A THEORETICAL BASIS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

Despite lack of satisfactory evidence of its effectiveness, the idea of good governance is celebrated, and has become the prescription of international development partners for all development challenges facing poor countries, including stagnated growth, poverty, and insecurity. This article posits that the origination and characteristic features of the good governance agenda is not different from earlier economic development models and strategies promoted by international financial institutions (IFIs) in developing nations, all of which failed to achieve growth and development in recipient African countries. For sure, these strategies are always based on theories and methodologies alien to African history, culture and social values. Most importantly, it can be argued that the good governance agenda is an imposition of Western liberal democracy and IFIs' universal blueprints of neoliberalism on poor countries. The objective of this article, is to critically evaluate the theoretical basis of good governance as related to liberalisation, democracy and decentralisation, using Afrocentricity and Africana critical theory.

Keywords: good governance, Africana critical theory, Afrocentricity, decentralisation

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the main questions that remain unsettled with regard to good governance is whether good governance results in improved economic performance and development. Despite a proliferation of studies attempting to establish such links, the evidence of a connection between good governance and development outcomes remains tenuous. Besides, many studies supporting the primacy of good governance for development could be contested on conceptual and methodological grounds (Gisselquist 2012, 2; Avellaneda 2006, 7; Chang 2011, 484; Valdes 2008, 7). In the case of Africa, the implementation of good governance reforms such as liberalisation, democracy or decentralisation has not translated into better governance or welfare improvement in any African country. While the African democratic experience of democracy has not been impressive, the opening of African economies to economic liberalisation (which has also led to privatisation of state owned enterprises, removal of subsidies, and monetary austerity) has further increased the level of poverty in the region and placed African democracies under the prescriptions of the World Bank, IMF and other international donors (Enwere 2013, 63). And by focusing on meeting the demands of external donors at the expense of their people’s welfare, many African democratic leaders have become very corrupt and selfish. Given this situation of persistent poverty, increasing inequalities and endemic corruption despite good governance reforms in sub-Sahara Africa, (henceforth Africa), this article will examine the theoretical basis of good governance as related to liberalisation, democracy and decentralisation using an Afrocentricity methodology and Africana critical theory.

AFRICANA CRITICAL THEORY AND AFROCENTRIC METHODOLOGY

It is important that the African society looks inward to find its own development paths, using theories and methodologies that are founded on its history, culture and social values. This is what Afrocentricity is about. Afrocentricity is a scientific effort towards African development, which is based on African history, patterns of behaviours, culture, and beliefs and not an imitation of the Western methods of development. According to Asante (2003), Afrocentricity is a ‘philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location, and actualizing of African agency within the context of history and culture’. Afrocentricity can also be regarded as a paradigm, theory, and ideology of thought and action, in which the centrality of African interests, principles, and perceptions predominates (Pellebon 2007, 74). It involves conscious research of indigenous African societies in search of valuable principles, behaviour, practices, theories, patterns, ideas, representations, institutions, rituals and ceremonies which can be adapted for contemporary usage (Hotep 2010, 13).

Africana critical theory argues that European modernity and the development of the Western world is associated with the African holocaust, racial enslavement and colonialism, as well as with the destruction of the sovereignty, cultures, and civilisations of various peoples of colour (Rabaka 2009, 4). European modernisation disregarded the contribution and influence of African people and other non-Europeans to the world's civilisation but, considered them as unenlightened and uncivilised. And due to Europe's international imperialism, this Eurocentric exclusiveness and white supremacy has been normalised and globalised so much that most modern intellectual activities follow Eurocentric paradigms of intellectualism (Rabaka 2009, 4). Eurocentric intellectualism also standardises Europeans' cultural and methodological approach to problem solving, while any other functional perspectives, especially those from other cultures, are regarded as dysfunctional or corrupt. And due to the fact that mainstream theories and methods are mainly products of European circumstances and Western peculiarities, their application to African situations has not been able to address the daunting challenges facing the region, but has only led to the production of superficial, alien knowledge and the further subordination of Africa to the West (Hawi 2005, 4).

Due to the Western inclination of many scholars (including African scholars who are also products of the Western educational system), many intellectual analyses have actually misrepresented Africa, which has led to sweeping generalisations about the continent and ineffective policy recommendation and interventions (Obeng-Odoom 2013, 170). Unlike Western theories which have made Africans perpetual objects of investigations, the Afrocentric approach is unique in placing Africans at the centre of analysis and synthesis. It prioritises African people's customs, beliefs, orientations and conceptualisations. It seeks to find the African subject place in all phenomenon whilst also ensuring that African values and thoughts are protected and free from interpretations that are un-African (Asante, 2007, 42). Afrocentricity particularly challenges the defining principles of the European supremacist domination of Africans and other non-Westerners, thus making it both a theory and a movement (Pratt-Clark 2014, 220).

CRITICISM OF AFROCENTRICISM

Afrocentricity has been widely criticised especially by mainstream scholars who refuted many Afrocentric claims, especially of African origin of European intellectual achievements (examples include Bernal 1991; Lefkowitz 1996). Afrocentric scholars claimed that philosophy began in ancient Egypt, even though Europeans believed that philosophy originated with the Greeks. Afrocentric scholars argued that Egypt was the educational capital of the Ancient World and that many Greek philosophers ventured to Egypt to study from ancient Egyptian wise men (Asante 2004). Afrocentrists therefore accused Europeans of claiming African achievements, a situation termed 'Stolen Legacy' (Chukwuokolo 2009, 32). However, the Afrocentric claim that the ancient Egyptians are black is contentions. Egyptians do not perceive themselves as white or black; rather they see themselves as Egyptian, just as many cultures do not fit into the black/white dichotomy (Roth 1995). In ancient Egyptian paintings, the Egyptians particularly depicted themselves as having skin colour lighter than Nubians and darker than Libyans and Asiatics (Roth 1995; Nivenus 2014). Moreover, to assume that every race or culture must either be white or coloured is Eurocentric, because this is a racial dichotomy invented by white colonialists in order to separate the world into the civilised and uncivilised (Nivenus 2014).

