

AFRICA 2050

Jobs and Prosperity in a Multipolar Global Economy:
Moving out of Fragility and Conflict



Table of Contents

The African Continent in 2013: Success, Diversity and Fragility	1
“Fragile,” Conflict-Affected and “Failed” States: What Are the Underlying Realities Behind the Concepts?	2
Upcoming Tensions, Stresses and Shocks That May Either Destroy or Force Change upon Fragile African States.....	13
References.....	34

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The African Continent in 2013: Success, Diversity and Fragility

While the future of Africa was until recently the subject of two competing narratives, Afro-pessimism and Afro-optimism, thanks to successes since the beginning of the new century, optimism is now clearly on the rise and the continent is perceived as a new frontier. Nevertheless, diversity and contrasting trajectories, rather than broad optimism, best describe the continent in 2013. While 27 countries have already graduated into the middle income category, others are still prey to economic mismanagement and unresolved political tensions. Some of them are even left behind, adrift, and caught in conflict traps. Facing economic stagnation, enduring poverty, and civil strife, these countries are usually classified as “fragile.” Contrary to expectations, growth alone is not sufficient to cure fragility and many African countries with strong economic and social performance also have elements of significant fragility.

The purpose of this article is to try to go beyond easy categorizations and identify sources of inherent fragility in many African states. This analysis will allow us to discover future constraints to growth and future sources of instability in the continent. It will also allow us to better understand why some countries seem unable to move out of fragility, failure and violence. The overall objective is to assess whether and under what conditions these countries can successfully emerge out of such “fragility traps,” and allow the continent to decisively move out of fragility and conflict.

This article will first identify key characteristics of inherent fragility which relate to the social and political organization of many African countries and their specific history. This analysis leads to questioning whether some level of inherent state fragility in Africa is more widespread than one might think when just looking at broad economic and even governance indicators. It will then briefly highlight a number of tensions, stresses and shocks threatening the stability of many African countries and likely to particularly challenge inherently fragile states over the coming decades. It will emphasize the key demographic factors, the poorly managed urbanization process, and the rising tensions in many rural areas with the ongoing process of land degradation and their accompanying consequences in terms of migration, ethnic tensions and local conflicts. It will then explain how unstable the situation has become in the Sahel as illustrated by the recent events in Mali.

¹ This paper is based on my knowledge of French speaking Sub-Saharan Africa that I first visited as a student in 1960. I had the opportunity of working in all French speaking countries since 1966. I lived there for 17 years as a regional director for AFD in the 70s and 80s, I travelled regularly to these countries in the 90s as a World Bank country director and I am still regularly visiting African countries as an academic and a consultant. I have had more limited work experience, however, in English and Portuguese speaking Africa and I do not pretend that this article properly covers the situation in non-French speaking countries. I also believe that North-African countries require a different type of analysis. My work experience has covered all continents, and I will make references in this article to non-African cases.

The article will continue to explain that if some challenges may destroy fragile states, they may also force change upon them. It will then highlight an aggressive agenda for action based on greater political inclusiveness and institution building. While institution building is a controversial area where past efforts have met with frequent failures, the article will briefly describe some encouraging experiments that offer new perspectives in this area. Finally, it will remind that change is not a linear and incremental process and that rapid “explosive” types of institutional change may offer new perspectives to fragile countries to meet upcoming challenges.

An outline for a vision of an Africa in 2050 that has risen to the challenges and moved out of fragility and associated conflicts risks will be presented. This vision highlights a clear three pillar agenda for African leaders. This agenda emphasizes the need to strengthen fragile and conflict affected countries, to diversify the economies to meet the job challenge and to address the specific plight of resource-poor landlocked countries.

“Fragile,” Conflict-Affected and “Failed” States: What Are the Underlying Realities Behind the Concepts?

Are fragile states basically “unfinished” states in a process of state formation?

Modern states are supposed to exercise a monopoly on the use of violence over their territory, perform certain minimal functions for the security and well-being of their citizens, entertain working relations with the international system, and provide law and political order. When such minimal functions are either no longer performed by a given state, or imperiled by internal or external shocks, there appears a whole range of state situations which can be characterized by labels such as “at risk,” “fragile,” “poorly performing” and in extreme cases such as Somalia, “failed” or “collapsed”. If a country has also experienced or is experiencing a significant internal conflict, or is likely to experience in the near future a conflict or to be significantly affected by a conflict in a neighboring country, it is labeled as “conflict affected” (Di John 2010).

A critical issue is that state formation is a historical process subject to reversal and that fragility, state failures, and civil wars need to be studied in both a historical and political perspective. Some states, a typical case being Afghanistan, never consolidated and have never graduated from fragility, while others such as Cote d’Ivoire, where considerable state and even nation building took place in the 60s and 70s have, in a way, “backtracked” and are now in a fragile situation. The history of a specific state’s formation is necessary to explain its relative position on a theoretical continuum going from a chaotic non state status, such as the feudal system in Europe, to the modern Weberian state. Some states can be located at an intermediate “fragile situation” where most state institutions have not yet established deep roots; or fragility may be a kind of deviation from such a continuum and the outcome of specific historical events, leading in the worst circumstances to state collapse.

We need of course to keep in mind that there is no preordained path and no determinism which would drive a given state to a systematic destiny. We can, however, note that when nation

states have been built over centuries, as is the case in most of Western Europe, developed strong institutions and erased most ethnic, religious and regional divisions, they have clearly moved out of fragility. When in addition they have built over time political systems recognized as legitimate and “nations” sharing a common vision and commanding wide internal consensus among their population, their resilience to shocks is considerable. This cannot be the case for recently established states, where institutions are still shaky, the legitimacy of political systems subject to controversy and ethnicity remains an unresolved issue.

Has the historical state construction process been aborted in Africa?

In Africa, the historical process of large kingdom and state formation began in Ethiopia in 800 AD and later in West Africa with the kingdom of ancient Ghana (located in present-day Mali) in the 11th century, the Empire of Mali in the 13th century, and the fairly centralized Songhai Empire in the 15th century. Other centralized states also developed in other parts of the continent during the 14th and 15th centuries, such as the Kongo Kingdom in central Africa (Shillington 1995). However, due to low population density and difficult climatic and environmental conditions, this process of state formation remained embryonic in most regions.

Beginning in the 16th century the few centralized kingdoms were either dismantled or their structure was distorted by the slave trade. This chaotic period of constant wars further disorganized the local economies and social organization, destroying whatever state authority existed beyond coastal areas. In the second part of the 19th century, most remaining centralized kingdoms and mini states were conquered by European powers and organized as colonies. Colonial states developed according to different exploitative and organizational logics. But none of these colonies ever tried to attract adhesion from their population in order to build modern “nation states.” They were mostly organized around the export of tropical commodities along what Cooper calls the “gate keeper state” concept (Cooper 2002). The key issue was the development and control of the main export communication lines (ports, railways and road networks).

This elementary state system was then quickly substituted at independence by a supposedly “modern” state system. However, most borders had been determined by the colonial powers and cut across ethnic and religious boundaries. It should thus be no surprise that state fragility is so common in Africa, since state formation is recent and ethnic and religious diversity remains an important factor. Moreover, state structures had clearly not been devised to build Weberian type nation states or to command adhesion of the population.

Is geography the culprit?

Geography has sometimes been an obstacle to the process of state formation. The topography of some countries for instance is too mountainous and difficult to penetrate for a state authority to entirely control its territory. Governments, unable to develop or maintain costly road infrastructure in low population density areas such as deep forests and wide deserts, find these areas difficult to control (Herbst 2000). In many colonies, the use of forced labor even pushed populations towards remote areas beyond the control of colonial authorities (Hochschild 1999).

This context explains, to a point, the present Mali drama, as no central authority in Bamako has ever been able to control the vast desert expanses of the northern part of the country. Illicit traffic has always been the norm in these vast, lawless regions. More recently, local warlords have developed criminal activities based on drug trafficking and kidnappings. Geography and difficulty in controlling huge and almost empty territories hence explain up to a point why most Sahelian countries should be considered as inherently highly fragile, whatever their present and expected economic performance.

Have wars and conflicts made states more fragile or more robust?

We tend to consider conflict as “development in reverse.” For example, after a 10 year conflict DRC has backtracked to pre-independence levels of GDP per capita and overall well-being for a good part of its population (Prunier 2009, Stearns 2011). However, wars have also been an integral part of the process of state building in Europe. State rivalries and almost perpetual conflicts indeed forced European states to develop efficient state organizations and institutions, starting with permanent standing armies and well organized fiscal and financial systems to fund them. England’s early ability in fiscal and debt management explains for instance its successes in the 18th century wars (Reinhart and Rogoff 2009).

A key difference during the second part of the 20th century was the shift from interstate wars to the so called “new wars” which are basically civil wars (Van Creveld 1991). Such internal conflicts indeed tend to weaken or break apart states which are still undergoing a consolidation process instead of strengthening them. In fact, the type of conflict that developed in Africa since the 70s resemble much more the Thirty Year’s War in Europe which wreaked havoc in central Europe for most of 17th century, than the 18th and 19th century interstate wars that finally forced European states to consolidate. Just as in Europe before the consolidation of the nation state, in Africa today the distinction between war and organized looting and crime is sometimes blurred, and violence often has primarily predatory objectives. But such conflict may well force some fragile African states to either consolidate or explode. It may finally represent a step in a highly complicated and bloody process of state and nation building. This may well be the dilemma now confronting DRC.

Can states be simultaneously fragile and good performers?

