Hyden, G., Olowu, D., & Okoth-Ogendo, H.W.O. (eds). (2000), African Perspectives on Governance. Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc.

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The general thrust of the book serves to provide a sense of where governance research may be in particular useful and whether it has rewarding prospects for implementation in Africa. The book also draws from insights gained as a result of research in East Africa and Nigeria as case studies. The introductory chapter deliberates on the challenges of governance that the African continent faces as it grapples with the various military dictatorships, civil wars, and authoritarianism, all on the backdrop of worsening economic climate. In his contribution, Hyden objects to the notion that it is the lack of capacity that spoils the state's propensity to get things done, but also blames society for the similar lack of capacity to improve governance alongside the state. The author further notes that the relative degree of legitimacy of a country's rules and institutions is important in any attempt to analyze the stability of the system in the face of a crisis in effectiveness. On the same note, the author attributes the ineffectiveness of many African governments to the experiencing of turbulence and total breakdowns (like in Liberia and Somalia), which crises have been accompanied by an equivalent crisis in legitimacy of the incumbent regime. This section of the book also toys around with the interplay, co-existence, and interface of *effectiveness* and *legitimacy* as terms that have exhibited the propensity to be dependent and/or independent of each other on issues of governance. It is noted in the book that one can anticipate situations where the state may be ineffective, while the regime remains quite legitimate, a factor which gives the government a higher degree of maneuverability than in a situation where the regime lacks legitimacy.

Another salient point that the book brings to the fore is that the public realm is not merely the state but also civil society. The authors noted that the public realm is the arena in which both the state and civil society associations interact and compete for influence, and a place where the regime is put to the test, as it strives to forge a palatable relation with civil society whose influence on the civilian population should not be under-estimated. Colonialism and its relevance to contemporary politics are also made reference to as a determinant factor on the type of governance that exists within a polity. The authors argue that:

"While African nationalists managed to de-racialize civil society, democratization after independence never succeeded because they failed to break the tribal logic of 'native authorities' that had been established in the name of 'indirect rule' by the British" (p 14).

In analyzing the existence of poor governance institutions on the African continent, Hyden Hyden, Olowu, & Okoth-Ogendo, (p 14) attribute this appalling state of affairs to the nationalists' failure to break the hold of customary power, pursued as it had been in the name of defending tradition against alien encroachment. The concurrence by the various contributors to the book is that the dual arrangement, whereby the urban-based nationalists, on one hand, were able to indigenize civil society and use it overturn the colonial system of rule, while the rural population, on the other hand, was confined to perpetuating local traditions within narrow ethnic parameters set for them by the departing colonial state. This created a disconnect between the incoming nationalists and traditional institutions which had been made to maintain their structures of power, thereby creating a structural barrier to the development, not only of democracy, but also a public realm of a civic kind. The resurgence of external factors as a debilitating institution towards the creation of democratic institutions on the African continent has also been cited in the book. Contributors take note of the fact that external forces, notably the international finance institutions, and the financial economic dependence on those organs has been accompanied in the 1990s by a degree of political dependence that was not formerly there. This dependence manifested itself primarily in behavior in the international arena not at national level, as state sovereignty prior to the 1990s was never questioned, especially in the days of the Cold war. With the demise of the Cold War, the dependence that African countries now experienced included measures aimed at influencing not only domestic policy, but the very constitution of the political order, a level of intrusiveness that African countries had never witnessed since the days of colonialism. It is no coincidence that most political scientists, Afro-centric scholars, and critical observers see in the extension of this situation the prospect of re-colonization of the continent.

Pursuant to the fact of re-colonization and increased civil society activity in many African countries, the issue of constitutionalism has again come to the fore. Many African countries have come to revisit their national constitutions with increased pressure from civil society to strengthen democratic institutions. This has been exemplified by unprecedented constitutional reform debated emanating from various quarters of the continent. Afro-centric scholars maintained that engaging in constitutional reform debates is a desirable endeavor meant for the reconstruction of the state in Africa. The book eventually deliberates on the continent's prospects of strengthening its democratic institutions through constitutional means where both the state and civil society work in collaboration. Furtherance to the issue of constitutionalism and civil society has been the material observance of human rights (which has been on a free fall in recent years) as a precursor to good governance, with Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda being cited has having appalling human rights records on the continent. The book note that the inculcation of civil liberties in the constitution, citizen participation in governance processes as well as limiting the role of foreign aid and parties enables the creation of a conducive environment on which strong democratic institutions can be built. The media has also been caught on the furore of having the propensity to influence democratic transition on the continent, but also having the capability to destroy democratic states, especially given that media is able to sway the populace towards a specific political ideology. Additionally, ethnicity has also been cited as having an effect in either building and/or destroying the creation of democratic institutions on the continent and blaming political leaders of failing to manage ethnicity properly, resulting in ethnic eruption, as witnesses in Kenya in recent years. Feminists' perspectives have indicated that the role, of women in the democratization process has been underestimated, especially given the patriarchal African societies where male dominance is prevalent. Consequently, the authors called for a paradigm shift on

political elites to embrace the participation of women in political processes as imperative for the creation of vibrant democratic structures and a prerequisite for good governance.

The book concludes by citing the role of structural adjustment programs in the demise of African economies, the result of which has been characterized by high poverty levels and desperate governments, which eventually translated into begging cases. The book gives a detailed account of cases of many African countries who upon adopting the structural adjustment programs found themselves in dire poverty, desperation, and near-starvation. Overall, the contributors all concur that a combination of internal and external factors, have been at the forefront of spoiling prospects of the continent's capability to make meaningful development of its democratic and governance structures .

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