Another main criticism of Afrocentricity is that the paradigm refuses to recognise that Africa itself has undergone a process of cultural change over the years. It can be argued that the impact of colonisation and Westernisation on Africa is so profound that the identity of modern Africa has become so complex that seeking a pure African-based theory may be restrictive and cannot truly and fully reflect today's Africa or meet the needs of its citizens. Moreover, globalisation and technological advancement have greatly increased human interaction and have further eroded all forms of prehistoric constriction of identity, whether ethnic or racial. However, Afrocentric scholars continue to see globalisation as another form of display of Western hegemony that could perpetuate a global system of unequal relationships. This resistance to globalisation by Afrocentric scholars regardless of its many benefits is regarded as extreme and myopic, because no matter the resistance, integration of all cultures in this era of globalisation is inevitable and can only be strengthened and expanded (Adeleke 2015, 209). Some Afrocentric scholars such as Hawi (2005) however, concur that absolute rejection of modernisation is truly extreme and will deprive Africa of the associated benefits of technological advancement. Hawi (2005, 5) therefore proposes an indigenisation and modification of Western theories to suit African norms, culture, traditions, and needs so that such adapted theory only reflects Africa and no longer imitates Western theory. Despite this criticism of Afrocentricity, it is the most appropriate methodology for this article, as it seeks scientific ways through which Africa can develop, based on its history, patterns of behaviour, and culture, and not an imitation of Western methods of development.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AGENDA: BACKGROUND

During the colonial period, African colonies were mainly exploited for the benefit of advanced countries. Moreover, European colonialism gave many European countries greater political and economic control over the rest of the world. These inequalities, particularly between Global North (describing rich countries of Europe, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and Japan) and Global South (describing the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific), led to disparity in the development experiences of these two regions (Willis 2011, 18). Thus, the preoccupation of post-colonial African governments was to speed up industrialisation and development so as to catch up with the advanced European countries. The idea of catching up is also a Eurocentric idea as development is defined by the state of advancement of the industrialised countries of the North, so that other countries that may develop must follow the path of development of these advanced countries. Consequently, most of the development strategies adopted by African countries have been based on Western development approaches as well as reform packages from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). These organisations are also referred to as the Bretton Woods Institutions (Willis 2011, 36). In the last 50 years, Africa has also received loans, aid and other development assistance worth over US$l trillion from the World Bank and IMF, even though this aid is usually dependent on reforms recommended by these institutions. Nevertheless, this aid has not made Africa better off in terms of growth, development and poverty reduction since its independence from colonial government (Moyo 2009).

In the 1950s and early 1960s the Modernisation theory was popularised by the West as the main guide for the newly independent African countries and the rest of the third world to develop. The thrust of Modernisation theories is that to achieve economic growth, underdeveloped countries must follow some series of linear and phased process, modeled on the historical growth path of the developed world. Other processes dimension, of modernisation theories include investment, savings, foreign trade and free trade, based on comparative advantage (So 1990, 36). Rostow's linear stages of growth was particularly influential in this regard. According to Rostow (1960), the transition from underdevelopment to development would pass through five linear stages. African economies were expected to leap the 'traditional stage' to 'pre-conditions for take-off', 'take-off', 'drive to maturity' and finally the 'age of high mass-consumption" and finally catch-up with the West. Following modernisation theories, newly independent governments of Africa, adopted Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) with the hope that industrialization would transform the African economies from subsistence, agriculture-based economies to modern economies. The implementation of ISI in Africa involved massive importation of machinery from developed capitalist countries, financed through exports of primary products, mainly minerals and agricultural materials (Chachage 1987, 5). However, due to exploitative trade regime which favours the developed countries, the returns on the export of primary products by African countries were not sufficient to finance their massive imports, leading to balance of payments crisis and debt crisis. Thus ISI could not achieve its objectives. But the main flaws of the modernization theories, which lead to its failure was its false assumption that all countries are homogenous and its universal applicability (Okereke and Agupus 2015, 22).

In the 1970s, many African countries shifted their development strategies towards export promotion which was supposed to lead to increased foreign exchange earnings, capital formation, employment creation and economic growth. However, like ISI, this also was a failure. However, the 1970s also witnessed a decline in the exports of primary products due to the adverse functioning of the world market and recurrent droughts. Thus African countries continue to face severe balance of payments deficits; poor growth and poverty (Chachage 1987, 10). From 1980 through the early 1990s, many African countries adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) designed by the World Bank and the IMF. SAP was a growth orthodoxy based on market liberalisation and deregulation. As a result, industrialization was replaced by trade liberalisation and financial deregulation, subsidies on public utilities were eliminated and the role of the government in the economy was reduced through the privatisation of public enterprises. However, evidence shows that the programme was largely unsuccessful, as most countries experienced deep reductions in output, high rates of unemployment, and an unprecedented rise in the levels of inequality and poverty (Rodrick 2002, 1).

However, the multilateral institutions of the World Bank and IMF did not blame the failure of liberalism on the inappropriateness of the SAP polices for African economies; rather the failure was attributed to bad governance, interpreted as failure to effectively manage investment and Structural Adjustment Programmes. And rather than finding out what really works for African economies, the Bretton Woods Institutions replaced the Washington Consensus with a Post-Washington Consensus, a broader agenda based on neoliberalism, but which also incorporates the role of the state in economic management (Rodríguez 2011, 28; Rodrick, Subramanian and Trebbi 2002, 1). The idea that institution matters was also reinforced by New Institutions Economics (NIE) which attempts to integrate a theory of institutions into the neoclassical theory of liberalism. According to North (2005), NIE modifies the neoclassical theory by adding institutions and political process as a critical constraint in the performance of economies and as the explanation for ineffective markets. The consensus that institution matters among development partners shifted donors to 'policies towards good governance, both as an objective and a precondition for aid and development cooperation (Singh 2003, 1). And for African countries under a heavy debt burden, stagnated growth, and persistent poverty, the implementation of the good governance agenda was not an option; rather, it was an obligation.