Good indicators of state’s progressive weakness for a state (Rotberg 2003, Ellis 2009) include the growth of criminal violence, inability to provide basic security, related emergence of warlords and inability to control borders or significant portions of its territory. Rotberg suggests that there is a hierarchy regarding state functions which he lists as: security, proper institutions to ensure the rule of law and regulate conflicts and secure property rights, political participation and political legitimacy and, finally, the provision of basic infrastructure and social services. Other influential studies (Collier & Sambanis 2005, Bannon & Collier 2003) have emphasized both the role of poor economic performance in state breakdown and the role of conflict in destroying economies. They have particularly highlighted the role of poorly managed oil and mineral windfalls and the “resource curse” in state weakness and risks of conflicts.

If we accept that there is a hierarchy in state functions, a specific country may be weak, or even “fail,” in a given dimension and “strong” in other areas. Countries such as Uganda may have a satisfactory economic management and performance, a wide range of public services, have strong political participation and reasonable regime legitimacy, but be simultaneously unable to control some of their territory and provide security in all border areas. Identifying a tipping point when a country’s particular weakness leads to serious overall fragility or when such fragility transforms into state failure is sometimes hard to determine, difficult to quantify, impossible to accurately translate into an aggregate “failure index,” and is largely a matter of judgment.

Despite a lingering conflict in the north with the Lord’s Resistance Army, Uganda is definitely not a fragile state. Niger, however, which demonstrates strong (oil driven) growth, fairly sound macro management, a legitimate government and much progress regarding social service delivery is in a different situation. This is due to its uncontrolled north and to specific stresses and risks such as the unresolved Tuareg issue, extremely rapid demographic growth, lack of cultivable land, sensitivity to drought, environmental degradation and proximity to a collapsing Mali.

Is fragmentation of a society a key factor of fragility?

We already noticed that “artificially built” African states usually encompass a wide variety of ethnic groups and sometimes many religions (traditional and modern). A well-known fault line which separates Moslem and Christian populations in West, Central and East Africa, from Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire to Nigeria and Sudan, is now a permanent zone of tension and latent violence. Even though ethnicity sometimes has no clear racial or biological roots, it has often become a social reality, reinforced in the past by deliberate actions of colonial authorities and still today by some African politicians who build their power on fear and ethnic hate.

It is common knowledge that states composed of ethnically heterogeneous populations present greater fragility than states composed of homogeneous populations. This explains, for instance, why ethnically heterogeneous states (such as Yugoslavia) or heterogeneous empires (such as the Austro Hungarian and Ottoman empires) broke apart so easily. Multiple religions in a given state also create specific challenges and make the process of state building extremely complicated, as described by Fromkin (1989) for Mesopotamia (now Iraq) in the 1920s. This problem made the hasty introduction of democracy in Iraq an almost impossible challenge under the recent US occupation. Ethnic, religious and even cultural heterogeneity clearly create specific challenges to building resilient states.

In societies fragmented along ethnic or religious lines, particularly when the process of state formation is recent, the first loyalty of an individual beyond one’s own family usually goes to the extended family and more broadly to the tribal, ethnic or religious group. This is true in many African countries; it is also true in Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and in many countries in the Caucasus. In such contexts, the state and its authority are sometimes viewed with considerable suspicion and even mistrust. This weakens the state’s authority and legitimacy and facilitates non-cooperative behavior or even rebellions against any centralized political power.

In France, the process of state building involved until the early 20th century an active policy of destruction of all elements of cultural and ethnic diversity, including the deliberate destruction of the Occitan, Breton and Basque languages. In this context it is interesting to note that Botswana, one of Africa's fastest growing countries, is one of the few African countries that pursued an active policy of nation building, involving a deliberate policy of reducing ethnic and linguistic differences to strengthen its society's homogeneity.

Despite successive generations of African leaders's genuine efforts since the 60s and 70s to build nations and develop a feeling of common adhesion to nationhood, progress in Africa has obviously been uneven. In most ethnically heterogeneous African countries, political affiliations still tend to follow ethnic or religious lines, with Cote d'Ivoire being an almost perfect example. It is in countries characterized by a more homogeneous social context (Burkina Faso and Botswana for instance), or in countries such as Tanzania where leaders devoted considerable energy to build a nation, that the process of nation building has made significant progress. But in many other countries, fragmentation is almost the rule, and this creates specific elements of state fragility.

Is the "extractive economic and political institutions theory" a proper answer to state fragility and eventual failure?

Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) have recently developed a comprehensive theory of state fragility and eventual failure to explain why some nations are prosperous and others remain poor and fail. First, they differentiate between extractive economic institutions which extract resources "from the many" for the benefit of a small elite, and inclusive economic institutions which allow a broad sharing of resources and benefits. Second, they establish a link between economic and political institutions: Extractive economic institutions support and are supported by extractive political institutions that reinforce the power of the small elite, while inclusive economic institutions facilitate and are nurtured by inclusive political institutions which distribute political power in a pluralistic manner.

Inclusive political institutions require a certain level of state organization and centralization which explains why Sub-Saharan Africa is late in this respect. Synergies between economic and political institutions create either vicious or virtuous circles. In vicious circles extractive institutions tend to persist. They hamper development and create internal tensions, which lead to political instability as groups excluded from economic and political power fight to obtain access. In virtuous circles, inclusive economic and political institutions create both political stability and an environment conducive to development and the creative destruction that goes along with fast diversified growth.

Acemoglu and Robinson's analysis emphasizes that virtuous and vicious circles are products of history but not historically determined chance, leaders decisions, and major events (called "critical junctures") that disrupt existing political and economic balance may tip a state's destiny one way or the other. However, in their view, there is no clear recipe to voluntarily trigger such shift. They provide many compelling analyses of dramatic African spirals leading to state failures due to a combination of extractive economic and political institutions. They emphasize that those states that failed in Africa did so because the process of state building and consolidation began very late in the continent and because the legacy of extractive institutions which

concentrate power and wealth in the hands of a small group that controls the state, opened the way to unrest, strife and civil war.

Acemoglu and Robinson fully recognize that extractive institutions allow for periods of fast growth, but such growth unlikely to be sustained over the long term. Finally, by emphasizing the unstable nature of regimes that systematically exclude an important fraction of the population from political and economic power, they underline the inherent fragility of some African states despite their impressive economic performance.

Do “politics of the belly” lead to fragile “Potemkin-type” states?

State control in post-independence Africa has long been perceived as the fastest and most efficient way to accumulate wealth and such wealth accumulation as the best way to access or strengthen political power. This process was first described by Bayart (1985) under the generic name of “the politics of the belly” and further developed by other French social scientists. Under such a mechanism, most state institutions look like standard modern institutions, but behind the façade lies another reality.

This other reality is evident in the presence of deep networks of loyalty. The key purpose of these networks is to use control of the state and its key institutions to extract rents and benefits and channel them towards their own group or faction. This tension between loyalty to the group and loyalty to the state is at the heart of what is usually called high level corruption and explains most African state organizations’ weaknesses and inefficiencies. Heterogeneous societies exacerbate such inefficiencies, and such weaknesses go a long way to explain states’ inherent fragilities. Most modern African states are hybrid social constructions that retain traditional social structures under modern features (Jacquemot 2013).

In fragmented societies where clans, tribes, ethnic groups or political parties jockey for control of rents and power, institutions cannot spontaneously be the standard impersonal social constructions that are common in affluent developed societies. They are first highly personalized structures where the representative of a clan, tribe, and ethnic group or political party rules over a clientele. Rules are not impersonalized but determined according to one’s links with the clan, tribe, ethnic group or party. Such personalized “rules” have a direct negative impact on institutions’ performances (North 1990). But such mechanisms just reflect the overall state of a society. Hence the “poor governance” or the “neopatrimonialism”² which are associated with these contexts should not be judged on the basis of ethics but on the basis of history and efficiency.

What we usually call corruption is often the rent extraction mechanism from an institution controlled by a specific social group. It is part of a social mechanism. It may even be needed for social stability to “buy” social peace. For the participants in such mechanisms the corrupt one is the individual who diverts part of this rent for his own benefit. In fact, behind the “good governance” concept we tend to project an idealized vision of present-day impersonalized institutions and societies in “advanced” countries. We should be reminded, however, how poor governance was in “advanced” countries just a century ago, and how corrupt were such democracies.

² Neopatrimonialism is a concept which emphasizes the confusion between the private and public domains in African States.

In most heterogeneous, fragile countries, state institutions have a Potemkin dimension. For instance, customs services, ministries of finance, ministries of commerce, energy companies or port authorities look like ordinary state institutions. They are supposed to efficiently collect customs duties, manage public finances, facilitate trade, produce and distribute energy, handle maritime traffic in a port and generally speaking render specific services in the most efficient way to the population at large. If they don't, we tend to believe that their inefficiency is due to some lack of technical capacity or some management failure that adequate training and technical assistance will solve. Unfortunately, experience shows that such remedies usually do not work.

Do weak state institutions induce state fragility?

In fragile, heterogeneous states, loyalty to the group does not require efficiency at delivering public goods to the population at large, but first requires facilitating preferential access to jobs to one's faction, provision of free services to its clients, money transfers to friends and award of contracts to cronies. This situation is not specific to Africa, but can be found in most socially heterogeneous societies and explains the gross inefficiency of many state institutions in such contexts.

In the worst cases, such as Mobutu's Zaire, the population's expectations could be completely forgotten as long as rents were extracted and channeled to the right group; hence the state airline ended without any aircraft able to fly due to illicit sales of spare parts. The inefficiencies of states' basic institutions induce their fragility as they prove unable to provide the basic services expected by their populations, from security, law and order to electricity, road maintenance and basic education. Such states cannot command respect and loyalty from their citizens, who end up relying upon their tribal, ethnic or religious groups to meet such basic needs, triggering a vicious circle which requires more loyalty to the group to compensate for the inefficiency of the state. This process has been dramatically evident in Afghanistan since 2002 and goes a long way in explaining the coalition's failure as described in General McChrystal's 2009 sober assessment.

