



POLICY MAKING IN AFRICA: IMPEDIMENTS TO ACHIEVING VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND POLITICAL STABILITY

SADOMBA, Frederick Chakupa

Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, Department of Peace Leadership
and Conflict Resolution, Open University,
Zimbabwe.

ABSTRACT

The fact that the African economy remains underdeveloped and politically unstable despite decades of emancipation from colonial rule and years of formulating various types of economic policies is a serious cause for concern. Perhaps the greatest controversy in Africa today is how to achieve viable, sustainable economic growth and political stability in view of the globalisation paradigm. Striking the right balance between matters of globalisation and sustainable development is a serious indictment on African policy makers. African leaders ought to make policies that protect the continent from the pangs of un-sustainability while benefiting from the promises of globalisation. This essay seeks to answer how policy makers in Africa can achieve viable, sustainable economic growth and political stability..

Keywords: Global Growth, Politics, Commercial law, Institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable economic growth is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987). This definition which was accepted subsumes some notion of fairness of access to basic resource needs for all population, both in the present day and in the future (Ikeme, 2016). Sustainability is therefore, the capacity for continuance into the future (Horwitz, 2007). The futuristic aspect of this definition poses challenges for the environment, economy, society and future. Questions that ought to be answered by the present African generations include: “Can today’s level of wealth creation be sustained? Can social cohesion be sustained by the present developmental initiatives?” What also appears clear is that, a path for economic development by the present generation should not reduce the capacity of future generations to provide for their own wants and needs (Chang, 2009).

Policy makers refer to persons responsible for making policy, especially those in government. A policy on the other hand, is a course of action adopted and pursued by a government. Dye (1995) holds that, public policy is an art as well as craft because it

requires insight, creativity and imagination in identifying societal problems and describing them, in devising policies that might alleviate them and in finding out whether these policies end up making things better or worse. Africa is renowned for its wealth which was the driving force behind its colonisation. African universities and colleges churn out graduates and confer advanced degrees, yet the scramble for employment seems to continue unabated (Chang, 2009). This is a confusing paradox of life. How can Africans continue to languish in poverty and scarcity amid plenty? These are the issues that need to be answered by Africa's policy makers.

Political stability is the durability and integrity of a government administration. A stable political environment is one where the population does not experience strong indicators of social unrest. In a stable political environment, people are normally satisfied with how their rulers handle problems and the solutions they create. Granted, political stability is based on the propensity for regime or government change, the incidence of political upheaval or violence in society as well as the stability of fundamental policies, such as property rights (Daron, Johnson and Robinson, 2001).

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

Political and economic stability are deeply interconnected. The uncertainty associated with an unstable political environment may reduce investment and lower economic development. Similarly, poor economic performance may lead to political unrest and the collapse of governments (Massachusetts Bureau of Economic Research, 1992). In a politically unstable environment, risk averse investors may hesitate to take economic initiatives or may exit the economy altogether. Investors prefer a stable political environment with less policy uncertainty. In this essay, therefore, the effects of an unstable political environment will be taken to be endogenous equations that conduce to low and reduced economic growth and *vice versa* (Jomo, Ocampo and Khan, 2007).

When African countries regained their independence from colonial occupation, many expected increased economic growth and political stability. But, to date, many African countries have not achieved meaningful economic growth and many still remain mired in political instability. The economic and political situation obtaining in most African countries has seen millions of the continent's populace migrating mostly to Europe, the home of Africa's former colonial masters. Poor governance systems and the inability of many African governments to stimulate sustainable development amid political repression have been among the key drivers of emigration. Impliedly, most African countries have failed to disentangle from their former colonial masters, a sad development for many of the continent's nationalists (Horwitz, 2007).

African policy-makers are challenged to craft policies that ensure sustainable development capable of sustaining utility or well-being of present and future generations. In order to achieve sustainable development and political stability, African leaders should ensure that their stock of capital (human, man-made and social) remains constant overtime or ideally that it increases. Today, Africa's dilemma is compounded by the concept of globalisation.