In its present form, good governance is a bundle of many requirements, including democracy, participation, human rights, decentralisation, the rule of law, efficient and effective public management, transparency, and accountability; while neoliberalism remains the main growth strategy (Aubut 2004, 14). Economic liberalisation, democracy, and decentralisation in particular are the main governance reforms promoted in developing countries by donors. Theoretically, both democracy and decentralisation offer valuable benefits such as increased local participation, improved human rights, accountability, and responsiveness, which are donors' requirements for good governance. However, in the African context, the implementation of good governance (especially liberalisation, democracy, and decentralisation) has not been associated with any remarkable growth, development, or poverty reduction (Enwere 2013, 59). Although face value, good governance or a call for improvement in governance resonate with the aspirations of many Africans. Especially because of poor public service delivery to the masses, who also face the burden of corruption daily and therefore strongly desire accountability in government. Nevertheless, there exist unending arguments on the validity of the theoretical basis of good governance as a development strategy, especially in the African context. Moreover, the poor outcomes of governance interventions and institutional reforms portend the possible existence of theoretical inconsistencies (Geo-Jaja 2004, 316). The following section will examine the underlying theories of good governance, namely democracy, decentralisation and neoliberalism.

THE ORTHODOX NOTION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AS RELATED TO DEMOCRACY, DECENTRALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM

Good governance can be said to have its roots in the concept of governance. However, governance itself is an ambiguous term with no standard meaning. But in its wide sense, governance can be viewed as the processes or manner by which a country is managed or steered towards the achievement of societal goals (Gregory 2014, 16). In this regard, government is not synonymous with governance. While government can be defined as the autonomous authority of the state regime encompassing components such as the 'machinery of government', governance describes a complex process of governing, involving a network of private and public actors and structures (Gregory 2014; Chachage 1987, 5, 20). Governance has also been linked to the concept of institutions and the political economy. In this sense, governance is viewed in terms of its public sector administration capacity.

Many development agencies pay particular attention to the state's capacity to manage public affairs. IMF (1997) defines governance to encompass all aspects of the way a country is governed, including its economic policies and regulatory framework. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines governance as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels (UNDP 1997, 2). The World Bank (1992) defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) (2006, 10) defines governance as the capability of governments to get things done, how they respond to the needs and rights of their citizens, and how, in turn, people can hold their governments to account. The key assumption here is that efficient and effective government institutions are very necessary for the creation of a conducive economic environment, whereas corruption and rent-seeking behaviour in government impedes economic and societal development (Frey 2008, 46). The key elements of good governance include transparency, accountability, the rule of law and participation. It is worth noting, however, that despite international financial institutions' (IFIs) prescription of good governance to poor countries, many of their approaches run contrary to the principles of good governance. For example, by imposing good governance on poor countries as a condition for a loan, the policy inevitably contradicts its principle of democracy and participation.

With the new shift in emphasis from government to governance, there are also major changes that occur in the sphere of public administration. Two main examples of such changes are democracy as contrasted with authoritarian rule, and decentralization as contrasted with hierarchical government mode (Rhodes 2007, 1247; Argüden 2011, 3). Consequently, Gregory (2014, 15) argues that the ideal governance system or good governance largely entails decentralisation of formerly centralised state authority as well as the establishment of a democratic society. Moreover, attributes of the good governance agenda comprise largely the primary components of the Western-style democracy such as multiparty elections, the rule of law, human rights protections, transparency, accountability, participation, and decentralisation of power to local levels. Since the main elements of democracy are similar to the elements of good governance, Kassahun (2011, 204) equates democratic governance with good governance. Decentralisation has also been equated with good governance. Kiwanuka (2012, 45) argues that decentralization and good governance go hand in hand because decentralised systems promote people's participation and empowerment and also improve public sector efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability, which are also elements of good governance. This article articulates that the good governance agenda is based on Western theories of liberal democracy and decentralisation, while neoliberalism remains the underlying growth strategy. The following sections further discuss the theoretical arguments on which each of these components of good governance is based.

NEOLIBERALISM AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Economic liberalisation and good governance have been presented to be mutually reinforcing (Springer 2010, 935). Liberalisation generally refers to a reduction of government influence in the economy so that private sector participation in the economy can increase. Liberalisation includes policies that promote free trade, deregulation, elimination of subsidies, price controls and rationing systems. It also includes the downsizing or privatization of public services (Woodward 1992 in UN 2010, 97). Put another way, economic liberalisation is a laissez-faire approach to economic activity and management so that government intervention is at a minimum while the forces of the market determine the allocation of resources. The argument for liberalisation is that government does not have the capability to manage the economy and that state intervention in economic activity leads to the inefficient allocation of scarce economic resources and distortions which in turn have an adverse effect on economic growth and poverty reduction. Accordingly the role of the state is confined to creating an enabling environment for the private sector to thrive while, through efficient allocation of resources, the free market increases output, employment and economic growth.

The same argument applies to trade liberalisation. Proponents argue that trade protection causes inefficient production in economic sectors with high trade barriers. However, when barriers are removed, production shifts to efficient sectors where countries have a comparative advantage. Thus trade liberalisation is expected to lead to greater market access and increased exports, which will ensure higher rates of economic growth (UN 2010, 98). Equally, liberalisation of the financial sector is expected to lead to financial development and economic growth. According to McKinnon (1973) and Shaw (1973), government regulation of the financial sector often leads to too low or negative real interest rates, which discourage savings and encourage inefficient use of capital. However, the deregulation of interest rates will increase household willingness to save and hold financial assets whilst also making funds available for investment. Allowing the markets to determine interest rates and allocate financial resources is expected to channel scarce financial resources to the most productive sector and also to direct global savings to countries with the most profitable investments. In this regard, higher domestic real interest rates are expected to attract more foreign capital or foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country (UN 2010, 104).