Unless political leaders are determined to fight against such tendencies and to create a nation going beyond tribal or religious affiliations, which inter alia requires establishing "modern" institutions refusing the tribal or clan logic, the fragmentation of a given society along ethnic, tribal or religious lines translates into global inefficiency of its state institutions and finally high state fragility. Clearly the fragmentation of most African societies makes state institutions particularly prone to fragility, which has a direct impact on overall state fragility; more homogeneous societies tend to develop stronger state institutions and more resilient state structures.

Are inclusive political systems the solution to states' fragility?

Acemoglu and Robinson consider that inclusive political systems and broad coalitions provide satisfactory answers to state fragility, particularly in a democratic context. This may be true sometimes but not always. In developing countries, political systems have evolved either towards inclusion or exclusion. Inclusive systems can be democratic as in today's Ghana, or autocratic as in yesterday's Cote d'Ivoire, where President Houphouet Boigny was attentive to

personally redistribute the smallest rents and positions, among all ethnic groups. Inclusion clearly brings political stability, while exclusion requires repression to provide (usually temporary) stability. It is also useful to distinguish inclusive systems that give everyone a stake and induce investment and innovation from those that just distribute some of the rent to everyone to stay in power. The former category clearly provides more stability than the latter.

In political systems based on systematic exclusion of specific groups and associated repression, lack of transparency can easily lead to processes of criminalization of the state as highlighted by Bayart (1999) in more recent publications. In such circumstances, all state institutions may be controlled by a specific minority (or even a majority group in a winner-takes-all philosophy), and the associated rents are channeled in total opacity for the leader of the group's benefit. Such states have an inherent institutional inefficiency and overall fragility, which is only compensated for by the capacity of their security apparatus, controlled by the commanding group. Whenever the security apparatus fails, the regime and the state can collapse under any unexpected shock. If the security apparatus is fairly strong as was the case in Syria, a shock may lead to a lengthy full-scale civil war.

Should one believe that democratic inclusive political systems are necessarily more efficient, more stable and less prone to fragility? This is not necessarily the case in heterogeneous societies. Contrary to expectations, standard (superficial) democratic processes such as those quickly introduced in the 90s, do not solve such problems. Once elected, the faction in power indeed quickly learns how to rig elections to remain in control, and inclusion remains superficial and elusive, as Paul Collier (2009) has reminded us. However, even when elections are conducted under a fair process, in a multi-ethnic context where political parties are organized along ethnic lines, experience shows that superficial democracy may make matters worse. While a clever dictator may be able to redistribute part of the rents to all ethnic and social groups in order to consolidate his power, an elected president cannot redistribute "his" rents as such redistribution would strengthen his opposition.³ In such contexts, democracy may exacerbate exclusion instead of fostering inclusion.

Can inclusive politics coexist with state fragility?

Even in inclusive coalition governments, "inclusion" is sometimes negotiated by a redistribution of rents through a sharing of state institutions as booty for each group to exploit. In such situations, the same inefficiencies occur, driving the states into the same fragilities. In such contexts, which are frequent in post conflict situations in which no clear winner has emerged, the leading political or ethnic group tries to buy allegiance from other factions by distributing state institutions and positions. In doing so, the group ethnicizes and politicizes key state institutions, from the most financially rewarding (ministry of finance, customs, port authority, key parastatals) to the smallest organizations where only a few per diems can be expected. Again, Potemkin institutions flourish under such circumstances, despite democratic appearances and attempts at inclusiveness.

³ Hence the motto from the Ivorian opposition in the mid 90s: "Bedié ne partage pas" ("Bedie does not share") is not related to his character but to the shift to an elected system of government where money buys votes.

This process which can be more developed in some countries than in others, runs contrary to all elementary management rules governing “modern” institutional efficiency, which requires the selection of leaders based on merit, and human resource management based on results, as well as systematic controls requiring transparency and principles of management for state institutions largely dissociated from ethnic, family, partisan or religious logic. By “modern” institutions, we mean institutions that are not based on personal relationships and cronyism, but require impersonalized relations. Of course the merit-based, result-oriented system is to some extent an ideal and each country may be located on a specific continuum which goes from this ideal model to the worst cronyism.

In heterogeneous countries where factional, ethnic or religious groups struggle and sometimes fight for control, state institutions face specific obstacles to building such efficient institutions. During the long interim period when ethnicity or tribalism permeates the society, selection of leaders and promotions of key managers cannot be dissociated from such social and political constraints. Hence such countries need to manage a complex dual system where merit and ethnicity (or religious affiliation) need to both be taken into account. Their situation and constraints are similar to those faced by multilateral institutions or private multinational companies, but in a context where the requirement for efficiency is usually much weaker and ethnicity much stronger.

Clearly all heterogeneous societies do not fit this description, and we have, in fact, a continuum in terms of the logic which governs the functioning of state institutions: from a “modern,” “merit based” efficiency-determined logic such as one found in Sweden, to a completely closed, opaque, clan-determined system found in today’s Guinea Bissau. Democracy, by introducing vote pressure, helps put efficiency higher on the priority list. But democracy by itself is not a guarantee for engineering a “modernization process” of state institutions that will move state institutions out of personalized relations and cronyism.

This is particularly the case if the regime is weak due to a difficult exit from conflict which requires building complex political alliances and “rewarding” allies; if perceived lack of government legitimacy will force the commanding group to considerable compromises; or if the leader of a country still only understands his political role as being a mediator among factions and using corruption and rent distribution as his key instrument, such as in Afghanistan. Finally, specific constitutional arrangements may also impose an explicit sharing of state responsibilities and institutions among political, ethnic or religious groups, such as in present day Lebanon since the Taief Accord which ended the civil war.⁴

Preliminary diagnosis on state fragility

1) *Many African states are unfortunately prone to some level of “inherent” fragility* because they have had little time to develop the long roots that are needed to establish a state’s resilience, particularly a sense of nationhood and common destiny, inclusive political systems offering political and economic perspective to all segments of the population, and “modern” efficient state institutions free from the type of cronyism which goes along with non-inclusive political

⁴ Switzerland (it is a paradox) is in fact in a similar case; its constitution historically developed in a conflict context in the early XIX century provides detailed specific responsibilities and privileges to its different ethnic/ linguistic groups which tends to reduce state institution’s efficiency. A strong democratic pressure fortunately makes up for the related loss in efficiency!

systems. This inherent fragility is enhanced by the frequent fragmentation and heterogeneity of their societies and the strength of ethnic, tribal or religious links which permeate social and political life. Heterogeneous societies are especially at risk of fragility if the logic which governs the state is biased by partisan, ethnic or religious factors and drifts towards cronyism.

2) *Key issues are (i) the level of government inclusiveness and legitimacy* that superficial types of democracies limited to periodic presidential and legislative elections do not necessarily address and *(ii) the quality of the main state institutions*. In this regard, fragile states have fragile state institutions and the level of a state's fragility may depend upon the relative efficiency/inefficiency of its state institutions, particularly its sovereign institutions:⁵ army, police, justice and local government that are supposed to provide security and law and order, and financial institutions that are supposed to fund these basic functions. Also critical are the key economic institutions which help regulate trade, transport and access to food, the key social service institutions that provide education and health, and the institutions that provide basic infrastructure services such as water and energy, access to housing and key urban services.

3) *The most fragile states clearly have weak and inefficient sovereign institutions* and may easily collapse under minor shocks such as demonstrated in Mali very recently. In non-inclusive political systems, particularly in heterogeneous societies, if a specific faction/political party/or ethnic group has little legitimacy, but total control over the political system, the state apparatus and all the rent generating activities, the state is inherently very fragile whatever its economic performance. If the regime proves unwilling to share a significant part of its political and economic power with other factions/parties/ethnic groups, trouble is to be expected. In such circumstances, stability depends on the strength of the security apparatus or exceptional oil or mineral wealth which allows some redistribution without any weakening of the faction in power, such as in Angola.

4) *Inclusive political systems and/or a well-functioning democracy may lower the inherent fragility* linked to a society's heterogeneity, but democracy and political inclusiveness are no guarantees of a state institution's efficiency and hence of state resilience. An element of deep fragility is always present if the rules governing changes in leadership are unclear or prone to changes at the will of the head of state. This explains, for instance, the present uncertainty and even anxiety of investors and the population at large in usually stable countries as election deadlines approach. In post conflict countries where no clear winner has emerged, even in supposedly democratic contexts, whenever state institutions are distributed among factions as booty to exploit in order to buy allegiances and hopefully build peace, institutions remain inefficient empty shells. They are prey to rent-seeking mechanisms that cannot support economic growth, but rather act as a brake. High state fragility is the rule in all such cases and moving out of such fragility traps is always a challenge.

5) *The deeply ingrained character of a state's inherent fragility explains why moving out of fragility is so difficult* (Michailof 2011a). Fragility indeed goes to the heart of the social, ethnic and religious structure of a society, its history and its political system. External exhortations and pressures are unlikely to help much. A society's ethnic or religious heterogeneity is a given, resistant to any international prescription, and may require careful political management for

⁵ "Institutions régaliennes".

centuries, such as in Spain with the still unresolved Basque and Catalan problems. A society's political system is the product of history and a specific local balance of power. Reforming state institutions in such contexts requires going beyond usual public sector reforms or the rather ineffectual provision of technical assistance. A deliberate political decision to move away from cronyism in order to drastically improve the state institution's efficiency and to improve the state's capacity to weather external shocks or threats is needed. It is not an easy decision since it impacts internal political equilibriums. In this context, the fragility rankings which only emphasize weak policies and governance or low growth rates tend to focus on symptoms and miss the needed historical and political dimensions.

