

African and Latin American Political Regimes in Perspective: A Regional Analysis of Emerging Socio-Political Trends

IAPSS Think Tank

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Introduction

This year's IAPSS Africa and Latin American Think Tank Team will examine current socio-economic trends and their impact on political regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Our four policy papers will be centered on the following themes:

- **First** - Characterization and differentiation of the regions;
- **Second** - Analysis of emerging democratic trends such as: direct democracy, multiparty systems and democracy innovations;
- **Third** - Trade-related development assistance policies in Africa and trade relations with Latin America;
- **Fourth** - Emergence and impact of Internet and social media in these territories.

This first paper provides an introduction to these regions and the topics we'll be exploring in the future.

In comparing two regions as diverse and vast as Sub-Sahara Africa and Latin America, it's helpful to begin by discussing the misconceptions and generalizations often used to describe and label them.

Characterization: Failed and Fragile States

While Sub-Saharan Africa (from here on out referred to as Africa) and Latin America provide fruitful comparisons, we must avoid broad generalizations. Common among policy makers is the use of concepts such as *fragile* and *failed* states. The latter, has been subject to critiques which deem it as simplistic, misleading, and politically-problematic (Andersen, 2007; Bøås & Jennings, 2005; Hagmann & Hoehne, 2009).

As a result, this paper recognizes the need to avoid this bias by contextualizing the current key trends in these non-Western countries within their respective domestic and regional experiences and realities.

Nevertheless, it is suggested that: 1) state failure, whether understood as a process or feature of political systems, is undoubtedly an issue of domestic politics that in International Relations has become a post-Cold War phenomenon. **Failed states** are states unable to carry out their major functions such as provision of security, economic services, norm regulation, and political participation. 2) **Fragile states** are identified as those able to perform most of these activities but which are faced with increasing difficulties and vulnerabilities e.g. vulnerability to poverty, food insecurity, natural hazards, conflict, macroeconomic shocks (Ghani & Lockhart, 2008; Collier, 2009; Naudé et al., 2011). In Latin

American, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Guatemala are often labeled as fragile states; while in Africa, Angola, Chad, Nigeria, Sudan, DR Congo, and Timor-Leste often receive this label.

Political Regimes in Latin America & Africa

When examining political regimes in these regions, the conversation often falls to success and failures of democracy. Both regions have experienced waves of democratization since the 1980's and have seen the number of military dictatorships and one-party systems go down. However, their transition experiences diverge in that political regimes in Africa have evolved within neo-patrimonial, personalistic (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997) rather than corporatist regimes as often seen in Latin America.

Even though, some political regimes in Africa continue to demonstrate personalistic traits, leaders are starting to let go of old patrimonial habits as citizens increasingly demand less corrupt and more competent leaders to represent them in the global economy. Kenya provides a good example of this.

Latin America has evolved from a region where dictatorships prevailed for most of the twentieth century to a region where only a single openly authoritarian regime (Cuba) exists today (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013). This transformation is often attributed to the region's political context, strong normative preference for democracy among citizens, and a lack of radical policy preferences among key actors (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013).

Political reforms in both areas have led to an increase in multiparty politics - which presents unique implications for their political regimes.

The Rise of Multiparty Politics

Instead of single-party politics or military rule, multiparty politics has dominated political regimes in Africa and Latin America. Multiparty democracy swept across Africa in the early 1990s, as single-party states and authoritarian leaders bowed to pressure from outside and within. Overall, multiparty regimes in Africa have a higher failure rate than in Latin America. Also, multiparty regimes in Africa have suffered from perpetual 'democratic leaders', which hold on to power beyond their term limits. For example, Uganda is officially a multiparty democracy, however, its President, Yoweri Museveni, has been in power since 1986. Cameroon's President Paul Biya has also removed term limits and former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo unsuccessfully tried to do the same.

In Latin America, recent periods of economic instability have tested the strength and durability of multi-party systems. Even so, young democracies have shown that while their party systems display high levels of instability, their political regimes have been more stable than expected. Thus, the crisis of the party system has not translated into a crisis of the democratic regimes (Milmanda, 2013).

Emergence of Direct Democracy, Participatory Budgets, and Other Democracy Innovations

Growing disillusionment in political regimes and institutions has led to demands for more responsive and effective political institutions. Democracy innovations such as direct democracy and participatory budgets are examples of new institutional arrangements which seek to increase citizen participation in decision-making. In Latin America democracy some democracy innovations include: participatory budgeting in Brazil, the "Mesas de Concertación", in Peru, "Auditorías Articuladas" in Colombia, the "Consejos Gestores" in Brazil, and the "Consejos Autogestivos" in Mexico are just some examples of these new citizen-led

arrangements (Dagnino, Olvera & Panfichi, 2006).

Although occurring less in Africa, some local governments have experimented with participatory institutions (see Santos, 1998; Heller, 2001; Fung & Wright, 2003). Examples include participatory budgeting in South Africa and recent mobilization in hopes of implementing direct democracy institutions in Kenya.

Although promising, it's still unclear whether democracy innovations can coexist with traditional representative institutions in these regions and what their impact can be.