Liberalisation policies often also include the privatisation of public enterprises. Privatisation has become a cornerstone in the good governance agenda and its aim is to make public enterprises and assets more efficient and free from corruption and from government's neo-patrimonial networks (Konings 2004, 283). Privatisation refers to a situation where the ownership, control or management of public service assets is transferred by the government to the private sector (Smith 2001). A privatisation process may take different forms such as the outright sale of public assets to the private sector, a reduction in the regulatory role of government, outsourcing services, and internal market arrangements through which the purchase of services is detached from their provision; user fees; private-public partnerships, and liberalisation. Many developing countries have subscribed to liberalisation policies since the 1980s, especially as part of adjustment policies required for loans and foreign aid from donors and IFIs. Although evidence shows that the adjustment programmes implemented in the 1980s were unsuccessful, their failure was never attributed to the programmes themselves. Rather, the failure was blamed on poor governance in recipient countries as well as on the reluctance of these countries to open up quickly enough, resulting in only partial implementation of adjustment programmes (Sundaram, Schwank and von Arnim 2011, 3). But this conclusion about the failure of SAP can be contended.

Arguably, many of the assumptions on which the SAP theory of neoliberalism is based are not realistic in developing countries. For example, SAP's assumption of free market mechanisms is not practicable in developing countries whose markets are highly imperfect and underdeveloped. Similarly, the abrupt elimination of the public sector in economies whose growth path previously depended on the state cannot but create large distortions that could hurt the poor (Rodríguez 2011, 22). Nevertheless, there is a consensus among donors that it is poor governance and not inappropriateness of the adjustment policies that led to the poor outcomes of SAP. Consequently, the main tenets of SAP, economic liberalisation and deregulation, remained accepted as a precondition for growth by IFIs and as a result, liberalism forms the foundation of the good governance agenda. It is argued that a positive outcome can only be achieved if the state keeps to the free market ideology (Abrahamsen 2000 in Springer 2010, 935). The World Bank (1994, 2) particularly argues that to achieve poverty reduction in Africa, liberalisation programmes must be complemented with good governance, while good governance must necessarily include the shrinking of the state and the promotion of the civil society.

The good governance agenda also serves to construct economic liberalism as a force for democracy. The current good governance agenda may be classified under what Ryan (1993, 293–296 in Thorsen and Lie 2006, 5) classified as modern liberalism, which is a free market system having the state as active participant in the economy, especially to regulate the marketplace, and to provide essential goods and services to the public. While classical liberalism favours laissez-faire economic policies, modern liberalism argues that the state must play a significant role in the economy if the most basic liberal goals are to be achieved. Nonetheless, whether classical liberalism, modern liberalism, or neoliberalism, the core assumption of these theories is a self-regulating market (Thorsen and Lie 2006, 5). Harvey (2005, 2) describes neoliberalism as a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be improved by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework suitable to such practices. According to the theory, as investors and entrepreneurs, they improve their individual wellbeing, which leads to the growth of the entire economy. Neoliberalism is expected to lead to wellbeing as every individual serves his own self-interest in a free market. Neoliberalism is argued to lead to democratic empowerment because wellbeing improvement promotes greater interpersonal trust and competence in people, which in turn encourages the required traits for democratic citizens (Neher and Marlay 1995 in Springer 2010, 935).

DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance agenda has broadened development so that it does not only include economic liberalisation reforms but also political liberalisation. According to Ogundiya (2010, 204), an inseparable connection exists between democracy and good governance since both concepts are based on almost the same principles. The term democracy is derived from two Greek words, 'demos' meaning people and 'kratos' meaning rule. Translating directly, democracy means a form of government in which the people rule. However, what constitutes democracy has evolved over time. Even in the ancient Greek city states where democracy originated, only adult male citizens were allowed to vote, while non-citizens, who form the majority of the population, were not given the privilege (Blackwell 2003). Democracy, according to Schumpeter (1942), is 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote. Principles of democracy include regular fair and free elections; universal adult suffrage; popular sovereignty; an independent judiciary; competitive political participation and representation. Other features of a democratic system include freedom to vote and contest for office, freedom to speak and publish dissenting views, freedom to form and join organisations; strong civil society organisations; political tolerance; transparency; the separation of powers of the various arms of government; and respect and protection of citizens' rights (Klein, Kiranda and Bafaki 2011, 5; Johnson 2001, 5). In a democratic system, citizens have the power to choose their representatives through competitive elections. Election is an effective tool used by the people to make government responsive and accountable. Advocates for democracy have argued that a democratic system of government is more beneficial than other forms of governments (Oke 2010, 34). Proponents further argue that a democratic system will guarantee better quality of individual lives through the granting of political and civil rights. Democratic governance is expected to be more responsive to the demands and pressures from citizens. In democracies, power lies with the masses of the electorate and human freedoms are guaranteed. In contrast, authoritarian regimes (such as military and one party regime) repress individual freedoms and the leaders are not constitutionally accountable to the people (Bedeski 2009). A good example includes South Africa under apartheid. Authoritarian regimes would likely be less concerned with poverty reduction and other issues relating to human development compared with democratically elected governments. This is because poverty and other challenges affecting the masses may not threaten authoritarian regimes who do not need the votes of the masses to remain in power (Gerring, Strom and Alfaro 2012, 2). While democracy is seen as a valuable element of good governance, decentralisation is expected to strengthen the capacity of the state to deliver on its obligations to citizens. Consequently, decentralisation is usually implemented alongside democracy in the pursuit for good governance.

DECENTRALISATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The wave of decentralization actually came before the 'third wave' of democratisation. Specifically in the 1980s, the implementation of adjustment programmes required that developing countries decentralise their economies by privatising public enterprises, deconcentrate the over-centralised public administration, and devolve functions previously centralised to sub-national governments (Smith 2001). Decentralisation is a major component of the good governance agenda, principally to foster democracy, participation, and empowerment at the local level (Kulipossa 2004, 774). According to Charlick (1992,16), decentralisation increases participation of citizens in public decision making, which leads to good governance in the form of better management, responsiveness, and accountability. Decentralisation can be defined as the transfer of decision-making authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to actors and institutions at lower levels (Litvack and Seddon 1999, 2; Larson and Ribot 2004, 8). Decentralisation can also take the form of strengthening of sub-national governments in relation to the central government through an increase of local capacities, improvement of the fiscal powers of sub-national governments and an increase in their responsibilities (Selee 2006, 12). From the perspective of good governance, decentralisation refers to the restructuring of governance system so that there is a system of co-responsibility between and among institutions of governance at central, regional, and local levels while increasing the authority and capacities of sub-national levels (Mugabi 2004, 22).The discussion on various types of decentralisation, namely administrative decentralisation, fiscal decentralisation and political or democratic decentralisation are well documented in Larson and Ribot (2004).

Theoretical arguments for decentralisation reforms include increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of local service delivery, a reduction in the size, risks and burden of the central government, promoting local participation and local democracy, promoting the accountability and transparency as well as responsiveness of public officials to citizens, increasing the legitimacy of government, and nation building (Okojie 2009, 2; Faguet 1997, 14). Decentralisation is also argued to be an important element of participatory democracy (Olowu 1997). Accordingly, decentralisation empowers local government to help educate citizens about democracy. Local governments also provide the initial platform to develop new political leadership who can later go into politics at national levels. Decentralisation also enables the participation of the greatest number of citizens in the democratic process. As more people participate in governance processes, their civic consciousness increases as well as their political maturity, thereby developing the community's sense of democracy. And because local governments are closer to the citizens than the national government, they provide a conducive environment for democracy, not only for people to effectively participate in elections to choose their representatives, but also to demand accountability from public office holders at local level. Thus, decentralisation complements democracy in promoting the accountability and responsiveness of public policies (Olowu 1997, 108; Kulipossa 2004, 775). Smith (2001) argues that increased accountability associated with democratisation and decentralisation will definitely change the structure of public expenditure in terms of what type of projects are publicly financed as well as where such projects are located within the national territory. Similarly, the quality of public services provided is expected to improve, which in turn is expected to increase consumers' willingness to pay for them. Consequently, there will be improved cost recovery and a possible decrease in the overall cost of government.

The above sections have critically examined the theories of liberalisation, democratisation and decentralisation as well as the benefits each of the theories offers for the achievement of good governance. With the principles and advantages outlined above, it may be expected that a good governance reform involving the implementation of liberalisation, democratisation and decentralisation should necessarily lead to good governance and welfare improvement. The next section reviews the implementation of these theories in Africa and how they impact on good governance and development.

LIBERALISATION, DEMOCRATISATION, DECENTRALISATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

Analysing the impact of governance reforms such as liberalisation policies, democracy and decentralisation in Africa, it is found that none of these reforms has translated to better governance or poverty reduction. Contrary to expectations, liberalisation reforms have not been able to mobilise sufficient local or foreign capital needed for growth. Foreign capital inflow to Africa in particular remains low and has not contributed significantly to development (Sundaram et al. 2011, 6). Between 1990 and 2008, Africa's share in global FDI stood at an average of 3 per cent (%) which is below its 5 per cent (%) share in the 1970s. Africa's share in global FDI is also less than that of other developing regions such as Asia, which has about 18 per cent (%). Since the 1990s, about 65 per cent (%) of FDI flow to sub-Saharan Africa goes to South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Sudan and Equatorial Guinea, which are all oil-dependent economies except for South Africa (Sundaram et al. 2011, 6). The problem with having foreign capital flow mainly to the petroleum sector is that such flow rarely translates into development. In many African countries, oil revenue is hardly directed to the improvement of welfare; rather it is used to enrich the political class. Moreover, the foreign oil companies who exploit most of the crude oil seek their personal interest and not the interest of the countries. Due to the usual neglect of other productive sectors in the economy such as agriculture and the high level of corruption in the oil sector, most oil dependent developing countries end up being the most impoverished, a situation referred to as Dutch disease (Bature 2013, 15).

Despite good governance reforms of financial liberalisation, African countries have also not been able to mobilise domestic saving and investment even though financial deepening has increased (Arestisa and Canerb 2009, 232; Reinhart and Tokatlidis 2000, 4). In Zimbabwe, which adopted several good governance reforms including financial reforms between 1991 and 1999, economic growth, savings and investment fell far below the pre-reform levels. (Chigumira and Makochekanwa 2014, 25). Zimbabwe also experienced harsh economic conditions during the reform period, which resulted in a decline in domestic demand and local production as well as low capacity utilisation. The unstable macroeconomic environment also discouraged both savings and investment activities in the country (Chigumira and Makochekanwa 2014, 27). In Malawi, access to finance continued to be a problem despite financial liberalisation. And due to financial constraints, between 1996 and 2000, about 78 per cent (%) of firms have contracted in size, laying off workers, while much more enterprises were closing than new ones were opening (Kabango and Paloni 2011).

