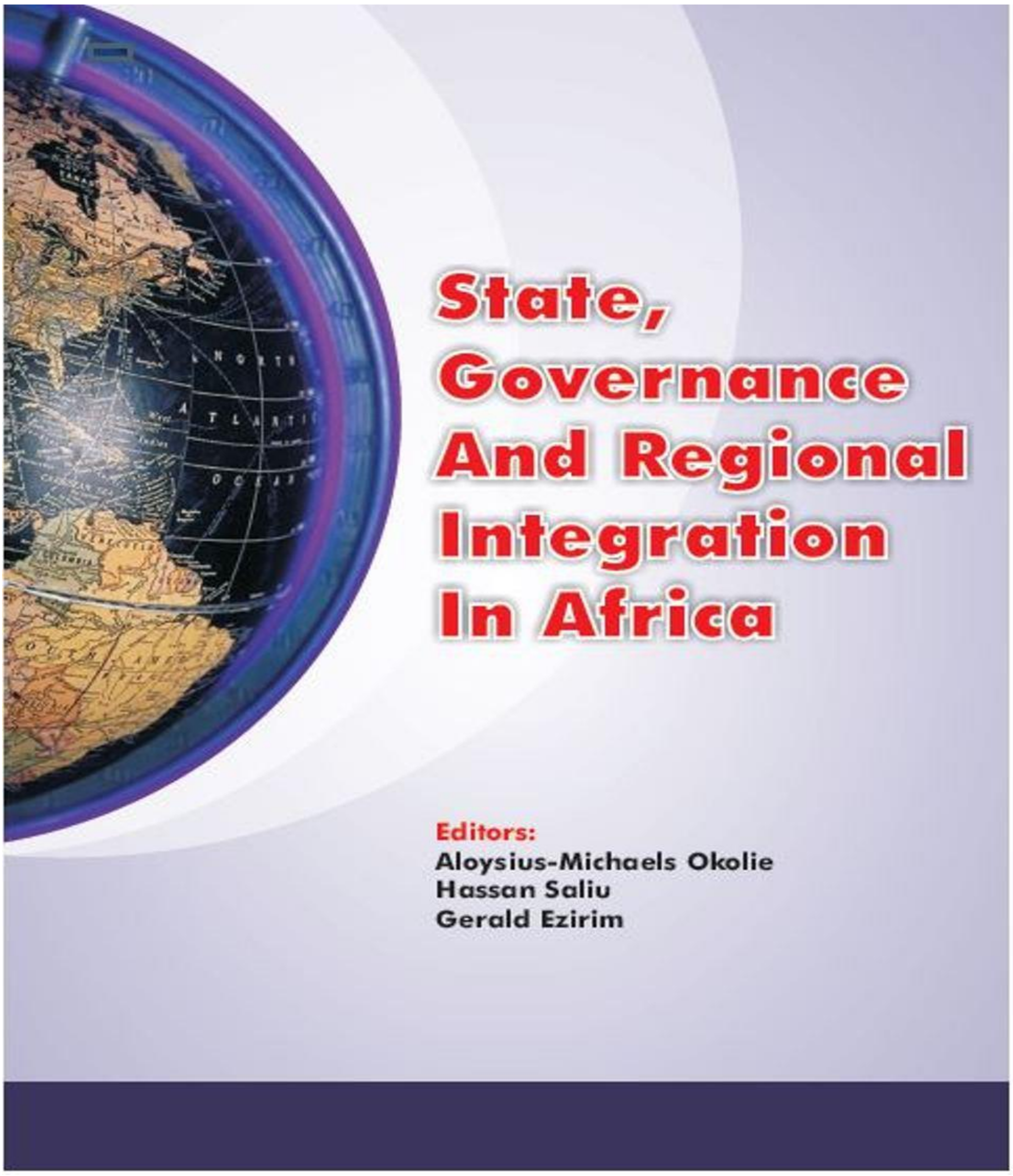

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Evaluating the Concept 'Good Governance': What Is It? And What Does It Measure?