Economic Transformations: Inequality & the Rise of the Middle Class

Recent economic transformations in Latin America and “*dual transitions*” of economic and political reform in Africa have produced high level of dynamic economic growth. As a result and despite the global financial crisis, Africa is currently home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

This growth has helped build a burgeoning middle class, which has created new markets for goods and services. In addition to growing consumer markets, African countries have discovered additional natural resources which if managed properly, could help spur further economic growth and development in the region.

Nevertheless, despite this growth, the regions are still affected by high levels of economic inequality and political exclusion. The situation is dire in Africa, where almost one out of every two Africans continues to live in extreme poverty¹. Optimistically, the World Bank (2013) suggests that this rate will fall to between 16% and 30% by 2030.

New Aid Trends: Aid for Trade

As discussed earlier, democratization in Africa has had a significant impact in the promotion of international trade as a key element to development. The existence of democratic governments has also facilitated international support from donors.

For our policy paper exploring aid trends, we will opt for a more policy-oriented analysis than the previous ones. In this paper, we will focus on the characteristics and implications of the *Aid for Trade* initiative in Africa and its relationship with democratization processes and the promotion of international and intra-regional trade.

Several reasons for focusing on *Aid for Trade* are:

First, unlike other forms of development assistance, it focuses on matters of economic growth and job creation, helping developing countries to move from reliance on aid to the use of trade to generate higher standards of living. Also, since it was launched in the 2005 World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial meeting, it represents an acceptance by donors that trade is an important means to growth and development. However, substantial supply-side investments and policy reforms are necessary to help developing countries lower the cost of trading, increase productivity, help firms diversify into new export products, and integrate into global value chains. Thus, it seeks to mobilize resources to assist developing countries to build supply capacity and trade-related skills.

Second, *Aid for Trade* is growing in importance. It now accounts for 25% of total Official Development Assistance (ODA) (OECD, 2011). Its disbursements have grown steadily - almost doubling for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) category in which Sub-Saharan Africa is the largest regional recipient. Disbursements have increased from US\$ 4.8 billion in 2005 to US\$ 8.8 billion in 2010 (UNCTAD, 2012).

The Initiative does not substitute other ODA disbursements but rather calls for more resources which are directed to: (1) building productive capacity; (2) economic infrastructures; (3) trade-related adjustment; and (4) trade policy and regulations. By addressing these constraints, it seeks to help LDCs be more active players in global trading - helping them tackle obstacles to trade by mainstreaming trade policies into national development strategies, setting up the structures needed to coordinate the delivery of technical assistance and promoting trade capacity building.

Emerging Trends in Societies

Latin America and Africa Social Media and Internet; the New "*Public Space*"

Internet, communication, technologies (ICTs) are transforming world politics. The current "*information revolution*" is based on rapid technological advances in computers, communications, and software that in turn have led to dramatic decreases in the cost of processing and transmitting information¹. In a world that's increasingly complex and globalized, there is a growing interdependence among societies around the globe. After decades of political change, especially the formal acquisition of participatory democracy, now we can see the increase of political participation in the regions' citizens.

Africa and Latin America have not been spared from the disruption of the Internet and social media. Although, Africa lags behind most other regions when it comes to number of Internet users, there are still an estimated 100 million users since the end of 2010. This number is expected to grow as the number of people with Internet access has quadrupled since 2000 and cell-phone usage has been greater in Africa than in any other region of the world. Currently, seven

in ten Africans own their own mobile phones, with access essentially universal in Algeria and Senegal, according to Afrobarometer findings from across 34 countries.

Still, the shortage of electricity and broadband infrastructure, coupled with the high cost of hardware will continue to present barriers to Internet access.

However, Africans are increasingly using ICTs in their social and political life. For example, in Botswana, voters are progressively bypassing traditional media and turning to social networks for their news.ⁱⁱ At the same time, in 2009, Facebook became the most visited website in Africa and Twitter and YouTube, rank among the most visited websites in most African countries². The number of Facebook users in Africa grew from 10 million in 2009 to over 17 million in 2010³.

On the other hand, Latin America has the fastest growing Internet market in the world, having increased 12% in the past year to more than 147 million unique visitors in March 2013ⁱⁱⁱ. Brazil for example is home to the region's largest number of Internet users, 62 million. Latin America also leads the way in regards to number of social network users.

Impact of Increasing Urbanization

Lastly, we will explore urbanization in Africa and Latin America. In Africa, more than 30% of all Africans now live in cities (up from 15% in 1965) – and this number is expected to rise. Also, Latin America is more urbanized than any other region in the developing world, with 75% of its people living in cities today^v.

¹ *Understanding International Conflicts, and introduction to theory and history*. Joseph Nye, Jr. 7th edition.

² See more at:

<http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2010/social-media-boom-begins-africa#sthash.EB1Z2CB2.dpuf>

³ Ibid

In Africa, the shift from rural to urban life has been crucial for galvanizing economic development because cities bring people with goods and ideas together with those who have capital. Urbanization in Africa, is also forcing members of different tribes to interact with each other. In Latin America, urbanization has raised concerns regarding

crime and drug use. All of which can be explored in a future paper.