6) *Times of crisis, the "critical junctures"* described by Acemoglu and Robinson, such as changes of regimes, arrival of a new generation of leaders, external threats, or a combination of such factors *are usually necessary environments to move out of inherent fragility* and build resilient states. Building such a state also requires a strong will and clear perception by the political leadership of the road ahead and the objectives to be met. The way Mustafa Kemal reformed the collapsed state that emerged out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War may be one of the best historical examples of a fast exit out of a failed state situation. In Africa, the way Museveni led a collapsed post Idi Amin country out of fragility may also be considered as a model.

7) *The type of inherent state fragility described is not incompatible with basic economic reforms and strong growth.* Strong growth may over time help reduce the most obvious elements of state's fragility since economic growth usually triggers the type of interaction with a strengthened civil society and private sector that will require a strengthened bureaucracy described by Levy (2012). A good non-African example is Cambodia, which inherited from the Khmer Rouge a collapsed state, and put together afterwards a poorly performing state system riddled by cronyism. Nevertheless, Cambodia is now trying to reform some of its faulty state institutions to meet the demands of a dynamic economy driven by Chinese investments. It is only in the most extreme situations of cronyism and abysmal governance such as in former Zaire or today's Zimbabwe that the economy is plundered to the point that growth is impossible and fragility may turn to failure.

8) *The inherent or latent state fragility just described, usually only comes to light when states are confronted by specific tensions, stresses and shocks, or a combination of such events.* The main challenge confronting many African countries over the coming decades will be how states with such serious elements of inherent fragility will react to the huge coming tensions, stresses and shocks. These tensions will be generated by exceptional demography, increasing demand for jobs, environmental degradation of agricultural land and associated deforestation, and huge expected and unexpected changes in the world economy. Will these still fragile states adapt quickly enough? Will they "modernize" their state institutions fast enough to meet these coming shocks? Some of the upcoming stresses linked to demography are easy to identify. But mitigation measures require vision that goes well beyond the usual short-term political horizon. Will such challenges force reforms and adaptations? Or will they swamp these countries, driving them backward into crisis and conflict? Most African states will indeed soon be confronted by the kind of challenges that according to Toynbee (1972) could either strengthen or destroy civilizations.

Upcoming Tensions, Stresses and Shocks That May Either Destroy or Force Change upon Fragile African States

We will now briefly review a number of tensions, stresses and shocks which are already impacting many African countries and are likely to worsen in the coming decades. This section will highlight how challenging it will be to address these shocks, and it will identify a diversified agenda for action based upon a typology of fragile states. Identifying key common problems beyond diversity, and particularly the need for more inclusive politics and efficient state institutions, it will then suggest innovative approaches to modernize state institutions. Finally, it will conclude that in the next decades, many factors will force change upon even reluctant reformers, and this will help the continent move out of fragility and conflict.

Success stories may easily unravel

A number of worrying internal and external factors which are already impacting many African countries will most likely increase in intensity over the coming decades. In the recent past, some of these factors led countries that were previously perceived as stable and good performers into internal strife and conflict. A typical example is Cote d'Ivoire, a success story for 20 years, where a benevolent dictatorship hid flawed political institutions and lack of consensus, while massive foreign technical assistance hid deep institutional weaknesses. Economic success increased massive internal migration and immigration from neighboring countries in a context of already high demographic growth⁶ and exacerbated land issues among heterogeneous communities. An inadequate macro answer to a commodity shock led to a long period of economic stagnation which exacerbated urban unemployment. The combination of these stresses and shocks finally threw the country into 10 years of civil strife and conflicts (Michailof 2005). Deep scars left by the conflict and the cumulative unresolved problems due to this lost decade now definitely put the country at risk despite its recent economic successes.

The demographic dynamic which was critical in Cote d'Ivoire's crisis raises many serious challenges to most African countries. The poorest states will be confronted by huge education and social infrastructure problems related to the high ratio of young to total population. But other critical problems due to demography will also appear in both the uncontrolled development of very large cities and in the environmental degradation of some fragile rural areas.

Urban environments have become highly inflammables

The urban population in Sub-Saharan Africa increased eleven-fold between 1950 and 2000, but the high rates of rural to urban migrations have not been associated with the type of job creating industrialization process witnessed in 19th century Europe or today's Asia.

Lack of jobs

Over the next fifteen years, 330 million youths will join the job market in Sub-Saharan Africa⁷ and will greatly help the development process if they can be put to work. If they do not find

⁶ Between 1950 and 2010 the population in Cote d'Ivoire was multiplied by a factor of 7. The same ratio applied to France would put the French population at 360 million.

⁷ United Nations World Urbanization Prospects 2011 and World population Prospects 2010 .

jobs, they will represent a major source of social and political instability. Regarding non-rural jobs, in Sub-Saharan Africa the GDP share of manufacturing has decreased from 12.8% to 10.5% from 2000 to 2008 (Hugon 2012). FDI today is significant and growing, but it is mostly focused in mining and other extractive activities and is creating very few jobs. At the same time, many existing light industries producing consumer goods for local markets are threatened by cheap imports from China and India in contexts where the success of extractive activities and the associated Dutch disease sometimes negatively impact local competitiveness. Textile industries, for instance, have disappeared from West Africa.

Due to inadequate infrastructure and business environments and sometimes to high factor costs, if we put aside the very specific cases of Mauritius and South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa is not yet significantly integrating into the international industrial value chains with their tremendous possibilities for job creation. As a result, urban unemployment in most African countries has become a very serious issue and will most likely remain so for the next two decades. If we take a long-term perspective, some African regions are likely to become booming manufacturing zones, taking over specific low cost segments of the Asian or Brazilian value chains. However, such industrial transfers to integrate Africa with world value chains (already happening in Morocco and Turkey) will favor coastal areas close to well-managed ports and avoid disorganized landlocked urban contexts. In rural areas where modern manufacturing and service jobs are unlikely to meet the demand for jobs, job creation will be critical to social and political stability, as will be discussed later.

Poor urban management

Urban growth has also been so fast that urban management is lagging behind. While fast developing countries with significant budget resources already have considerable difficulty in regulating and managing such fast urban growth, fragile countries without resources and urban management capacity are literally swamped by sprawling unmanageable slums and “unstructured districts” lacking the most basic facilities in terms of roads, drainage, safe drinking water and electricity.

The flat spatial organization of these cities will also deepen the transport problem as energy prices will increase in a context of dilapidated public transportation systems. African leaders in some fragile states already fear a complete collapse of urban transport and disruptions in economic activity in the case of a new oil shock (resulting, for instance, from a conflict in the Gulf). In order to avoid riots, they often heavily subsidize petroleum prices despite tight budgets. As energy prices inexorably increase over the next 40 years, with considerable expected price instability during the transition period, this is also likely to increase tensions in capital cities.

Some of these “unstructured districts” have already become huge lawless areas controlled by rival gangs involved in illicit activities. All of this creates tensions similar to those that precipitated the Arab Spring. Such issues have usually not been properly addressed by poorly coordinated local authorities who lack resources and an appropriate taxation system. A tripling of the urban population by 2050, without undertaking major reforms in urban management and considerable infrastructure investments, would lead to nightmarish situations. If such issues are not forcefully addressed over the coming decades, already poor social conditions will worsen to

a point where regaining control of events may require time spans likely to be incompatible with the population's patience.

Imported food price instability

Another socially and politically sensitive issue is the frequent dependency upon food imports to feed large cities in the poorest countries where agriculture has remained stagnant. A global shift in the world food balance calls into question the long-term political viability of such a development model. Demonstrations and riots occurred in Africa during the 2007/2008 food price spike. Expected instability in world food prices will make a recurrence of similar events very likely in large cities, which are highly dependent upon food imports. Such instability will not necessarily allow local food production to easily catch up and substitute for imports, since this would require stable price policies over the medium term and adequate agricultural policies which are presently usually missing. Clearly expected price instability in world food markets and long-term trends will put social stability at risk in large cities dependent on food imports.

Tensions are also rising in rural areas

In addition to the high growth rate of the urban population, the rural population in Sub-Saharan Africa has also multiplied by a factor of almost 3 between 1950 and 2000. As a result, arable and permanent cropland per capita of the agricultural population has decreased in the continent by about 40% since 1960 (World Bank 2008). The rural population will continue to increase over the coming decades at rates varying between 1 and 1.8% per annum and, over the next fifteen years, about 200 million newcomers in the job market are expected in rural areas.⁸ A key issue is whether such additional increases in rural population will lead to intensified agriculture or just increase existing extensive agricultural systems' pressure on land. A related critical issue will be the rural sector's capacity to provide jobs.

Demography and urban bias often lead to land degradation rather than agricultural intensification

There are of course huge differences in rural densities. The present ratio of population to agricultural land reaches 800 per hectare in Rwanda and Somalia. However, even a density of about 300 in a country such as Cote d'Ivoire is close to a maximum under extensive agricultural systems usually requiring 20-year fallows after 2 to 3 years under cultivation. It is clear that long-term sustainability of agricultural systems and the need to double food production to meet food demand in Africa by 2050 urgently require an intensification of agricultural practices.