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Abstract
The advocacy for good governance (GG) by International Financial Institutions is part and parcel of neoliberal agenda in their dealings with Africa. The framework was set to provide an account, and assessment of quality of governments in the continent which undoubtedly was designed to improve the trust of citizens on democracy through effective and a holistically reformed system of governance. For the fact that the paradigm ignores the local contents of African system of social and political relations, good governance can only be left with its other mission of hierarchical rankings of these countries in order to inform aid and investment decisions for the expatriates outside the region. The aim of this paper therefore, is not to re-define the concept of good governance, but, to explore the neoliberal construct of good governance and possibly propose what actually is embedded in it that makes Africa to be moving slowly in the process of attaining the good governance paradigm objectives.

Keywords: Good governance, Democracy, Neo-liberalism, Construct, and Paradigm

Introduction

To an average western scholar, Africa is still in dark ages despite significant developmental strides, and successes recorded by Africa in politics and in its economy amidst various security challenges in the global body politics. As if one would be tempted to ask, why? The answer would surely be the absence of 'good governance' and the relevant institutional framework that will offer the basis for realizing such objectives of 'good governance'. Although good governance might not be a new concept to Africa, since Africa does not originate today. It has for long being there from time immemorial showing different administrative capacities across the continent and its relevance to human existence.

Also, the chant for good governance reminds us the fact that past experiences of Africa are still fresher in our memory. The 1980s marked the new phase in the transformation of the socio-economic status of Africa. Neoliberalism had then ushered in a new down with new changes that include the introduction of the famous 'Washington Consensus'. The impact of this on Africa was essentially in the areas of seeking development, despite the suggested severe retrenchment in the name of reforms, and Social dislocation as a consequence of conflicting development agendas. Neoliberalism as a development agenda has commoditized socio-economic life which placed the market at the center of the resource allocation in this new area. However, such reforms targeted easing the 'burden of doing business' which is a serious if not the most important concern in the business of ‘good governance’. This has made the achievement of good governance very skewed for the fact that public discourse become narrow in its coverage, since market is made to reflect the main concern of public policy in this region.

In addition, neoliberalism had at the time sprang-up different mechanisms to enforce compliance to the inner kernel of what it proposes through the support of the International Financial Institutions (IFI). Before then, there existed other mechanisms in Africa aimed at fostering the acclaimed development. Unfortunately, no meaningful success was recorded better than the previously original standard of the African states. Through the constant activities of these International Financial Institutions, the transfer of capital become the very reason for the ratings of agencies of governments as good instruments. This paper may not however, agree with the dependency theory for its over reliance on the conspiracy’s nature of development in both north and in the global south which is solely for the purpose of maintaining weakly relations.

One very fundamental question in the business of good governance that still begs for an answer is who benefits when governance is tagged ‘good’? meaning, for whom? The contributor, and the donor, or the receiver? Any attempt to answer these questions would only land us in a conflict of conceptualizing ‘good governance’. Still further, the emergence of this concept has succeeded in dividing the world countries into two categories as vigorously pursued by neoliberals; the rich which are the good; and the poor which are the bad. While the quality of governments in the rich countries might said to have been the ‘best’ and worth emulating, the quality of governments of the poor countries is described as ‘bad’ that requires a total rehabilitation by way of reforms of the public sector. In line with this therefore, the framework for establishing governance is now categorized as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’. On the whole, one may not need to doubt that the whole of this idea was made possible only by the growing concerns of neoliberalism that sorted to transport the freedom of trade within and beyond its national boundaries.

It is the aim of this paper to expeditiously evaluate the good governance paradigm as a neoliberal construct and see whether or not, good governance is attainable across Africa. Also, it is the interest of this paper to examine African institutional frameworks and see whether they have constituted the governance problems for themselves contrary to what Africans insinuate regarding the dominance of the global capitalist system which do not have sympathy to Africa’s political as well as economic setup.