GLOBALISATION

Globalisation seeks to increase integration of economies through rapid information and technological exchanges. Globalisation means trade liberalisation, free capital mobility and the empowerment of transnational corporations (Jomo et al., 2007). With such seemingly insurmountable challenges, how do African policy makers achieve

viable, sustainable economic growth? The African continent was already ‘singing the blues’ without the strong wave of globalisation now sweeping across the globe. A new world economy has emerged and is threatening viability of the small and economically low-performing African states (Horwitz, 2007).

In today’s global economic dispensation, anonymous investors influence currency rates, the availability and price of international capital and interests rates in economies some distant away from their operational bases. Africa needs to embrace the framework of rules within which economic activity takes place. This economic ‘playing field’ is defined in the international framework by the Bretton-Woods Institutions (the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF)) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), among others (Daron et al., 2001). Meaningful, viable and sustainable policies for economic growth need to consider the exponential increases in computing power that have helped developed countries to overcome the barriers of physical distance (IMF and the World Bank, 2010). African policy-makers should therefore craft policies that will enable African states to participate in the global economy and at the same time, open up barriers to foreign investment, reduce corporate regulations and taxes and other disincentives to vibrant economic activities (IMF and the World Bank, 2010).

It is important to point out however, that, globalisation concepts appear to be at cross-purposes with the principles of sustainable development. Globalisation threatens consensus –seeking and the incorporation of the needs of all countries, regardless of size. Again, the integration of the environment and the development concerns of the state in the achievement of social equity, bring about more sustainable patterns of production and consumption are threatened. An example of this scenario is probably the damaging manner of how the Chinese Diamond Corporations benefited from the Marange Diamonds in Zimbabwe, leaving the country with nothing to show, but large excavations which pose serious environmental challenges and are a danger to life (Lin, 2012).

THE WOUNDS OF POVERTY

Essentially, African economies remain influenced by external influences outside their geographical borders. This has meant that African economies continue to be dominated by the same Western countries that had colonised most of the continent. It should be borne in mind that these Western countries marginalised Africa. The wounds of poverty, civil wars and conflicts; environmental degradation, debt and poor export performance, characteristic of most African states, have their roots in the European colonialist and capitalist activities in the continent (Basu, Calamitsis and Ghura, 2000). Indeed, the question still remains; how can policy makers in Africa achieve viable, sustainable economic growth and political stability? What choices and opportunities are available to the African economies and what policy measures can be crafted and implemented to ensure the elimination of the undesirable conditions while reaping the desirable fruits?

Answering the above questions is no easy task. Much of sustainable economic growth depends on the stock of capital which must not decline or ideally be increasing for sustainability to be ensured. A 2016 United Nations report indicates that more people are migrating from Africa mainly to Europe and the tide shows no signs of stopping. Some of these emigrants are fleeing wars and persecution; others, mostly the young, are seeking economic opportunities. African policy-makers therefore, need to make concerted efforts not only to address economic and political instability, but also to alleviate and create

sustainable economic and political stability in the continent (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2013).

VIALE ECONOMIC POLICIES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Viable economic policies should drive socio-economic transformation and the resultant benefits will accrue to the African populace by way of political stability. Economic policies should aim to build industry-driven economies capable of providing economic opportunities such as employment, social inclusion, and reliable access to education, clean energy, adequate food and safe water. These basic elements are necessary for the reduction of poverty, boosting productivity and improving the people's standards of living. In turn, the result is enhanced political stability (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2013).

African governments need to create policies that build diversified industrial sectors that are globally competitive, environmentally sustainable and capable of improving the continent's living standards significantly (Felipe, 2009). Since sustainability is also futuristic, efforts to advance industrialisation in Africa must be built into robust environmentally friendly policies where responsibilities are shared with the local populace. Efficient utilisation of resources and the use of clean energy sources have the potential of bringing about sustainable economic development. But in order to build globally competitive industries, African governments need reliable and sustainable energy sources. This is also necessary for building sound and resilient infrastructure and incentives for innovation. Policies should therefore, indicate how this will be achieved. Whatever forms of energy African economies decide to utilise must not be detrimental to the ecosystem (Chang, 2009).