But an intensification of agriculture has remained elusive and increased agricultural production has been mostly achieved thanks to an expansion of extensive agricultural systems to new lands, through deforestation, conversion of grazing land to agriculture, or shortened fallows with associated loss in soil fertility. While there is a huge potential to increase yields and intensify production, exploiting this potential for intensification will require considerable reforms, particularly in the incentive systems and price policies which suppose a shift against a frequent pro-urban bias. Not much has changed in this regard since Lipton (1977) published his well-known book on urban bias in development. Such bias indeed reflects a given rural/urban

⁸ United Nations World Urbanization Prospects, 2011 and World population Prospects 2010.

political balance of power. New macro and exchange rate policies such as those achieved early on in Uganda to boost agricultural productivity are needed in many countries, particularly in the CFA zone, as well as complex land tenure reforms and important investments in infrastructure. These are not small undertakings.

Urban demand for household energy has also proved destructive for soils and agricultural potential. Around most large cities, the demand for charcoal has destroyed tree cover and soil, sometimes extending more than a hundred miles. In many cases, the sheer speed of demographic growth in both urban and rural areas in a context of weak agricultural and land policies has been excessive for a spontaneous adaptation of agricultural systems and proper intensification to take place. Finally, there are concerns regarding the impact of global warming on agriculture in the continent. While the seriousness of the climate threat to agriculture is now unambiguous, its magnitude is uncertain. Most experts consider that Africa is likely to be the continent most affected by global warming, which may lead to a 2 to 9% reduction in agricultural GDP.

Controlling land degradation will require massive investment in knowledge and appropriate policies

Rural demographic growth will create havoc if agriculture is poorly managed. Tropical soils are extremely fragile, and their physical stability is highly sensitive to deforestation, poor agricultural practices linked to higher population densities, and poorly managed intensification. Where average rainfall is below 1000 mm, soils are particularly fragile and traditional agricultural techniques do not allow important increases in rural population without irreversible destruction of the soil structure and progressive desertification. The present situation is especially worrying in landlocked semi-arid countries such as Niger where land resources are limited. Where soil fragility is particularly acute, even standard irrigation techniques can sometimes only bring temporary (20 year) relief and end up with salinized soils and a collapse in production (Nahon 2012). Some sources estimate that between 5 and 10 million hectares are lost each year to severe land degradation in Africa (World Bank 2012).

Agricultural progress under such conditions requires massive investment, first in knowledge (research and technological improvements), as demonstrated by the success of Brazil on its own fragile lands. But agricultural research in Africa is underfunded and adrift in the poorest countries which are most in need in this area. The hasty introduction of agro-businesses with foreign investment and expertise, often seen as an easy shortcut to agricultural growth, could accelerate the process of soil destruction due to agricultural techniques ill-suited to tropical soil fragility, cultivation of steep slopes, lack of associated agricultural research and short-term mostly financial objectives.

Collapsed agricultures exacerbate ethnic tensions

Increased rural densities combined with stagnating agricultural techniques are now triggering internal migrations and acute land tensions. While most rural areas in Africa were once viewed as empty and peaceful spaces where time seemed irrelevant, if this were ever true it is no longer the case. In many regions, conflicts are now multiplying among communities and ethnic groups that used to live at peace in a context of land abundance. In the most fragile

environments, this can easily lead to a mix of periodic local Malthusian crises, famines, renewed migrations, deep social instability and conflict.

Examples of such situations include the western part of Cote d'Ivoire where insecurity is still rampant or North Kivu where conflicts have almost never ceased for the last 20 years. Due to a very slow demographic transition, without drastic policy changes and massive investments in knowledge, land rehabilitation, well-designed small scale irrigation, and associated reforms in land use and ownership (Griffon 2010), long-term perspectives in the environmentally fragile countries are very worrying.

Finally, since the prospects for job creation in urban areas are unlikely to be satisfactory over the next fifteen years, the focus should shift to rural development—which still employs about 65% of the Sub-Saharan African population. Improvement of family farming systems and a whole range of associated policies should take precedence in this respect over agribusinesses (Losch 2012). Will all countries be able to meet the challenge? Will some of them face an impasse in escaping unemployment and instability? The Sahel's specific fragilities need special attention in this context.

Challenges are daunting in the Sahel

The recent collapse of Mali highlighted the magnitude of challenges confronting Sahelian countries which, from Mauritania to Chad, cover an area about 10 times the size of France. In most Sahelian countries, years of accumulated neglect regarding rural development, an issue that has been regularly highlighted since the early 80s, have now become a huge problem in a context of land scarcity, deforestation and land degradation (Giri 1983; Giri 1989; Belloncle 1985; Bonfils 1987). Unresolved ethnic and political problems add to the magnitude of present and future challenges (Michailof 2011b).

Behind its façade of superficial democracy and Potemkin institutions, Mali was already vulnerable because of deeply ingrained corruption and the involvement of some of its elite in illicit trafficking. The return from Libya of a few hundred disgruntled Malian mercenaries of Tuareg origin after the collapse of the Khadafi regime brought additional instability to an already uncontrolled north. This was enough to topple the regime and send a shock wave throughout the whole Sahel. This unexpected shock wave is now a marker which highlights deep inherent fragilities throughout the region.

While the agricultural potential is not fully realized in the south, in the north the traditional economy based upon extensive agriculture, small-scale irrigation and herding is collapsing due to the recurrence of droughts, land degradation and lack of off-farm activities (Dayak 1992; Thebaud 1988). The ongoing rural crisis is compounded by unresolved ethnic prejudices and a weakening of local state institutions: local police, governments and justice are often so weak, corrupt and mismanaged that resentment against state authority is growing. Ethnic clashes have already multiplied between farmers and herders. In what were until recently easy to control neighborhoods, quarrels where a few spears were drawn have now become bloody confrontations as the price of Kalashnikovs fallstthanks to the Libyan "weapons supermarket."

The young now prefer emigrating or turning to Trans-Saharan traffic: stolen cars, cigarettes and petroleum products coming from Algeria. Customers can even order the brand and color of their

cars (stolen in Europe). Nowadays, more and more drugs, mostly cocaine, transit from Latin America through Guinea Bissau, Benin or Nigeria and then through the Sahara towards European markets. At the same time, just as state legitimacy tends to collapse, migration and new IT technology make abysmal poverty and increased inequality unacceptable to younger rural generations, exacerbate frustrations, and make religious extremism attractive.

The whole north of Mali, covering an area the size of France, was, until the French military intervention, entirely controlled by four main groups of insurgents who had defeated the Malian army. Two of them, AQMI and MUJAO, are openly connected to Al Quaida and heavily involved in organized crime, drug trafficking and kidnapping. They maintain contacts with other rebel groups that operate in Mauritania and the north of Niger, the terrorist Boko Haram sect in Nigeria and remnants from the Algerian terror group GSPC.

In the northern part of Niger, most of CAR, north of Cameroon, and parts of Chad and Mauritania, “road robbers”⁹ hamper trade and are a constant source of insecurity. Until now, the standard response to such rural insecurity has been ill-conceived and poorly planned military actions. As a result, huge regions in the northern part of the Sahel have now become grey areas where the state’s authority is disintegrating as officials can no longer reside or travel safely (Ngoupande 1997).

Is the demographic time bomb leading to a new Afghanistan in the Sahel?

The parallel between the northern parts of the Sahel with Afghanistan is striking in this respect and has been highlighted for instance in the Algerian press, as early as September 2010, long before the collapse of Mali (Tlemcani 2010). Despite obvious cultural differences, both regions are confronted with similar demographic impasses: 3% population growth in a context of severe land and environmental constraints. Rural populations are confronted with similar issues of land degradation, migration, weak local governments, and lack of support for agriculture and livestock development. Wide Sahelian regions can drift towards a state of anarchy. Such scenarios are now seriously debated among worried national and international intelligence and security circles as no one can predict how the global Sahelian situation will evolve after the French military intervention in Mali.

If we take a long-term perspective, the situation of the whole sub-region is worrying. The cumulative population of Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad was 49 million in 2005 and will be about 154 million by 2050 (Ferry 2007). Will the ongoing development of oil and mining resources and the expected surge in export services and IT provide the millions of urban jobs needed for an exceptionally young population by 2050? Will booming coastal countries, such as Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon accept from these Sahelian countries new massive inflows of immigrants after they already expelled them by the tens of thousands several times over the last decades?

Beware of unexpected shocks

It is now clear that African countries are following highly diversified paths. Average per capita income now varies in a ratio of 1 to almost 100 between DRC and Equatorial Guinea. While

⁹ “Coupeurs de routes”

tensions and stresses are unlikely to lessen and will mostly affect fragile countries over the coming decades, no African country will be completely immune, as demonstrated by the case of Tunisia. This country was fairly ethnically homogeneous, had strong state institutions, and enjoyed political stability, good doing business indicators, and a diversified economy already entering world value chains. It unfortunately also had a corrupt and non-inclusive regime, state capture by those close to power, a high level of unemployment and a very fragile agriculture.

Even growth creates tension...see China! The magnitude of expected tensions due to the widening gap in income and wealth in the next 40 years in the African continent should be a source of major concern in a context of widespread inherent fragility. All capital cities in Africa have been thoroughly transformed during the last decades. However, beyond vibrant urban centers where business is booming, tensions are also building up. They are building up in sprawling slums that no visitor can discover since no road reaches them. They are building up in poorly controlled rural areas where agriculture has been neglected, and security is deteriorating. In the past, no one cared much about these regions. Widespread circulation of AK47s and rampaging jihadist militants now change the context (The Graduate Institute 2009). Controlling such tensions and their spillover impact over the coming decades will be *the* major challenge confronting the continent. The unexpected collapse of the Libyan regime has led to the unexpected collapse of inherently fragile Mali. Will Mali stabilize and recover its balance? Or will inherently fragile Niger be the next domino to fall? Will still-politically-fragile neighboring Cote d'Ivoire be contaminated?