Concept of Governance

Despite the plethora of definitions of governance and their commitment toward exemplifying what governance constitutes, it is right to say that governance encompasses all those activities which are connected with governing a country or a state. It relates to decision making that describes expectations of citizens, how power is being dispensed or practiced, what process do people follow to verify performance as well as leadership processes. Governance therefore is based on authority, responsibility, influence, and accountability by all, particularly, the political leaders. However, achieving governance comes with reforming institutions, functions and, government policies for better public welfare.

Several governments have shifted to adopt different strategies for development across the globe. This has helped to sharpen our understanding of the concept. The most important of the strategies include institutional/bureaucratic reforms aided by the activities of International Financial Institutions. A "bureaucratic reform is packed with references to the principles of good governance as deemed appropriate guidelines in making the government able to work effectively in executing the policies that have been established" (Hermana, 2017). Because, a reformed system of governance is generally understood to cover "the various institutions, mechanisms, and established practices through which a country exercises governmental authority, discharges its responsibilities, and manages its public resources" (International Monetary Fund, 2017:1).

Sifting through the definitional variations, we may argue that the concept has sidelined the frontiers of the African states in terms of attaining governance. In Africa, the institutions, processes, mechanisms, and other established practices the neoliberal concept of governance intends to entrench could not be available in the Euro-American format. What was obtainable is only a local arrangement that is unique to Africa through which all frontiers of administrative, economic, and social governance are being entrenched. However, due to the contradictory nature of neoliberalism as regards Africa's development mechanisms, the domestication and entrenchment of the neoliberal paradigms becomes extremely difficult.

The drive towards achieving the set goal of this paper is in the belief that governance is not just as being preached, there is the general notion in the side of International Financial Institutions that African societies can only develop when they are able to effectively transform in politics, economy, and in the social system. Such transformation takes the form of plurality in politics (with different centers of power), and of the economy (with different stakeholders involving public and private sectors). Pluralism is all about democracy, and democracy is undoubtedly the bedrock of good governance. Dahl (1967), argued that the fundamental axiom in the theory and practice of American Pluralism is instead of a single center of sovereign power, there must be multiple centers of power, none of which is or, can be wholly sovereign. This, however, is:

> … a political representation which is central to a component of democratic governance which is a serious challenge in Africa. The executive and parliaments must represent the common good, especially in countries emerging from totalitarian rule, where parliaments tend to enact laws serving narrow factional interests rather than the wider public good… parliaments should be concerned with rule of law including political plurality and other rights of citizens (Saminu, 2016:24).

This was the description that Plato had supported as his second best State; the one that "government by laws was supreme, applying equally on both the ruler and the subjects" (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:82). People may not perceive any sort of difference in politics, economics and in the social systems when pluralism defines democracy. Introspectively, the pluralistic nature of governance would make us discover the possibility of whether underdeveloped countries can thus achieve good governance as packaged by the International Financial Institutions.

To sum it up, governance is a moral description of the state, in that state must play a moral as well as an economic role for the upliftment of the generality…To this end, the role of the state becomes very necessary to examine whether, or not, the increasing economic development and neglecting the moral part of its role would actually lead to the path of development (Knutilla & Kubic, 2000). Putting in mind that today's mystical chants of economic development is nothing distinct from neoliberal agenda. A liberal state thus, is in no doubt to have being seeing itself as an agent of liberation and of the total emancipation of local people and businesses from the bondage caused by the growing authoritarian and less plural states.

Therefore, the belief of this paper aligns with Saminu (2016) that governance is a complex and multidimensional concept which even its designers are still unable to provide a single most acceptable definition. Its focus ranges from the set of institutions (mostly democratic institutions), to the set of rules guiding the administration of the concept, and finally to the end result which solidifies in form of service delivery. It will not be a mistake if we say that governance framework is just about how countries outside Euro-America have embraced liberal democracy, and how best have such countries been able to practice liberal democracy? That liberal democracy is to Africa a borrowed system of government and an alien development framework that comes with both internal and external arrangements that cannot be wholly implemented without modification.

