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Oloruntoba, Samuel Ojo, Falola, Toyin (Eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development*. Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan. 925 pp.

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*The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development* is a journey into how the idea of good governance came to dominate discourse and debate on “politics and development” in Africa. The handbook is a gestalt of reflections and studies from the past through the present. This project is a substantial contribution to the debates on how Africa’s history with the West in forms of colonialism, neo-colonialism and coloniality has prevented substantial and accelerated development. The handbook organizes fifty-four chapters into nine sections. This allows the debates on politics, governance and development to be contextualized properly.

Theories and concepts of politics and governance are highlighted as the author investigates different theories regarding the difficulties concerning development in Africa since independence. These encompass the theories of the state, post-colonialism, decoloniality, social change and nation building. For instance, Nasong’O argues that multiple theories have been in competition with one another in the study of African politics, with varying degrees of “analytical potency.” The myriad of theories includes liberal theories of modernization, Marxist, and nationalism.

The author also notes that the discussions about the African state have generated more confusion than clarity. The lack of consistency in the use of terminology occurs because the theoretical foundation of African states produces controversial concepts. For example, post-colonialism as a theoretical framework to understand the state in Africa is often controversial and a topic the author takes issue with. According to Onuoha, post-colonialism is limited in accounting for and understanding the socio-economic and political phenomenon in Africa because of its conceptual ambiguity. Post-colonial theory, according to Onuoha, is deemed as elitist and fails to mediate debate around “real” politics. An urgent need to revisit the transcendence of colonial imprints on contemporary African societies emerges from the legacy of Western ideas in concepts and theories.

This need leads William Jethro Mpfu’ to argue that African critical thought on development would not be so restricted to decoloniality if coloniality had not disclaimed politics and development on the continent. A decolonial imagination of development in Africa has to hone in on the historical and political injuries that Africa has come across in slavery, colonialism and coloniality. While the author acknowledges that decolonialization encompasses certain contradictions which make post-colonialism a myth, he also argues that decolonial thinking can become a combative ontology in reaction to the colonial paradigm.

Since development is a process of social change at the socio-economic and political levels, the theory of social change may refer either to the notion of social progress, social revolution or a paradigmatic change in socio-economic structure. The author Agugua proclaims that colonialism and its detrimental impact on the continent requires a type of

social change that responds to the demands for changes. Although Agugua argues some theories of social change referencing evolutionary and historical perspectives underscore a global approach needed to understand how social groups contextually exist, he acknowledges that the post-modern approach to analyze social change is crucial in understanding Africa.

The last of the books' context-setting writing investigates the theoretical foundations of nation-building in Africa. This chapter is of paramount importance since one of the main challenges of post-independence political elites in Africa has been establishing nation-states out of the tessellation of nationalities that were conglomerated by colonial Europeans. Lawrence Ugwuanyi addresses the idea of nation-building within what is African theorizing or Afro-theorism. These concepts mean advancing ideas through concepts which are believed to be rooted in the worldview of African people. This chapter has a particular merit for the volume because it advocates for a Pan-African nation that reflects the divergence of peoples rather than restricting nation-building to the national level.

Part II dwells on the historical context of politics, governance and development in Africa. In this part, the authors scrutinize pre-colonial institutions in Africa and their relevance for contemporary Africa. With empirical case studies, Elizabeth A. Eldredge argues that chiefdoms were omnipresent throughout pre-colonial Africa. These institutions of governance became more complex and structured over time, the stronger of which were the first preys of colonial imposition. Following the same line of thought, Alina Segobye argues that there is a better manner to understand and appreciate how political and governance institutions evolved. Her arguments were founded on anthropological studies which enabled her to infer that pre-colonial political institutions were not always expressed in terms of material culture. Instead, politics was instilled across several other institutions of social and economic life. This analysis also relates to the history of nationalism, the earliest form of which originated in Ethiopia. Africa has gone through many stages in the history of nationalism and despite making some progress, African leaders have tended to focus on the nation-state, and thus leave boundary disputes and conflicts between African states that are not yet resolved. These narratives challenge the core basis of racist anthropological studies, which denied the existence of history and previous political arrangement in pre-colonial Africa.