Africa, like the rest of the world is experiencing extreme weather variations, severe droughts at times alternating with floods, land degradation and erosion. All these phenomena threaten the ecosystem and greatly contribute to climate change (Davis and Valensisi, 2011). These developments negatively impact on efforts to end poverty and improving the continent's standards of living of its peoples. In order to address the effects of climatic changes, African leaders must develop national policies that guide each country's response to climate change. The broad policy objectives should not only recognise the nested interdependency between the economy, society and environment, but should also seek to balance these with social and economic considerations for sustainability (Chang, 2009). Failure to balance these issues disadvantages both the present and future generations. Contemporary studies have shown that economic success and viability is dependent on environmental viability. The establishment of famine early warning systems should be key in future developmental policies. (Davis and Valensisi, 2011).

AFRICAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

African leaders need to rethink economic growth and social development policies (IMF, 2009). African policy makers should seek to enhance societal good through honest hard work. This calls for commitment, patriotism and the establishment of good governance systems. Dealing decisively with issues of corruption at all levels of government is critical in the achievement of viable and sustainable economic growth and political stability. Decision-makers should ensure that the scarce economic resources are utilised for the benefit of the people and not personal aggrandisement particularly of the ruling elites and their close associates (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2013). Both economic and political policies must ensure enhanced transparency and accountability.

Essentially, this calls for an environment where there is ownership of public policies by African societies, where citizens are prudent stewards of the destiny (Horwitz, 2007).

Improving governance, promoting the rule of law, practising openness, encouraging transparency and dealing decisively with corruption, are all policy considerations that can enable African countries to attract sustainable economic growth and political stability (IMF and the World Bank, 2010).

One renowned African scholar, Professor Patrice Lumumba of Kenya, in his recent address at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, remarked that, the development challenges of Africa are deeper and include high inequality, uneven access to resources, social exclusion and environmental degradation, among others (The Telegraph, 2017). On the political front, African countries are still dogged by ethnic conflicts, 'stolen elections', dictatorial tendencies, oppression and lack of respect for human rights, among other ills. Several initiatives have been undertaken in the past to try and reverse these phenomena. For example, through the United Nations Programme for the Economic Redressing and Transformation, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), African leaders showed collective vision and commitment to the development of the continent (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2013).

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEACE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Experience and the situation obtaining on the ground in the African continent have shown that the combination of peace and good governance would lead to economic transformation and the attainment of economic growth and political stability. With good economic and political policies, Africa can easily shrug off the cauldron of instability and economic deprivation (Horwitz, 2007). Policy makers need to give thought to the contemporary challenges undergirding the political, economic and social parameters and address the conflicts that are related to ethnicity, lack of resources or abuse thereof, among other concerns (IMF and the World Bank, 2010). African leaders have often been accused of being democrats for convenience rather than conviction. Again, policy makers must move away from being recipients of numerous development initiatives led by international donors. Such initiatives have engrossed the continent in heavy debt and engulfed Africa in a reliance syndrome (Horwitz, 2007).

Peace combined with good governance can foster development of the continent by establishing political stability. Policy makers should therefore commit to peace. Strong leadership and state of development would enable economic transformation. Policy makers must fashion policies to meet the wishes of both the local and international markets and stand ready to exploit the benefits from globalisation (Jomo et al, 2007). Responsiveness and accountability to the people's needs used jointly with appropriate policies, incentives and sanctions can ensure that both private and public resources optimally promote shared growth in Africa (Economic Development in Africa Report, 2012).

In a special issue of its Economic Development in Africa Report (2012), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development noted that national development goals in Africa should draw on democratic public deliberations. 'The participatory and consultative dimensions of the African state should enable the communities to take part in the development and governance processes' (Economic Development in Africa Report, 2012:9). In addition, African policy makers must enhance ownership of national development programmes by citizens. Such measures increase the legitimacy of economic policies and transparency in the state administrations. The African Peer Review Mechanism under NEPAD was designed to achieve this transparency and the building of

a developmental state that is economically and politically stable (Economic Development in Africa Report, 2012).

INDUSTRIAL POLICIES CENTRED ON MANUFACTURING IN ORDER TO IMPROVE COMPETITIVENESS AND CAPABILITIES OF DOMESTIC INDUSTRY

The UN Economic Development in Africa Report (2012) further encourages African states to adopt industrial policies centred on manufacturing in order to improve competitiveness and capabilities of domestic industry. High productivity is necessary for sustained economic growth and the reduction of poverty. The ripple effects of economic development are on political stability (Lin, 2012). Over the years Africa has experimented on a number of developmental initiatives that included structural reform programmes. However, it suffices to caution that current leaders should draw lessons from past initiatives and policies and incorporate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that identify past lessons and feed into the next policies. Feedback is critical for both economic and political stability of nations (Economic Development in Africa Report, 2012).