The Good Governance Dilemma

No doubt that good governance does not need another set of definitions for the concept has been defined severally by its agents including the global multilateral institutions. The concern of researchers here has always been what constitute good governance? And what does it stand to achieve? It may be good if the exploration could first go philosophical. Good governance did not start as a paradigm for economic development only, but as a basis for establishing peace, harmony, and the ultimate sign of justice. Being a poet of ideas, a philosopher of beauty, and the true founder of the cult of harmonious living, Plato was in this regard the first to depict political society as a system of distinctive or, differentiated roles that each part presented a necessary function and was defined in terms of its contribution for sustaining the whole society, enjoying rights and duties bore by each member of the society (Wolin, 1960). In the act of good governance, Plato's assertion seems all encompassing and, has taken everything in its fold, what only remains are on specifying the process toward realization of the said desired society.

However, today's good governance paradigm is a coinage of the global International Financial Institutions being the careers and promoters of neoliberalism with the said claim of freeing the African people from demeaning underdevelopment bondage. The paradigm has principles and standards that it sets to achieve in its expected African states. The principles include political participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness of government, and equity in the distribution of scarce resources, and the role of both public and private sectors in changing the pattern of the business of government in Africa. To begin the discourse here, Licht et al (2007) argues that these principles are the central tenets in International Financial Institutions' policies on good governance and empowerment of the business sector.

It worth noting that, Chomsky (2006) argues that the state of imbalance has become very evident in international development policy, where due to strong dependency of national governments on International Financial support, the adoption of structural strategies prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank within the overall framework of the 'Washington consensus' has become a condition for underdeveloped countries to guarantee at least short term governability, paving the way for the new neoliberal global world order and decisively shaping the content of development. However, in the context of the hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism, the tendency of unilateral imposition that characterized development agencies' policies (Easterly, 2007) became so glaring in the role of the state as regards development. Therefore, since the 1990s, such restructuring and reforms in global governance have provided relative predominance of donor states and agencies, and of financial interests over the poor countries' development frontiers.

The issue of good governance was rather brought up as a result of the evident rift between International Financial Institutions (Britton Woods) and African governments over the ways to Africa's development. Even though, individually, African states seemed contented and have surrendered their development agendas to external development agencies. However, several strategies for development have been adopted since 1970s; starting with the 1973 Addis Ababa Declaration; 1976 and 1977 Revised Frameworks of the New International Economic Order in Africa; the 1979 Monrovia Declaration for the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, and finally the Popular Lagos Plan in Nigeria.

It is on record that African experience reveals that exogeneity defeats the local contents of democracy and whatever the developmental and economic policies associated with it. International development agents who are apparently democrats have felt constrained to give market reform priority over mere domesticating the contents of democracy, taking the African local format. The most important issue of public policy, namely, structural adjustment programs (SAPs), is not subject to democratic choice, because the International Financial Institutions distrust the Africa's ability to choose correctly on an issue in which 'the right choice' is absolutely clear. At the same time, SAPs are a draconian that they assumed to require imposition and had ultimately failed to achieve the desired goals, and this has provided the basis for the emergence of good governance being the next capitalizing development paradigm.

If indeed the good governance paradigm is about development of less developed countries of Africa, one would be tempted to ask what sort of development then? The dependency theorists have already eased the tempo for the imposers. That, the structural dependency theorists might be wrong for their insistence on industrialization and on how developing economies can achieve more policy space. Since the painted picture of the political economy of African states is that of less industrialized incapable of producing more humane societies that nurtures human flourishing across the region. But, industrialization alone cannot sufficiently provide the required development.

Politically, it may interest us to acknowledge the fact that 'good governance' has now assumed the status of a mantra (i.e. a mystical song) by the donors and beneficiaries alike, or the global International Financial Institutions and their home countries. Standards and conditions for aid based on which the performance of the recipient African countries can be measured are already set in place by the International Financial Institutions. The activities of African countries in comparison with Euro-American countries have shown that development in these countries is still a mirage achievable only on the receipt of foreign aid even when there is no need for that. Therefore, like every other development package, good governance is a condition on its own and it comes along with other conditionalities.