Since opening up its markets due to good governance reform, the volume of African exports has been growing at slower rates than in other regions, while the level of imports has increased significantly. Meanwhile trade liberalisation has also caused a significant loss of tariff revenues, the impact of which has been adverse on government fiscal capabilities, especially because most African governments have thin tax bases and cannot significantly expand tax revenue (Sundaram et al. 2011:24). Unable to diversify their economies, African countries depend mainly on exports of a small number of primary commodities such as crude petroleum and agricultural products, making them even more vulnerable to price fluctuations in the international markets than before liberalisation (UNCTAD 2008). Moreover, in many industrialized countries, the agricultural sector is protected and subsidised, making it more difficult for African farmers to compete in the international commodity market. Ultimately, Africa have not benefited significantly from trade liberalisation (Sundaram et al. 2011, 16). The IMF (2001) estimates that the gains from eliminating all barriers range from US$250 billion to US$680 billion per year. However, over 70 per cent (%) of these gains will go to developed countries while more than two thirds of the gains are expected to go to developing countries as a result of the Doha trade agreement will go to countries like China, Argentina, Vietnam, Brazil, and India (Anderson and Martin 2005 in UN 2010). Even though few countries have experienced rapid growth during the last decade, such growth has been based on mineral extraction, a sector that contributes to worsening inequality and limited employment growth (Sundaram et al. 2011, 6). It is no surprise therefore that the periods of liberalisation in Africa are also associated with rising poverty, inequality and unemployment (Demmers 2004, 258).

Analysis of good governance reforms through the privatisation of state owned enterprises in Africa also shows mixed outcomes, with no African country being categorised as successful in implementing privatisation reforms. In West Africa, Nigeria, Chad, and Mali for example, it can be observed that despite privatisation and deregulation, old problems persist. Public service provision in these countries remains very poor, solid waste collection is inadequate in all major cities, private healthcare facilities are inaccessible to the majority and power cuts persist, deterring economic growth and citizens' welfare (ASC 2005). In many countries, privatisation further reinforced the neo-patrimonial networks and nepotism it was intended to correct. Due to corruption in the processes, the privatisation of public enterprises has mainly enriched the elite and political class. This is especially true in Nigeria and Ghana (Arowolo and Ologunowa 2012, 793). Adejumobi (2000, 4) observes that deregulation policy further weakens the capacity of the state to control corruption, as privatisation creates a host of opportunities for personal wealth accumulation. In Cameroon, for example, the privatisation process was highly political, embedded in power relations, and non-democratic, and contributed to civil conflict. Privatisation has particularly contributed to ethno-regional conflicts in Africa, in places such as Rwanda, Sierra Leon, and Liberia, due to the exclusion of important stakeholders in the decision making process. In the Cameroonian case, the Anglophone Cameroon perceived privatisation as a renewed onslaught by the Francophone-dominated post-colonial state on the Anglophone cultural and economic heritage (Konings 2004, 283).

The third wave of democracy which blew across Africa in the 1990s showed radical outcomes that disappointed democracy optimism and the expectations of good governance and economic development. Democratisation in Africa has produced what Zakaria (1997) refers to as 'illiberal democracies', which are a form of government that mixes democracy with a substantial degree of non-democratic practices such as the flagrant abuse of power and arbitrariness, a compromised judiciary, and the abuse of human rights and freedoms. In many African countries, the democratic system is characterised by election violence, looting, stealing of ballot boxes, destruction of property, killings, protests, election boycott, voter intimidation, election fraud and rigging. Its party primaries are mostly selective, non-participatory and undemocratic. Such experiences are common in countries like Kenya, Benin, Gambia, Zambia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and the Republic of the Congo (Atoubi 2008, 11). Consequently, many elected leaders are corrupt and unaccountable to the electorate since their loyalty is owed to party godfathers and patrons (Idada and Uhunmwuangho 2012).

The establishment of democracy as a prerequisite to good governance has not been able to reform the African patronage system. In many countries, public institutions, including the judicial system, are captured by the ruling regime and the rule of law is subverted for personal benefit so that the rich are able to get away with offences while the rights of the poor continue to be violated (Kassahun (2011, 212).Omeiza (2008, 13) argues that African democracies since the 1990s have not led to improved governance, neither were they able to produce policies to benefit the masses or guarantee equal access to public goods. Democracy in Africa has been reduced to mere multi-party elections which offer the people rights they cannot exercise, people will vote but their candidates will never win, and political equality disguises highly unequal power relations (Ake1996, 5). Rather than improving the standard of living, democracy in Africa has resulted in political violence, civil wars, genocide, poverty, insecurity, conflict, unemployment and corruption as evident in Nigeria, Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone.

The African situation leads one to question the purported relationship between democracy and good governance. Many studies have also shown that the relationship between democratic governance and development is contentious. Studies by as Przeworski (2004) and Doucouliagos and Ulubaşoğlu (2008) have found that democracy does not have a direct impact on economic growth. Przeworski (2004) particularly shows that in poor countries, the type of regime (whether autocratic or democratic) makes little difference to economic growth. Barbone, Cord and Hull (2006) also show that, contrary to the theory that democracy may lead to development, democracy may actually worsen inequality and poverty. Specifically, the poor suffer in democracies in which few but powerful groups take control of institutions in order to benefit from policies to the detriment of the general populace. Inequality will also worsen when there is partiality in government provision of basic services to favour a specific class, sex or group. As Booth (2011, 2), rightly noted, democracies cannot achieve development where poverty is high because clientelism and vote-buying are cheaper and easier for power-hungry politicians to obtain than keeping promises to improve policies and the delivery of public goods.