The challenge facing most African leaders today is changing over-reliance by their countries on resource-based manufacturing which involves low value-addition. Such practice exposes African countries to external price shocks. A new strategic approach to industrial policy-making that support and challenge entrepreneurs to increase investment or exports, encourage experimentation, identifies and removes industrial obstacles and avoids a one-size-fits-all approach is needed (Davis and Valensisi, 2011). Policy makers need to embrace scientific and technological innovation for African countries to compete with global exports. This can be achieved through supporting science, for example, the topical Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) promoted by the Zimbabwe Government through the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development is one such initiative which may alter the African countries' economic landscape. This rethinking suggests that African countries need economic growth based on technological development. Fundamentally, this approach recommends that African countries engage in a development strategy that promotes expansion in labour and resource intensive industries, which may call for more capital and skills (World Bank, 2012).

THE ACQUISITION AND ADAPTION OF FOREIGN SKILLS AND TECHNOLOGY

Contemporary sustainable development frameworks stress the fact that simply natural resources cannot be the backbone of a country's industrial efforts. Natural resources need to be augmented through material growth and intellectual capital (Lin, 2012). The accumulation of technological know-how and learning capabilities, accompanied by the acquisition of production and industrial equipment that can be adapted and used locally in African countries is paramount to the achievement of sustainable economic growth (Horwitz, 2007). This calls for the removal of the vestiges of the misplaced emphasis on predominantly supply-driven institutions in the promotion of local knowledge for technology and its absorption for use. Policy makers in Africa should invest more in research and development accompanied by structural transformation and the ability to upgrade and diversify production and export activities (IMF and the World Bank, 2010).

For most African countries, the most important and largest employer is government. There is insignificant input from the private sector or from the indigenous or national populations. The absence of active participation by the domestic societies

coupled by a less activity from both the private sector and civil society in most African states has seen foreign powerful states dictating relations with the continent (Jomo et al., 2007). In most instances, such a scenario has rendered most African leaders answerable to international financiers for their continued stranglehold onto power with little regard for the common good. African countries should give priority to the creation of linkages in the domestic economy, for example, through the promotion of agro-industries, so that industrial development yields positive spill-over effects in other sectors of the economy (Sampath and Spenneman, 2010).

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND THE BUILDING OF ROBUST REGIONAL POLICIES

The creation of an environment favourable to both domestic and foreign investment is key. The policy makers should also work to unlock the manufacturing potential of the continent through regional integration and the building of robust regional policies and markets such as the West African Common Industrial Policy of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Public policies on building viable economies and political stability should garner national consensus, have private sector input, civil society and other social partners to ensure sustainability (IMF and the World Bank, 2010). However, suffice to caution that the market as an engine for growth is contingent upon the maturity of the local companies and sectors, availability of infrastructure, supported by other factors of production and policies. African policy makers should therefore, design and implement comprehensive policy strategies that promote faster and sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. Broad public support is necessary to ensure sustainability (Sampath and Spenneman, 2010).

VOLATILITY AND REMOVAL OF POLITICS OF PATRONAGE

Political conflict across Africa is often a result of the use of patronage in retaining control of the state. Most of Africa's leadership is known to sustain itself in power by purchasing power through the distribution of state resources. In Africa, frequently, 'political victory assumes a "winner-takes-all" form with respect to wealth and resources, patronage, and the prestige and prerogatives of office' (Annan, 1998:4). Consequently, the result of such flawed practices is conflict. African leaders should therefore, formulate policies that expose the venal or myopic deployment of resources (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Policies to ensure political stability should seek to deal meaningfully with the continent's volatility and removal of politics of patronage. Political instability in most of the African states is fuelled by failure by governments to bring about a reapportionment of ethnic representation in government or a redistribution of other goods and services. In such countries, the use of violence is not uncommon as people protest widespread poverty and stagnation in economic growth (Annan, 1998).