As a condition for lending development assistance, International financial institutions require a recipient government to show effective performance promoting the much needed reforms stated by the paradigm. The rationale is that with 'good governance' aid would be used to effectively achieve the objective of reducing poverty and other elements of 'bad governance' such as corruption, nepotism, a weak and over-bloated bureaucracy, mismanagement, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, and lack of due process in the business of government. It clearly noted from the Euro-American perspective, that the ability to assess the quality of governance is so important both in terms of how the evidence generated can be used to reciprocally influence policy and how policy can also influence governance outcomes in Africa.

Measuring Good Governance

In order to ensure the goal attainment, all principles of good governance have been blended to form standards for measurement. Pointedly, as results of this act of the International financial institutions, a number of measurements have emerged over the past decades to promote good governance framework as part of neoliberal agenda in this region. Saminu (2016) has identified some of the indicators as follows: The United Nations Human Index (HDI), the Transparency International Perception Index (CPI); the World Governance Indicator (WGI), and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation measures which is domiciled at the School of Oriental Studies (SOS) for Africa. The critical concern of all developed measurement frameworks has been whether governance should be understood only by its attributes (i.e. measured by process indicators) or, also, by its impact (i.e. measured also by examining outcome indicators). In what might appeared to be the deliberate attempt to twist the position of African states as regard achieving good governance through local arrangement, McFerson (2009), argued that the initial attempts to measure good governance focused wholly on process dimensions rather than the outcome.

Furthermore, such attempts included the one made by the Transparency International Index of Corruption Perception (CPI). Accordingly, due to the constant global changes, from the late 1990s, a more inclusive view of good governance was taken into consideration and, some indicators were developed by the World Bank that are result-oriented however. But the question still is whether the new sets of indicators could accept the locally prescribed institutions and relegate the business interests of the indicator-developers to the background. In the last few years therefore, regional indices have also emerged and new surveys have been used to address specialized aspects of good governance that were virtually enumerated in all the specialized frameworks. However, the most comprehensive tools used to date to measure the quality of governance is the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), the Ibrahim Index of African Governance and, the African Peer Review Mechanism. For the purpose of this study therefore, it would be necessary if these two, at least, could be taken for more examples.

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)

As previously mentioned, the Worldwide Governance Indicator is more encompassing in assessing the quality of governance in the present day world. What is not guaranteed now is whether the developed indicators can also be used to measure the aggregate and the effectiveness of the Euro-American systems. For it has a spectacular measures of the degree of quality of governance that include:

- **Voice and Accountability**: It measures the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in the selection of their government, as well as having freedom to voice out their individual concerns through a free media, and to associate freely.
- **Political Stability and Absence of Violence**: It measures the degree of a country's political stability without a likelihood of political destabilization by illegal or violent means, including terrorism.
- **Government Effectiveness**: It measures the degree of effectiveness on the services government renders which include: the quality of public services, capacity of the civil service and its independence from political pressures.
- **Regulatory Quality**: It measures the ability of the government to provide an all-encompassing regulatory framework that enables and promotes private sector development.
- **Rule of Law**: It measures the extent to which government officials have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, including the quality of contract enforcement and property rights, the police and the courts.
- **Control of Corruption**: It measure the extent to which corruption is defined as the illegal exercise of public power for private gain, including both 'petty

and 'grand' corruption, as well as 'capture' of state activities for a personal gain.

The African Peer Review Mechanism

This is another developed mechanism for measuring good governance in Africa. In this regard, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a mutually agreed instrument that was voluntarily acceded to by the member states of the African Union (AU). The framework was established in 2003 as a self-monitoring instrument to assess, project and establish progress, and to provide lessons on how to enhance good governance on the continent for a better, prosperous, peaceful, and harmonious living. The methodology of the framework enables a country to establish and validate governance performance and highlights good practices and challenges where possible. The process is aimed at fostering the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and an accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration.

Also, the main purpose of the assessment is to appraise the extent to which the countries' policies and practices conform to the agreed political, economic, democracy and good political governance values, principles, codes and standards in the African Union Declaration of Democracy, Economic and Good Political Governance (APRM, 2017). The general concern here, being an African owned paradigm one can outrightly say that there is no meaningful deviation from the one sets by the donor International Financial Institutions. This ought to have taking consideration of local contents and by resting on the result of the systems. Although, despite our concern there was a remarkable improvement in the affairs of African countries; Nigeria, Uganda, Rwanda, and South Arica for example.