Although Africa has accelerated five decades of independence, the book argues that the continent is neither free nor developed. According to Odukoya, contemporary crises and the contradictions of underdevelopment in Africa reflect the continent's dependency. Both settler and non-settler colonialism served the interests of imperial political economies through aggressive appropriation and exploitation of resources; in essence, both forms are rooted in cultural supremacy. Nationalist movements and individuals in resistance to formal colonialism and decolonization then provides an avenue to garner the socio-economic and political benefits of independence.

The emergence of military in politics has been an influential factor in the level of political development in Africa. Starting from the first military coup in Egypt on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1952, the continent became a theatre of coups and counter-coups in line with many other post-colonial states. In Part III of the Handbook, the contributors contend that virtually all modern African militaries are a creation of colonialism, which possess a culture and character different from African culture and attitude. This contributes to the reason why African states remain prone to military coups and counter-coups. The book concludes that preventing coups and counter-coups should imply a reconsideration of the concept of leadership. Leadership should not be represented by those holding public offices but entrusted to political institutions which necessitates a reorientation of the military towards professionalism and deference to civilian control.

After decades of military interregnum in Africa, there seems to be a new order sweeping across the continent. The handbook discusses that the military forces are shifting back to their original enclave, the barracks. This was the outcome of popular outcry against

the brutal and oppressive nature of military rulers. Nevertheless, one basic problem with the military-led transitions in Africa is that former military leaders, overtly or covertly, still have influence. The authors conclude that the degree of democratic consolidation in Africa depends largely on the pattern of intervention and mode of withdrawal by the military in countries where they once experienced political sovereignty. This is because civilian control over the military is important for a stable social and political order. The author argues that “objective” civilian control of the military entails a socialization process, which will help to build a person’s spirit of nationalism before they are admitted into a military institution.

Part IV of the Handbook tackles some under-searched issues, such as the crisis of identity, which has generated conflict wars and xenophobia. The identity crisis and its concomitant influence on the process of nation-building seem to be the most protracted and challenging. The authors of this section conclude that colonialism in Africa hindered nation formation and in the process created a kind of identity politics that has remained the bane of nation-building on the continent.

Nation-building, migration, and ethnic identity have become places where deliberate state policy marginalizes and alienates groups in the state. Contestation over resources has led to conflict rather than democratic development in and between communities. For these reasons, identity conflicts persist. Certainly, the challenge of establishing and ensuring structures of justice to prevent conflict is a pressing issue.

Part V focuses on the role of progressive forces such as civil society groups, trade union bodies, peasants and militia groups in politics, governance and development. These groups embody the struggle for democracy as political elites failed to incorporate them into political processes post-independence. Their significance is merely determined by the context and history of the countries they work in. Additionally, the peasantry have served a vital economic and political role in the struggle to open up political space and foster democratization in Africa. The authors argue civil society organizations contributed to political liberalization under the third wave of democracy on the continent. Owing to the adoption of participatory democracy or its semblance in many African states, social powers should be involved into the process of nation-building and development.

The themes of democracy, governance and development are tackled in Part VI of the Handbook. The role of democracy and its institutions, such as political parties and the media in reinforcing socio-economic development have been successful as watchdogs in quest for a democratic consolidation and development. Although there has been an improvement in electoral democracy, this has not translated to the reinforcement of democratic values in most African countries. Political parties have been undermined in their efforts by tough political authoritarianism. The relationship between gender and governance in Africa has sidelined women in a way typical of the politics of exclusion.

The only way forward for democracy is improved political citizenship and political participation in Africa. The authors argue that the level of political consciousness and socialization dictate how citizens participate in politics. It should note that the media also shapes political outcomes and thus is critical to fostering democracy and communicating political agendas to citizens.