Empirical evidence of decentralisation in African countries such as Namibia, Ethiopia, Guinea, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique also shows great disparities in the success and failure of decentralisation policies, both within and across countries and over time. While some community-level decentralisation programmes in Namibia have been relatively effective in contributing to participation and local good governance, it is very difficult to duplicate such successful local decentralisation experiences on a wider scale because such experiences are dependent on specific local conditions and qualities (Kulipossa 2004, 777). An analysis of decentralisation in Africa reveals many challenges. Bossuyt and Jeremy (2002, 2), drawing on cases from Ethiopia, Guinea, and Mozambique, have found that in each of the case studies, decentralisation is highly political and a top down process. Moreover, decentralisation tends to be masterminded and implemented by ruling elites, alienating citizens and organisations at grassroots level. And on the part of central and local government officials, there has been persistent rent-seeking behaviour, and the search for control over their people and resources. Kakumba and Fourie (2008, 130) reported that decentralisation in Uganda neither removed inherent weakness in the local government system nor improved accountability. Ekpo (2008, 20) also found that in South Eastern Nigeria, decentralisation could not achieve much improvement in service delivery due to the financial and institutional constraints of the sub-national governments. Erratic intergovernmental fiscal transfers in particularly are an issue in many countries. For example, in Zambia and Zimbabwe, allocations from the central to the sub-national governments are highly unstable and unpredictable, which renders local governments ineffective (Matovu 2014, 45). Similarly, the decentralisation of the education sector in Zimbabwe has not reversed persistent regional inequities in access to schooling, per capita expenditures, and quality. Most importantly, empirical evidence from Africa shows that decentralisation, democracy, and development are not necessarily causally related (Kulipossa 2004, 777).

Theoretically, liberalisation, democracy and decentralisation offer valuable benefits such as financial deepening and empowerment, increased local participation; improved human rights, accountability, and responsiveness. However, the adoption of these polices has resulted in crises and chaos in many African countries while poverty remains unabated. The next section provides an Afrocentric analysis of the good governance theory.

AN AFROCENTRIC ANALYSIS OF THE GOOD GOVERNANCE THEORY

From the analysis above, it is clear that good governance reforms in the form of liberalisation imposed by IFIs and international donors on African countries have not led to economic growth in African countries, neither has democracy or decentralisation improved the welfare of African citizens. All the benefits assumed in good governance theories have not been realisable in the African context. Despite democratisation, deregulation, privatisation, decentralisation and the opening up of their market, countries in sub-Saharan Africa continue to experience high levels of poverty. These countries are also the least developed, with high level of insecurity, hunger, violence, infant mortality and an unacceptably low standard of living. Rather than abate these problems, good governance adjustments and reforms have in some cases aggravated them. Indisputably, there is evidence of institutional decadence in Africa such as corruption, nepotism, patronage networks, administrative inefficiency and poor public service delivery; nevertheless the origins of the tools of current good governance reforms are surely very significant. It is recognised that the discourse of good governance is an agenda set by the Bretton Woods institutions and donors. The World Bank's position in particular, largely provides the basis, political framework, economic context and principles of the current good governance agenda. It may be that the principles of good governance such as the rule of law, participation, transparency and human rights are related to some of Africa's challenges, at least from the World Bank's point of view; nevertheless, the articulation and implementation of these principles involve several contradictions and are not grounded in African intent, articulation, and focus.

As a donor-imposed development strategy, it can also be argued that the good governance theory was not formulated to seek the best interest of African people. Rather, good governance is an amended version of the World Bank's liberalisation and adjustment programme. Good governance is largely similar to the neoliberal market solution, modified by the addition of democracy and decentralisation factors. The question to ask in particular is 'whose governance?' as argued by Tandon (1996, 27 in Adejumobi 2000, 4). A cursory look at the agenda indicates that it primarily serves the interest of the World Bank and its ally agencies before considering the African people. By emphasising and insisting on trade liberalisation in a region with inadequate infrastructure and limited productive capacity to take advantage of market opportunities, these reforms unfairly and prematurely exposed African infant industries to unhealthy international market competition with much more matured industries from developed countries (Sundaram et al. 2011, 4). Africa particularly faces an unfair global trade system in which the World Bank insists on full trade liberalisation in poor African countries while developed countries continue to protect different sectors of their market from competition. The Western agriculture and textile sectors in particular have consistently enjoy subsidies and other protections despite globalisation (Demmers 2004, 293). The huge bailout packages given to the private sector in the US by the state in 2009 in order to cope with the 2008 financial crisis also contradict the free market ideology promoted by Western countries. The African region helplessly continues to be the market place and dumping ground for goods produced in the highly industrialised countries. A good example is the case of South Africa that tried to protect its poultry industry from the US's dumping of chicken at below cost price. But in response, the US threatened to cease providing trade benefits to South Africa, especially the country's access to American markets granted under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). As a result, South Africa was forced to open its market to American chicken even though such market flooding could lead to over 6 500 job losses and also threaten the development of domestic chicken production (Economist 2015). Thus the industrialised countries will continue to have a lot to gain from good governance and liberalisation while Africa has little or no hope of appropriating the gains of trade, due to various setbacks being faced by the region.

It can also be argued that the sponsors of good governance, namely the World Bank and IMF, have no moral justification for advocating good governance in Africa after imposing the Structural Adjustment Programme, the approaches and outcomes of which undermine the principles of good governance. For example SAP is non-participatory, it worsens welfare by eliminating subsidies on public goods and by downsizing the salaries of public workers, SAP promotes lack of accountability and fraud among civil servants (Adejumobi 2000, 4). Similarly, by imposing good governance on Africa as a condition for a loan, the policy inevitably contradicts its principle of democracy and participation. The continued imposition of Western-style governance and economic management also erodes Africa's opportunity to look inwards in its development pursuits. African societies were not impoverished or badly governed before the advent of colonialism by the West. The most evidence of poor governance such as nepotism, patronage network, corruption and dictatorship was not an inherent African nature; rather, those ills became pronounced in Africa due to colonisation and other Western influence. It can be argued that long years of colonialism succeeded both in subjecting Africa to Western theories, ideas, and patterns of development and in obliterating much of the regions' valuable history, norms, and patterns of governance and economic management which could have been useful in developing theories suitable for its development (Omeiza 2008, 14). A development theory that will answer African numerous challenges must be developed from within and must be owned both by its actors and beneficiaries. Moreover, the African environments contradict many of the underlying assumptions necessary for the practicability of good governance theories. Thus, the foundation of the current context of good governance is weak, as it is built on Western developmental traditions that fail to take cognisance of Africa's cultural and historical background.