Good Governance: A Neoliberal Agenda

To begin with, this paper believes that available evidences have shown that the primary objective of governance measurement as either 'good' or 'bad' has been to provide a hierarchical ranking of different countries in order to inform foreign aids, investment decisions and, other policies, as well as provide shorthand assessments to facilitate governmental and media reporting (McFerson, 2009) exercises across the continents outside Euro-America. All development frameworks have internal processes to achieve such desired goals of the International Financial Institutions. However, the successful realization of the goals depends largely on the less developed countries' capacity to implement policies and create broad-based partnerships across all sectors of societies as obtainable within the neoliberal Euro-American systems. There is the need for the involvement of both the public and business sectors as well as civil society organizations. Again, it implies that these countries cannot be expected to realize the ambitious development goals linked to their developmental plans on their own, but that all actors in society, including government, business, and civil society, have a role and responsibility to play as directed by the donors in their documents and proposals, a case everyone see as a classic stride of neoliberal hegemony.

Historically, by the end of the 19th century, the doctrine of liberalism had been transformed from a subversive attack on a parasitic state to become the ideological orthodoxy of a liberalizing state (Clarke, 1988). The role of the state was therefore no longer to restrict and tax trade (List's, or national Mercantilism) but to use all its powers to extend the freedom of trade within and beyond its national boundaries. What this means in future was that, theoretically, neoliberalism represents the reassertion of the fundamental beliefs of the liberal political economy as a dominant ideology of the 19th century to the 21st Century. Good governance is now reflecting as a new phase of the development of the neoliberal agenda in these continents. That is, towards the end of the 19th century, liberalism was seen to be waning caused by the growing demands of the social and businesses reforms. It is however understood that the purpose of liberalism was to create a framework within which man can think and operate, think and create for it has addressed the fundamental metaphysical and anthropological human problems. It is the hope of the liberals to construct a model of public order spacious enough to secure maximum freedom for everyone.

In addition, going by the growing power of neoliberalism, it would not be a mistake therefore, to say there are noticeable discrepancies between Euro-American development models and the local realities in Africa, particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa. According to neoliberals, 'good governance' moves means unlocking the present alternatives, and new opportunities for less developed countries to learn from their counterparts in the Southern hemisphere. It is argued that the power relations have historically favoured Euro-American axis over the less developed African countries (Brown, 2017). While neoliberalism has always been viewing the underdeveloped countries as second class societies whose markets need to be exploited.

However, 'good governance' as mentioned above takes the coloration of nothing more than democratic consolidation across the continent. Therefore, any critical examination of good governance particularly in Africa and beyond must take into consideration assertions of Ake (2001). Ake argues that African experience shows that exogeneity defeats the essence of 'democracy' and whatever the intentions of the developmental and economic policies associated with it. External development agents who presumably are liberal democrats, have felt constrained to give market reform priority over democracy. This however, is one of the major reasons why good governance efforts have always been championed by the Britton woods institutions and their agents. The United nations also takes it through various frameworks that have almost always being failing because the frameworks are designed after the Euro-American models, not actually the models obtainable in the host countries. A classical example of such frameworks include the SAPs, MDGs and its successor framework, the SDGs. Hence the thought on the contributions of the multilateral institutions is required for that purpose. That:

> Global institutions provide a platform to unite countries across the world. Key powerful multilateral (non – hierarchical) institutions are

> the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. These institutions are influential enough to provide the basis of power, network and a culture. However, these institutions would need to work together with governments of countries to ensure accountability (Rubasundram, 2017) in countries outside the Euro-American systems.