Part VII dwells on the political economy of development in Africa. The authors recount the history of political economy and suggest various ways which African countries can move from a state of dependency to autonomous development. The continent is affluent in abundance resources and must overcome the resource curse thesis, where contestation over resources has fueled conflicts instead of development. Strategies for economic development in Africa have clearly overlooked local solutions and the rich African diaspora. Capital mobilization, economic globalization, corruption in Africa and problems in the informal sector, which includes unemployment and a low level of education, have significantly harmed formal economic development. Regardless of the challenges the continent has faced, there are encouraging prospects which a determined, imaginative and visionary political elite can realize to reinforce inclusive development.

Government care should be cast on the transformation and development of informal economic transactions through socially inclusive policy strategies.

Part VIII of the Handbook covers Africa in global politics. In order to situate Africa within global politics, contributors explore Africa's relations with international financial institutions, uncovering how external forces continue to shape the rich resources of African countries today. The state's inability to manage the socio-economic challenges confronting several countries required the intervention of international financial institutions (IFIs). These forces of globalization have compounded the challenges of underdevelopment and have limited the level to which economies can diversify. The imposition of development programs by the IFIs without consultation with those that will be affected continues under various guises today. Regardless of the potential that a multilateral trading system could provide, countries outside of Africa are the ones that ultimately receive maximum benefit from the system.

The African growth narrative is cosmetic since poverty and inequality continue to be prevalent. Further, foreign aid is not benign and has served as a vehicle of neo-colonial control over the continent. Taking China as a point of inquiry, writer Mokoena argues that dependence on foreign aid stifles local initiatives for attaining development. However, Rita Kiki Edozie highlights Pan-Africanism as a means to secure ideological, economic, and political independence for all African countries. The author examines how African companies from South Africa and Nigeria are redefining Pan-Africanism through investment flows into different parts of the continent.

Part IX of the handbook explores the future of Africa's governance politics and development. This part of the Handbook endorses a substantial prognostic value, locating the continent in the future where the environment, climate, and human security matter for development. In order to reduce the negative effects of the anticipated population explosion, African countries will need to plan adequate measures to control the population in the future. Human security will matter, as managing security in Africa will become more difficult from the rise of terrorist organizations and greater military spending. Investment in human development is proposed as a way to decrease the tensions and conflicts yield high security costs. Chika A. Ezeanya notes that change is needed in African educational systems as they continue to follow colonial designs while neglecting the indigenous educational needs. This chapter is cognizant of the cultural specificities of the continent in its proposed solutions. Developing indigenous knowledge systems to drive development in Africa will be crucial for security and sustainable development.

The Handbook's last chapter by Augustine Kwasi Fosu revisits and re-contextualizes governance and development in Africa. As the author notes, economic and political governance have both improved in Africa since the mid 1980s. In the same vein, in order to ensure fiscal produce and macroeconomic stability, both economic and political governance have to keep improving not only to satisfy the market but also to reinforce inclusive progress.

Overall, the handbook investigated three intersecting issues of politics, governance and development in Africa. Through the archaeological and contemporary scrutiny that different contributors of this colossal work have demonstrated, the macro and micro features of the lives and the international relations of Africa will be impacted by future-coming issues. Although some progress has been made in political, governmental and developmental spheres in Africa, the shaky basis of the state in Africa, as a colonial entity created for exploitation and expropriation of the resources, has shaped its struggles: its capacity to reinforce nation-building, the legitimacy of political institutions, and mobility of capital.

The scholarly analysis of the African condition by the various contributors sets a research agenda on redefining politics, governance and development in Africa. The Handbook is a library-like work where hundreds of references are mentioned and listed. The Handbook's affluence in resources made it an encyclopedia that encompasses studies conducted in the pre and post-colonial eras about the dynamics in Africa. Although some

authors suggested serious measures to sort out controversy of the three themes, they failed to pinpoint a genuine diagnosis for the failure to achieve good governance and development in Africa. Additionally, most of the contributors focus mainly on the Southern hemisphere of the continent in their case studies. However, because of the substantial content and the colossal cognizance this Handbook supplies, I highly recommend its translation. It will allow foreign audiences to discover the gaps in the literature of politics and governance in Africa. After having read this rich volume, I predict that this Handbook will open several new paths for research, interrogation and methodology in African studies.

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