Constraints on sustainable political sustainability in Africa are legion. Some are general and others are country specific. The African situation is exacerbated by recurring food insecurity, poor standard of living and various aspects of underdevelopment. Consequently, the continent's policy makers require more interdisciplinary systems with greater sensitivity on sustainable development (Annan, 1998). No sustainable development can be achieved in Africa with the kind of endemic political instability that remains the order of the day since decolonisation. Moreover, contemporary leaders must completely move away and not promote (directly or indirectly) the divide-and-rule policies that were so common prior to independence. Policies should encourage

compatible and equal development among different areas or peoples in the same country (World Commission on Environment and Development, 2012).

THE CREATION OF ACCOUNTABLE, GRASS-ROOTS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

Equally important, corruption and deficiencies in governance have led to certain development activities that are not of mutual benefit and often detrimental to the people. Leaders and policy makers must create policies that will guarantee the transparent allocation of funds to vital developmental projects while plugging the stashing of ill-gotten wealth in foreign countries (Todaro, 2011). To this end, the creation of accountable, grass-roots democratic institutions and participation in decision-making will remain fundamental to the achievement of political and economic stability in most of Africa (Annan, 1998). Sustainable political and economic growth would require the adoption of holistic systems that integrate planning, training and orientation of all concerned. Necessarily, policy makers will thus need to develop economic, political and legal incentives and instruments that back-up development projects that give priority to the maintenance of quality environment and conservation of resources for future generations (Todaro, 2011).

Viable and sustainable economic and political growth policies must address deficiencies in education and training, public enlightenment and orientation, unfavourable political and economic conditions and limitations in financial support. Institutional capacity-building for innovative research and development should be carefully chosen and adhered to with continuous commitment and allocation of resources and the creation of an enabling environment by governments (World Commission on Environment and Development, 2012).

POLICY LEARNING IS CRITICAL TO BUILD UPON AND EXPOUND

From the above discussion, it is clear that the modern African policy makers will borrow greatly from already existing developmental versions. Policy learning is critical to build upon and expound. The challenges confronting the present-day states are largely created by a confluence of factors, some old and some novel, and the onus is on policy makers to identify these challenges and to devise sustainable economic and political strategies that promote development (Padmashree, 2014). Achieving viable, sustainable economic growth and political stability calls for the adaptation of new technologies appropriate to the African context as opposed to simply transferring or replicating existing technologies that do very little to develop local capacity. An essential adjunct to this process is promoting the accumulation of technological know-how and learning capabilities. African policy makers therefore, should address the vestiges of misplaced emphasis on science and technology institutions that are supply driven and promote strategies that emphasise tacit know-how and local knowledge for technology absorption and use (Bell and Pavitt, 2013).

The African policy makers cannot ignore other factors such as the role of markets in their pursuit of sustainable economic growth (Padmashree, 2014). They would rather do well by acknowledging the impact of open economies and the usefulness of markets as engines for growth (Bell and Pavitt, 2013). The maturity of African industries, availability of local infrastructure and policy and institutional capacity with emphasis on minimising production costs is fundamental in growing African economies and thus directly contributing to the achievement of political stability in the continent. Minimising

production costs is vital for the protection of local industries when exposed to lowered trade costs and entry of foreign firms into domestic economies (Padmashree, 2014).

Dr. Camillus Kassala of the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (2017), while summarising a presentation by Professor Patrick Lumumba entitled, Magufulification of Africa at the University of Dar es Salaam, observed that in order to bring political stability and hygiene to Africa, the African leaders should avoid the temptations of power, pomposity, property, prestige and popularity. The pursuit of selfish ends by most African leaders has led to high levels of corruption that have thwarted development. The effects of corruption, lack of ethos, promotion of ethnicity have all combined to frustrate development and contribute significantly to political instability facing most of the continent (Lumumba, 2017).

CONCLUSION

As a way forward, sustainable economic and political stability is feasible through the conservation, management, and rational utilisation of all natural resources in a manner that maintains the integrity of the ecosystem, support life and prevent environmental degradation. An integrated approach in the planning and policy formulation stages at local, national, regional, continental and global levels is unavoidable. The economic growth trajectory pursued by African leaders should increasingly generate job growth and remove large numbers of people from the morasses of poverty in order to promote political stability. African states should lead in development in order to address widespread unemployment and deepening poverty and inequality.

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