The weakness of key sovereign state institutions is also creating opportunities for organized crime and facilitating a worrying integration of local criminal networks with international crime. Piracy has become a highly profitable business along the horn of Africa and evolved into a sophisticated high-tech activity mobilizing financing from the Gulf. A similar development is now taking place in the gulf of Guinea and is becoming a serious concern for both international maritime traffic and neighboring countries from Togo to Cameroon (International Crisis Group 2012). West Africa, as already noted, has become the main zone of transit for cocaine between Latin America and Western Europe. The Niger Delta is a lawless area where organized gangs ransom oil companies and kidnap wealthy individuals.

Addressing such new challenges will require fixing some of the states' weaknesses in their security apparatus and opaque links between organized crime and some influential political networks. In a continent going through such major demographic and economic changes and the accompanying stresses, such events and the magnitude of criminal events should not come as surprises. *Over the coming decades, it will be critical that these challenges are addressed and do not swamp the concerned governments' will and their capacity to reform.*

Fragility: a subjective concept but a widespread commodity in Africa!

Agreeing on strict criteria to define fragile countries may be an impossible task. Fragility implies in fact subjective judgments on likely outcomes such as the expected resilience of a given political system and the likely efficiency of its state institutions when confronted with stress or shocks. These are obviously not matters easy to quantify despite recent attempts made by experienced economists (Guillaumont and Guillaumont Jeanneney 2009). Scholars and professionals alike accept that political and economic governance factors are crucial (Gnessoto

and Grevi 2006). The Africa 2050 study uses the list of fragile countries established by the AfDB and World Bank, which is based upon their harmonized Country Policy and Institutional Assessment or the presence of an international peace keeping force. This definition strictly applied is far from perfect as it does not include, for instance, Niger and Madagascar despite their noted fragilities. However, by using an agreed composite criterion it is an acceptable working option.

For a more thorough quantitative analysis of state fragility in Africa, such a classification can be further refined along the lines of Patrick and Sylvianne Guillaumonts' proposals. However, as these authors recognize the "fragility of the measurement of fragility," the best option may still be to use the best judgment of professional political scientists on selective subjective criteria. These criteria can be organized around three main issues: politics, institutions and governance, and the magnitude of ongoing and expected challenges and likely ability to address them.

Regarding politics, key criteria are the country's history and its past and present leaders' success at building a nation with shared values and a common vision; the level of ethnic, religious and cultural homogeneity or heterogeneity of the society and the persistence of deep ethnic, religious or cultural tensions; the level of control of sovereign institutions over the entire territory; the level of inclusiveness of the political system; and the level of consensus among the population regarding the regime.

Regarding institutions and governance, key criteria are the magnitude of high-level corruption and the connection of the political elite with local organized crime and international criminal networks; the impact of cronyism in key state institutions; the magnitude of internal rent-extracting mechanisms; and the related impact on institutions' efficiency at delivering services.

Regarding the magnitude of expected challenges and ability to address them, key criteria are the likely resilience of sovereign institutions to shocks such as spillovers from neighboring conflicts; the magnitude of the urban slum issue and government capacity to address this problem; the government's capacity in delivering basic services, from health to electricity; the present and future unemployment situation and the industrial context and perspectives; the fragility or resilience of the agricultural sector and the quality of agricultural policies and institutions; and the ability of the agricultural sector to provide efficient support to farmers, address land degradation and environmental destruction, and allow for an orderly modernization and intensification process.

A clear lesson is that fragility in Africa is a much more widespread than a superficial GDP growth-centered analysis would lead one to believe. Mali had annual 2.2 percent per capita GDP growth from 2000 until 2011 and an internationally acclaimed multiparty democracy. Not bad! Unfortunately, it also had red flags for most of the other previously listed criteria. Such fragility explains why it collapsed under the shock of a few thousand jihadists.

Fragile countries: Suggested typology and agenda for action

Since many African countries suffer from some kind of inherent fragility, all of them need to react. Nevertheless, the agenda for action will differ depending on the nature and depth of each country's fragility. Hence a typology is useful. Five main categories of fragile countries emerge from the above discussion: (i) Countries whose considerable growth potential is held up by

unresolved political problems; (ii) Landlocked countries with a low agricultural resource base or an inadequate use of it; (iii) Countries just exiting from conflict or still conflict-affected and confronted with a huge reconstruction agenda; (iv) Countries suffering from deep governance issues and non-inclusive political systems; and (v) Countries at war or that have already collapsed. The agenda for action will of course differ according to this typology.

The political challenge in category 1 countries: Change the “system” and not only the elite in power

In the first country category, in which growth potential is held up by unresolved political problems, the political agenda needs to be the priority. Any major political change should thus aim, not only at replacing existing political elites, but at changing “systems” based on cronyism and exclusion. In this context, the standard exhortation to democracy is widely insufficient. Democracy, yes certainly, but what type of democracy? Democracy in socially and ethnically fragmented countries has to take into account the specific needs of all minority groups and to keep in mind the absolute need for a fair sharing of resources and political power among all “fragments” of the society. Mechanisms need to be devised so that one faction does not misuse democratic processes to monopolize political power and rents. This was successfully done in Switzerland in the early 19th century, and African political scientists should now focus on how to build inclusive democratic systems in socially heterogeneous and fragmented societies. Restoring a centralized Malian state and refusing to take into account the specific concerns of the Tuareg and Arab populations may lead to a “Thirty Years’ War”.

Grass roots democracy at village or district levels, decentralization, administrative deconcentration, the buildup of transparent checks and balances, appropriate selection processes for managerial positions in the bureaucracy, and many other subjects should be at the core of such research. The research should also take into account non-African experiences. Many non-African ethnically-fragmented societies have indeed also been confronted with similar challenges. Why has Afghanistan largely failed in this respect? What are the lessons to be drawn from fairly successful Georgia? The key challenge will be to combine administrative efficiency and a fair sharing of power among ethnic and religious groups, an area where Lebanon, for instance, has largely failed.

A second issue will be the role of regional and continent-wide bodies to seriously press for political reforms. Political instability is a regional public bad. We already noticed how instability crosses borders thanks to refugees and arms smuggling. In the next decades, regional bodies such as ECOWAS or SADC will not ignore when exclusion and cronyism in one of their member countries threaten regional political stability. Peer pressure, soft power through the media and economic, as well as political, sanctions will have to be used in order to force political reform and changes in behavior in neighboring countries that put regional stability at risk. Such pressures will need to be much more aggressive than in the past when tolerance and non-intervention were the rule despite blatant corruption, mismanagement and misbehavior.

The economic challenge in category 2 countries: Make sure that the oil and mining bonanza does not destroy but rather fosters agriculture and services development and helps provide jobs

Landlocked countries with weak agriculture resource bases cover wide expanses where considerable oil and mineral resources are already exploited, such as in Chad and Niger, or have been identified. The expected mining bonanza can be perceived as an easy way out of present budget constraints and economic hardships. However, due to their exceptional demography, the critical problem for these countries is job creation. As these sectors provide very few jobs, the high growth rates associated with oil or mining will not automatically lead to political stability.

The risk for these countries is to follow the path of least resistance and let oil or mining income play its usual role, leading to debilitating Dutch disease and high level corruption. Oil and mining income will of course lead to high investment in infrastructure and some social expenditure, but no level of oil-driven public investment in infrastructure can sustain the needed level of job creation. The challenge has in fact many facets: Dutch disease is likely to destroy agriculture and SMEs where the potential for job creation is the highest. Being landlocked, these countries will not be able to significantly integrate with international industrial value chains. Finally, the weak or poorly managed agricultural resource base will require sophisticated approaches due to soil fragility and lack of water in a context of global warming. In such heavily constrained contexts, the agenda for action will first require an emphasis on agriculture and second, an ambitious service sector strategy.

Regarding agriculture, it will be critical to reconstruct the dilapidated state institutions in charge of overall agricultural policy, agricultural research, extension, and community development. A key issue will be to reconnect farming systems with their urban markets through appropriate rural road networks and price policies. Appropriate exchange rate policies will be needed to counteract the usual appreciation of the real effective exchange rate. These countries basically need to refuse the early Algerian model based upon neglect of both agriculture and private SMEs that finally led to the Algerian civil war in the 1990s. More broadly, the oil bonanza also needs to fund appropriate social expenditure in rural areas including access to safe water and electricity in all significant villages to help retain an important fraction of the young in rural areas.

In the service sector, in the coming 40 years, the potential for revolutionary change is considerable. Progress in information technology already allows Sahelian countries to compete on the international call center service market, and they have much to learn in the coming decade from the Indian approach in IT. But they also need to carefully study the Philippine labor export model to prepare an ambitious emigration strategy of skilled and highly skilled personnel. Just as the Philippines correctly identified global job opportunities for skilled personnel and developed specific training programs to meet this demand, similar strategies will be needed for Sahelian countries to benefit from the opportunities offered by an aging Europe. Already many nurses and medical doctors in French hospitals are Africans, and this may just be the beginning of a wide transfer of skilled labor from the Sahel to Europe.