Similarly, the implementation of good governance is no different from SAP. Good governance is a set of blueprints of neoliberalism ideas and a replication of Western 'accepted governance best practices', traded across poor countries as loan or aid conditionality. It is thus universal and stereotyped in its approach. The problem of universal approaches to development is that they often take little cognisance of the peculiarities or stages of development of poor countries. And evidently, there are no governance models that can be valid everywhere and for all stages of development (Booth 2011, 1). For example, the IFIs refuse to take cognisance of the fact that at the time of the introduction of SAP and liberalisation, the role of the state was very important in most African economies. The post-colonial African states had promoted development mainly through large-scale public ownership of national assets, public sector investment in infrastructure such as roads and the creation of public sector jobs which also represented the largest part of total non-agricultural employment (Sindzingre 2009, 16). Thus, for Africa, the paths of growth have previously depended mainly on the state. However, due to the implementation of adjustment policies (privatisation, deregulations and liberalisation), governments had to abruptly withdraw from the economy, and this disruption hurt African growth and social welfare. As argued by Rodríguez (2011, 22), the public sector cannot be completely removed from economic management without creating large distortions that could hurt the poor. By limiting the role of the state to mainly creating enabling macroeconomic conditions for the private sector, the Washington Consensus and the post Washington Consensus ignore the weight of history and politics, and the unique path and dependent processes that underlie state formation and the microeconomic expectations of economic agents, especially civil servants (Sindzingre 2009, 6).

The unprecedented growth experienced in China, Vietnam, India and the four 'Asian tiger nations', namely, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, which have adopted development strategies totally different from the good governance theories, is proof that Africa can also find its growth path without necessarily imitating the West. Thus, Africa needs to take its cue from these Far Eastern countries and look to its inside rather than outside (Rodrick 2002, 1). While not absolving corruption and nepotism in Africa, it is worth noting that the East Asian growth miracles were not preceded by any significant improvement in good governance (Gray and Khan 2010, 3). China in particular has achieved its growth despite evidence of what can be regarded as bad governance, for example, lack of independence of judicial institutions, absence of the rule of law, absence of accountability, and evidence of corruption and lack of property rights (Court, Hyden and Mease 2003, 26). However, unlike Africa whose development trajectory has been modelled on the West and imposed by the IFIs, China, for example, adopted a development strategy that fitted into the country's initial conditions and was compatible with the interests of the ruling group.

Moreover, in the successful Asian countries, government played a large role in stimulating investment and growth (Sindzingre 2009, 16). It thus confirms that growth and poverty reduction are achievable through government intervention and without necessarily following traditional theories of neoliberalism or good governance. This ability of the state to promote growth and development is what Sindzingre (2009, 10) refers to as 'developmental State', and its modus operandi in achieving industrialisation and development includes targeted industrial policies, political rent-seeking, the creation of 'distortions', targeted taxation, trade protection, the limitation of foreign shareholding, incentives for the banking sector and firm financing, technological training, and a technically competent bureaucracy. Khan (2006, 2–5) identifies these state capacities as achieving and sustaining high rates of investment, exhibited by successful Asian government as 'growth enhancing' governance capabilities. Moreover, these capabilities differ totally from the 'market enhancing' governance capabilities promoted by the IFIs and donors via the good governance agenda. Due to the IFIs insistence on minimal state involvement in the economy and a free market, the good governance agenda focuses on institutional reforms that ensure efficient markets and minimise rent seeking and government failure, but do not necessarily lead to growth and poverty reduction. It can be argued that the governance capabilities needed for poor countries to grow are the listed growth enhancing governance capabilities as contrasted with the market enhancing capabilities being promoted by the good governance agenda (Khan 2006, 5).

Finally, even though transparency, accountability, legitimacy, the rule of law and other elements of good governance are desirable in themselves, whether or not they translate into poverty reduction, poor countries are bedevilled with several other pressing issues that require priority. According to Kerandi (2008, 4), beside the issue of governance, many African countries are faced with other challenges such as terrorism, poverty, overpopulation, famine, civil war, HIV/AIDS, insecurity and conflicts. And without resolving these problems, it may be difficult for any development initiative (including good governance) to have the desired impact on African countries.

CONCLUSION

An Afrocentric approach to examining the impact of good governance implementation in African countries shows that not only are these policies unable to stimulate the desired improved governance and growth, but they also have adverse impacts on growth and welfare. It is unfortunate, however, that despite the fact that empirical evidence from Africa contradicts all the supposed theoretical benefits of good governance, the idea of Western democracy and a shrunken state remains resilient in the international development community. This calls into question the sincerity of the good governance agenda, and whether it indeed seeks the interest of the African people or it is a strategy to keep Africa under the perpetual domination of the West. Moreover, it is very clear that the foundation of the good governance agenda is built on Western developmental traditions, even though Africa possesses valuable history, norms and patterns of governance that could be used in developing theories suitable for the continent’s development. It is important that a theory aimed at developing Africa should be based on Africa’s reality and that it must not necessarily follow orthodox or Western development theories. The failure of democracy and adjustment programmes in Africa and the growth success of ‘Asian tiger nations’ who did not follow the good governance path indicate that Western theories are not infallible and that it is necessary for Africa to find out what works for it. While it is good to take cues from successful nations, scholarly efforts should begin research on African history, systems and customs to develop theories relevant to the African situation and stage of development, so that growth and poverty reduction can be achieved.

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