For their insistence on development through aid, these institutions come to Africa and other less developed countries to negotiate loans and projects made available only for what they called the realization of 'good governance'. The plans until today could not be achieved despite the huge millions of dollars being spent on the projects. One fundamental question everyone may need to ask is why in some areas, projects sponsored by the donor countries are yet unsuccessful while those with the local traditional arrangements are successful? In a '2017 TED' program, Chika Ezeanya Esiobu of Tanzania gave an example of the *'Tassa'*, a local traditional farming system that has yielded best in Niger republic; and the *'Gacaca'*, the Rwanda's traditional judicial system which through its 12,000 community based courts was able to successfully secure about '1.2 Million' cases when the Rwanda's modern judicial system was in shamble after the 1994 genocide.

Democratic systems still struggle to take root and the quality of governance remains a major issue in Africa. Some African regimes have become more sophisticated at holding on to power, through manipulating and rigging elections, changing the constitution to scrap term limits, and controlling the media and judiciary to suppress opposition. Strong leaders have established themselves in power for long periods using such tactics (European Parliament Briefing, 2017). The meaning of this is, good governance is just about the use of liberal democracy as a paradigm for transporting an alien culture to Africa and other less developed countries.

A classical example is the case of South Africa which is one of the major successful democracies in Africa today. In addition to that, like any other democracy in Africa, South Africa's democracy came with the challenge of, among others, including the previously excluded sectors of society in information and public affairs (e.g. Xenophobic cases). Despite that, democrats would say that it has also opened a window of opportunity for the historically disadvantaged individuals to access and occupy positions in the higher echelons of the labour market which were dominated by white males during the apartheid era. For some, this raised questions about the suitability and capability of members of society from the historically excluded sectors of society for the crucial roles associated with those positions. This is among the reasons which brought a sharp focus on issues such as good governance to the platforms of academic debate and research in the formative years of democracy in South Africa (see Masango, 2017).

In addition, Aggad and Apiko (2017) argues that the promotion of liberal democratic principles and good governance as stipulated in the African Union's Constitutive Act required a number of new institutions, instruments and processes to be put into place in the early 2000s which were not readily available in the whole continent. Such institutions included the launch of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), which aspired to become a full-fledged legislative body, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a Court system as well as a Commission on Human and Peoples Rights. Following years of implementation as well as funding pressures, the necessity to link institutions and instruments became increasingly evident and led to the birth of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) in 2011. The subsequent entry into force of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance (ACDEG) has strengthened the legal basis of some areas of engagement of the AGA. Therefore, looking at the relationship between democracy and its development frame works, one can say that it could be difficult to separate it from good governance framework. In fact, it uses good governance as a paradigm for change in the entire business of government, and, by extension, a change in the citizenry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper is of the belief that good governance is a standardized gauge for measuring the government businesses of all countries as most countries claim to be ruling for development of the citizenry. Unfortunately, it appears that, achieving the dream of good governance in countries outside the Euro-America is difficult simply because of the fact that the institutional arrangement in these countries was not made to cater for some of the issues raised in the good governance framework. The good governance framework has entirely sidelined the domestically inherited governance institutions or structures through series of reforms that are said to be designed for a better living, while the citizenry is still neglected and confused. However, Africa has had it different patterns of administering governance with various systems of accountability in both economy and politics, checks and balances system, ways of determining and enforcing one’s rights for ensuring stability in our local societies. Therefore, good governance paradigm may not find it easy to scale through within the African areas for the fact that it has introduced some new set of values which are not indigenous to Africans and they are not ready for the total discard of them.

However, the attitudes of the donor agencies and some countries within the Euro-American region have always being making it difficult to achieve the desired good governance. Because, the good governance package comes along with series of reforms. Particularly of bureaucracy, and cutting down size of the civil service. This bureaucratic reforms are made as prerequisite given by the International financial institutions for accessing assistance all in the name of changing how governments work across the region. Lastly, this paper argues that, provided the local settings and contents will not be considered in the process of the said modernization or reforms, the primary objective of good governance paradigm would not be achieved desirably. We therefore close by insisting that, the major concern of good governance is to hierarchically rank the less developed countries in order to inform foreign aids, investment decisions and, other policies, as well as provide shorthand assessments to facilitate development of their own countries and for providing more job to their expatriates while downsizing that of Africa and other less developed countries.

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