The political challenge in category 3 conflict-affected countries: Build strong and efficient state institutions focusing on sovereign institutions and security

Fragile states have fragile state apparatuses. Unless fragile states coming out of long internal conflicts and mismanagement and confronted with a huge reconstruction agenda considerably strengthen their institutions or rebuild them from scratch, little progress is to be expected. Weak finance ministries will be unable to raise the taxes needed to fund the state apparatus and channel resources towards line ministries and other state bodies. Weak police and corrupt justice will be unable to restore security, thus hampering private investment. Weak technical ministries will be unable to maintain infrastructure, devise proper sector policies and implement or supervise development programs. Weak social ministries will be unable to provide or organize the type of quality services in health and education expected by the population. Weak armies will finally be tempted by coups.

While the financial and technical aspects of modernizing state institutions may be tricky, the core issue is political will. Cronyism is incompatible with modern, efficient state institutions. Change will be resisted by existing political forces but is likely to be forced upon them by the magnitude of inefficiencies and strong demand from a more educated population. Information technology has already transformed most of the world into a village. In the next forty years, the present mismanagement of state institutions will no longer be tolerated. A specific issue in these countries will be the reform of the security sector. Along with access to food, water and shelter, security is by far the first request of populations regularly confronted with looting, kidnapping, assaults, rape and murder. In this context, modernizing key sovereign institutions including the police, the local justice system, the prison system, local government and civil administration, and finally the army, is badly needed. These are not small undertakings.

The international political challenge in category 4 countries: support and nurture internal agents of change

Category 4 countries suffering from deep governance issues and non-inclusive political systems will soon become regional problems. This will obviously challenge the principle of non interference in other countries' internal affairs which has been at the core of international law since the 17th century. Since outright military intervention is ruled out for political and ethical reasons and unlikely to help much in this respect, regional and continent wide institutions such as ECOWAS, SADC or the AU will have to use soft power to press for change in these countries. The strategy followed by the Soros fFoundation in Eastern Europe to support local civil society organisations, local universities, and think tanks might provide interesting experiences for consideration. Development of pan-African media along the lines of the Al Jazeera model would also help disseminate common values across borders. Specific African strategies should be devised by Africans to avoid clumsy interference of European or U.S. actors.

The challenge will be to create a continent-wide environment where non-inclusive political systems will be denounced and misbehaviour in governance will be systematically and internationally reported. While in the past, corrupt African dictators supported each other just as royal families supported each other in the aftermath of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 Europe, expansion of democracy in Africa is expected to produce a regional environment hostile to both dictatorship and gross misbehaviour in governance. The European construction should

in this regard be considered as a possible model where a mix of peer pressure, public opinion pressure and political sanctions have up to now succeeded in destabilising attempts at restoring dictatorial regimes. The pressure of international bodies, including a more aggressive stance of the IMF regarding transparency in oil and mining contracts and revenues and to support initiatives such as the EITI and the Natural Resource Charter would greatly help. The attitude of China will be critical, and the hope is that it will progressively adopt more responsible behaviour which should meet its long-term interests in the African continent.

The complex global challenge of reconstructing failed or collapsed category 5 states

There are neither quick fixes nor common rules to reconstruct failed or collapsed states, and each case is specific. However, benign neglect from regional institutions and the international community is not an option. The Mali case tends to show that some type of regional and/or international military intervention based on ad hoc alliances may be necessary, taking into account that, beyond military action, in each case success is linked to a proper build-up of a new political consensus and the construction of a modern and efficient state apparatus.

The weakness of many UN peacekeeping missions, as illustrated by the recent fiasco of Monusco in the Kivu when confronted by the M23 rebellion, should be seriously addressed. This requires clearer and more aggressive rules of engagement and a greater focus on effective military capacity. Permanent “stand by” African military forces will have to be established under an African Union umbrella in order to confront the type of threat that caused the collapse of Mali. Logistics and air support will have to be provided for some time by external powers. Finally, there is much to learn regarding state building from the mistakes made in Afghanistan (Michailof 2010a; Michailof 2010b), where the efforts to reconstruct a proper state apparatus did not start seriously before 2008, i.e., much too late given the deterioration in overall security.

Is building efficient state institutions a Sisyphean task in fragile states?

Out of the previous typology and associated agenda for action, it is easy to highlight that despite their diversity, all “fragile” countries are confronted with common challenges. Some challenges have long been identified, such as the urgent need to provide jobs and the governance problem. This section will focus on a specific and complex issue: how to build “modern,” efficient state institutions, including modern efficient sovereign institutions to reassert control over uncontrolled territory. This is a crucial starting point which will, in turn, facilitate other tasks: With efficient state institutions, sound policies will be easier to define and implement, talents and resources will be easier to attract and fragile countries can decisively move out of their fragile situation.

Building efficient state institutions is a difficult and controversial issue, but an issue on which an energetic government can act. It is a difficult subject because we cannot just “engineer” institutions according to a standard blueprint as Brian Levy (2012) has reminded us, referring to North, Wallis and Weingast (2009).

According to the 2011 World Development Report, creating legitimate and efficient institutions in fragile states is by necessity a very long (15-30 year) process. Should fragile countries wait for the slow “natural” build-up of efficient institutions that the emergence of an ideal democracy may require? This article argues that they should not.

First, though based upon accurate global historical data, such assessments send a desperate message to fragile African states that cannot afford to lose another generation. Although a society cannot jump overnight from highly-personalized institutions to impersonalized rule-based institutions, slow incremental changes will not do the trick in this time-constrained continent confronted with so many challenges. If DRC has to wait 30 years to reach a Ghanaian level of bureaucratic quality and overall government effectiveness, DRC is unlikely to still be a country in 2050. It is likely to either be a number of different independent countries just exiting a long drawn-out civil war or a zone of chaos like today's Somalia. In most fragile countries, the demographic pressure would be too high for them not to unravel, unless more drastic and quicker action is taken.

Second, the 2011 WDR does not fully take into account a number of successful experiences in other fragile and mismanaged countries. These experiments demonstrate that setting up either some modern "island type" efficient institutions along the Afghan model or a core effective bureaucracy as was done in Albania is feasible in very short time spans (3-5 years). Success in this area requires of course a "sound approach" based upon a good understanding of technical constraints. It all begins, however, with politics and the absolute need to aggressively eradicate the "politics of the belly" and its associated cronyism.

From innovative technical approaches to politically clever strategies

Innovative approaches are first needed at a technical level to either transform dilapidated state institutions into modern efficient organizations or to build them from scratch. A paradox and a crucial problem is that the way donors behave in fragile countries is often an obstacle to implementing this approach. Confronted with short-term objectives imposed upon them by their political authorities, terrified by the risks of corruption and/or blatant failure and discouraged by the prospect of seriously addressing the cause of state institution inefficiencies, donors generally bypass existing state institutions to establish ad hoc structures such as project implementation units (PIUs). By carefully selecting their personnel and providing them with attractive salaries, they meet their disbursement targets and implement "their" projects. Thanks to this standard and prudent approach adopted since the mid 1960s, if everything goes well, donors usually reach their project objectives.

However, by doing so, they also give the kiss of death to existing state institutions and significantly aggravate state weakness and fragility. In the most fragile countries that benefit from high aid levels (and outside Africa, Afghanistan and Cambodia are typical examples), the number of personnel employed by donors in such PIUs or similar schemes exceeds 100,000, i.e. a multiple of the number of technical and managerial staff present in the whole state apparatus. By providing highly attractive salaries which may represent multiples (from 4 to 20) of existing civil service salaries, they bring chaos into the labor market and attract the most qualified personnel who rush from state institutions to PIUs to get higher pay.

This situation sometimes reaches a point where PIUs need to be established within the state apparatus to avoid its complete collapse and even ministers, who wish to benefit from higher

wages, are paid by PIUs.¹⁰ Donors collectively fund what is usually called a “second” or “parallel civil service.” But this approach is usually purely project-oriented and does not allow for an orderly buildup of lasting institutional capacity. The corresponding projects have a short lifespan and technical teams are regularly disbanded. By draining the most competent staff out of the state apparatus, they contribute to its deep weakness, thus again justifying the need to use PIUs to get any meaningful results. Unless foreign donors continue funding it, this second civil service in Afghanistan will collapse sometime between 2014 and 2016, leaving the country almost as weak as it was in 2002. Unless this vicious circle is deliberately broken in fragile African states they will remain as weak as present day Afghanistan.

There is, however, much to learn in this respect from a different experience in Afghanistan, namely building from scratch a small number of highly efficient state institutions¹¹ between 2002 and 2007. The best example is the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) under the leadership of an energetic minister, Anif Atmar. Atmar’s recipe was fairly simple but somewhat revolutionary in Afghanistan. He asked a consulting firm to help him clarify his ministry’s objectives and define the needed organizational structure, staffing needs, and technical and managerial requirements. On that basis, he secured donor funding, and instead of filling positions with friends and ethnic chums he set up a transparent recruiting process to select on a merit basis a team to help him establish the ministry and fill up the managerial and technical positions. To attract highly qualified staff, he deliberately bypassed the obsolete state salary structure, making good use of a pilot program aimed at rehabilitating state institutions by inter-alia introducing premiums to counterbalance the distorting impact of the PIUs salary structure. He established control and audit mechanisms to secure money flows and set up a modern human resource management system based on performance. He then immediately started field work. In three years, the results were astounding. By 2006, despite impassable roads and destroyed infrastructure, the institution was able to transparently manage 17,000 small grants provided to rural communities throughout this huge country. Despite donors’ fears, corruption was negligible.

