complete disregard for civil security, the police usually fared even worse than the military (Houngnikpo, 2008:6). African leaders, democratic and autocratic alike, continue to define security in terms of the survival of their regimes.

The World Bank's Governance Matters 2008 data set ranks world-wide governance indicators, covering 212 countries and territories. A similar picture emerges from the Failed States Index 2008 compiled by Foreign Policy magazine and the Fund for Peace. This measures performance along 12 political, economic, military and social indicators of instability (demographic pressures, refugees and displaced persons, group grievance, human flight, uneven development, economy, delegitimization of the state, public services, human rights, security apparatus, factionalized elites, and external intervention). It concluded that Africa contains seven of the world's 10 most failing states: Somalia (most failing), Sudan (second), Zimbabwe (third), Chad (fourth), the DRC (sixth), Cote d'Ivoire (eighth), and the CAR (10th). Continuing down the scale, it suggested that Africa was home to 22 of the world's 40 most failing states (Rotberg, 2003:9). The third popular ranking system is UNDP's 2007/2008 Human Development Index. It

focuses on indicators of development which provide a reasonable snapshot of the extent to which a particular state is promoting human flourishing. From a total pool of 177 states, UNDP concluded that Africa contains 34 of the world's 40 most underdeveloped states, the least developed being Sierra Leone.

Lack of good governance alienated the people from their governments and led to problems of security. The bottom line of most theoretical explanations of state collapse in Africa is bad governance and thenceforth, the promotion of good governance and democracy has become a critical pillar of development policy, albeit currently unsuccessful in Africa. The major problem with the promotion of democracy is that there is no generally accepted theory of democratisation to guide the process. It therefore mirrors a confusion of agendas. Whereas the liberal dominated international development institutions and scholars stress the promotion of human rights and democratic principles as the panacea to underdevelopment, history teaches us otherwise (Akude, 2007:12).

## 5. Political Violence and Political Instability

During the onset of multi-party democracy in the so called third wave of democratisation, most regimes in Africa did not fully embrace the changes that accompanied the transition. Many autocratic regimes, for instance accepted multi-party democracy out of western donor pressure and agitation for change by local civil society groups (in most cases funded by the international community (Huntington, 1991). As a consequence, the constitutional frameworks and state institutions have been tampered with, in order to create an uneven play field against the opposition. Some of these processes have seen sporadic violence during electioneering periods, leading to political instability. However the degree of violence and the manner in which they are perpetrated vary from country to country as the recent elections in Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe can show. The reluctance of some incumbent regimes in Africa has been due to the fear of being held accountable for past misdeeds (Anthony, 2008:6). With many countries holding their third or fourth multi-party elections, internal power struggles have taken a violent dimension, thereby threatening the very existence of many countries. Since the onset of multi-party democracy in most African countries electoral processes have been accompanied by political violence<sup>6</sup>, as part of the democratisation process (Lupo, 2004).

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Most solutions that have been prescribed in recent times seem to view Africa through the prism of the continents natural resources and the competition to reap the benefit of their exploitation or as an object of humanitarian or military concerns. However what needs recognition is the fact that Africa is beginning to see the emergence of new social actors, different form of social and political mobilisation. In the process, the political and economic play field is also changing. Long term solutions to Africa instability problems will basically be determined by a new type of leadership both within Africa and in the western countries, where policy issues whose repercussions heavily impact upon development in Africa are made (Anthony, 2008:11).

State failure is largely man made, not accidental. Institutional fragilities and structural flaws contribute to failure, but those deficiencies usually hark back to decisions or actions of men (rarely women). So it is that leadership errors across history have destroyed states for personal gain; in the contemporary era, leadership mistakes continue to erode fragile polities in

Africa, Asia, and Oceania that already operate on the cusp of failure. Mobutu's kleptocratic rule extracted the marrow of Zaire and left nothing for the mass of his national dependents.

In terms of conflicts in Africa, many hot spots are recovering, and making big leaps towards peaceful coexistence. Even though there are some pockets of unresolved cases like Somalia, Darfur, Congo and Northern Uganda among others, there are encouraging examples such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, and Southern Sudan. In this context Africa is undergoing a complex process of multiple transformations. Solutions to some of these cases have been found from within, coupled with external support. For this reason, it can be argued that part solution to the conflict situation and political instability in Africa lies in the West.

Also crucial to the peace building and political stability in Africa is the potential role of the Africans in the Diaspora. But as argued by Mohamoud (2006: 169) "the contribution of African Diaspora to the promotion of peace in their countries of origin has been largely overlooked, yet it is a critical input for peace building". To reduce or eliminate insecurity in the region, the causes of underdevelopment and thus conflict in Africa must be given due attention at national, sub-regional and at the international levels.

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