The MRRD approach was not an isolated success, as during the same period a new Ministry of Finance, Central Bank and military intelligence apparatus were established along similar lines with the same success. Atmar’s approach summarizes very well the *key to success* at a technical level in establishing a modern efficient institution in a weak environment. These are based on the presence of an energetic leader, clear objectives and organizational structure, merit based recruitment, market based salary structures, severe control and auditing mechanisms and modern human resource management rules based on performance. This is not so simple in a fragile country where modern management rules based on merit and performance would contradict appointment systems based upon ethnic or political loyalty, and because transparency runs against rent-seeking mechanisms. In fact, strong internal forces systematically tend to oppose such modernization processes. Therefore, the implementation of such an

¹⁰ Use of technical assistance is also a requirement in such contexts to alleviate extreme inefficiencies. Cost of such TA which may reach in some countries up to 30 % of ODA leads to a financial and political dead end.

¹¹ Due to the extremely dilapidated state of existing Afghan institutions in 2002 after 20 years of war and several years of Taliban rule.

approach beyond a few isolated experiments requires both the full backing of the highest political authorities and a clever strategy.

A “clever” strategy is needed to go beyond isolated experiments

The requirements to implement this “technically-sound approach” show that applying such principles at the level of the whole state apparatus would be too great a challenge. Fragile countries are unlikely to be able to simultaneously mobilize 40 or 50 energetic ministers and heads of parastatals with the needed charisma and managerial ability. Even if such talents were available they would just be an assembly of technocratic talent and would not represent the existing local political forces. Even in today’s Italy there have been limits to the duration of a technocratic government whatever its merits. In addition, mobilizing 50 consulting firms to support such process would be extremely costly and a managerial nightmare. The brutal alignment of government salaries with market salaries would jeopardize macro balances. The process of permanent trial and experiment in human resource management would finally be unmanageable at a government-wide level.

A preliminary conclusion is that the idea of a “big bang” government-wide administrative shakeup is a non-starter and doomed to fail. It is indeed already a challenge to build a modern merit-based institution in a dysfunctional patrimonial society. It would be utopian to believe that this is feasible at the level of a whole government.¹² At the same time, building 3 or 4 islands of isolated effectiveness as was done in Afghanistan is not enough, as they collectively will not significantly affect overall government effectiveness and are unable to support each other in the inevitable fight against cronyism. Hence a step-by-step approach is likely to be needed to first build a critical mass of key modern merit-based state institutions able to support each other both technically and politically. Building on their successes, this approach should then progressively expand within government.

A “sound technical approach” at the level of each institution thus needs to be accompanied by a “politically clever” approach at a country level. The presence, for instance, of a technocratic prime minister as in DRC today or in Albania in 1998 does not change internal political equilibriums based upon fragile tribal and ethnic balance of power and complex rent-sharing agreements. A “politically clever” approach will require that, first, a small group of state institutions be “modernized”. But these institutions should not be isolated islands of administrative effectiveness swamped in an ocean of corruption, cronyism and inefficiency such as in Afghanistan in the mid-2000s, but rather constitute a “critical mass” of administrative effectiveness within the state apparatus and be part of a coherent plan to expand the state. Key sovereign institutions should be targeted first (Ministry of Finance, police, local justice) as well as critical technical ministries (such as infrastructure, transport and agriculture). Their success will be linked to the potential “explosive” increase in effectiveness following a proper modernization process just as demonstrated by the success of the MDDR in Afghanistan. Success will allow them to grow beyond isolated technocratic experiments and progressively expand to most, if not all, state institutions.

¹² An exception may be Georgia in the early 2000s in an exceptional political context.

It is, however, important to underline that a precondition to success in implementing such a politically “clever” strategy is getting the full backing of the highest political authorities. This remains an unresolved issue in Afghanistan, where the president never really understood the importance of this challenge and balked at the idea of removing key political power players, usually former warlords, from key ministerial positions in order to expand the “MMRD approach.” Heads of state need to understand that cronyism is a major source of inefficiency leading to instability and fragility. They must understand that it may well be in their long-term interest to accept the short-term political cost entailed by launching such major reforms (need to sacrifice useful political allies, need to manage during an interim period a two-speed civil service and institutional system) with the clear long-term associated benefits: strengthening the state apparatus, meeting peoples’ needs and moving out of fragility. This approach offers a way out of fragility; perhaps the only fast way out.¹³ The key message here is: “fix the flawed institutions, development and stability will follow.”

An “explosive” improvement in state institutions’ efficiency is possible and can take place in a very short time span, as illustrated by the recent Rwandan experience. Otherwise, small Rwanda would not today be threatening big DRC. Without such drastic changes in state institutions’ efficiency, many African countries will be unable to meet the upcoming tensions, stresses and shocks. Only reconstructed or strengthened state institutions will be able to implement the needed agenda to eradicate slums, fix the business environment and launch the type of job creating industrial development that is needed for these countries’ stability. Only such modern merit-based, efficient state institutions will be able to rehabilitate collapsing traditional agriculture and restore security in grey areas. Even more importantly, only such reforms will be able to mobilize the gigantic pool of talent available but presently unused in the continent. *Fix the faulty politics and the flawed institutions, development and stability will follow, and fragility will largely be a relic of the past.*

Many pressures are likely to force change upon most African states

There is no determinism in history. One thing, however, is fairly clear: There are too many unmet challenges for fragile countries to maintain their apparent stability for much longer. They are on a razor’s edge. Unless they change track, their elites are just as doomed. But these elites are neither blind nor deaf. They are already taking note. Like Mali’s neighbors, they know that unless they upgrade their dilapidated state institutions and fix their faulty politics, new leaders will move in. These new leaders will soon be confronted with the same dilemma. They will either follow the line of least resistance until their countries fall into a downward spiral and end up like today’s Mali, or they will decide to lead the type of reform and institutional development which triggered an “explosive” increase in government effectiveness in Rwanda.

Other factors will come into play. First, fast growth in successful stable “convergent” neighbors will offer attractive African models, just as the success of post-war Japan helped determine the Asian dragons’ own models. Second, the collapse of unsuccessful neighbors will lead many to

¹³ An alternative being trying to improve institutional efficiency by working on some critical functions such as “finance” or “personnel” simultaneously in a large number of state institutions. This approach, usually preferred by donors as it raises less problems at a political level (the need to change corrupt leaders is less acute), quickly runs into major obstacles since it is almost impossible to drastically improve an institution’s efficiency by just improving bits and pieces of it.

ponder what has gone wrong in their own backyard. Elites in the Sahel are already wondering about the incredible speed of the Malian collapse. Most have made a correct diagnosis based on faulty politics, cronyism, dilapidated state institutions and high-level corruption. Neighboring leaders are already aware that unless they quickly fix major weaknesses in their sovereign institutions (army, rural police and local administration) they may follow the Mali model because the French army will not police the Sahel for long. Finally, economic growth at the regional level will also put significant pressure on regimes to reform. The private sector will have a greater say in politics and will require greater efficiency from state institutions. Even in oil and mining economies, a middle class will emerge and be more vocal about reform. Regional entities will add to internal pressures.

Will spontaneous changes in ruling elites' behavior when confronted with internal and external pressures lead to a major upgrading of their countries' state apparatus and allow these countries to move out of fragility? Or will state failure push new leaders to the forefront? Perhaps the quick upgrading of state institutions will trigger a whole wave of changes in terms of more inclusive growth and inclusive politics. This article argues against such incrementalism and is therefore quite optimistic about 2050: China did not move out of its disastrous Maoist era by incremental improvements to Maoism.

The fear factor is also an important element. Japan would never have modernized during the Meiji era without the fear of becoming an irrelevant US colony. Would South Korea and Taiwan have engaged in their accelerated modernization process without the threat of external aggression? The risks in Africa are essentially internal: unemployment, uncontrolled migration, riots, famines, security breakdowns and regime collapses. In this respect, the Mali collapse, by frightening its neighbors, may bring wisdom.

Countries seldom reform without strong reasons and pressures. Post-Idi Amin Uganda needed to be in the worst conditions for Museveni to take over and engage in a thorough reform program. Professor Botchwey once remarked that Ghanaian elites in 1983 had to fear being forced to eat the roadside grass in order to accept reforms. As Toynbee once predicted, in order to progress, civilizations need challenges; but excessive challenges may destroy them. The fragile African states are confronted with big challenges. Will they be able to rise to such challenges? Or will the excessive magnitude of these challenges just swamp them? History will tell. But clearly, the line of least resistance will quickly lead them to an impasse and the action agenda based on the urgent need to fix faulty politics and drastically improve the performance of their state apparatus is clear.

Conclusion: Is Moving Decisively out of Fragility and Conflict a Dream for Africa in 2050?

Alternative scenarios are unacceptable

All alternative scenarios leading to increased instability among the most fragile of its 54 states and its population of two billion are simply unacceptable for Africa. In 2050, a continent that had long been perceived as hopeless, marred by permanent instability, coups and civil wars,

needs to be a haven of peace and stability, far from the constant European bickering, the Central Asian and Middle Eastern conflicts, and the Asian geopolitical tensions.

Let's imagine Africa by 2050 if the right policy decisions are made over the coming decades:

Thanks to significantly improved governance and an overhaul of its dysfunctional state institutions, Africa has taken full benefit of its immense mineral and energy resources to meet the local and international emerging markets' needs. Sound macroeconomic management has allowed most countries to master Dutch disease and transform their natural resource bonanza into human capital and efficient infrastructure. Harnessing the huge potential of its fast-growing cities, the continent has progressively become integrated into global value chains and replaced China as the world factory, thus providing jobs to most of its fast-growing youth population. It has made the best use of the productive potential of its small farmers by mobilizing its water resources and developing its rural infrastructure, and it has largely mitigated the agricultural impact of global warming thanks to genetically-modified cultivars. Having become a major player in the global food market, thanks to modern, export-oriented farming systems, it is now contributing to addressing the global food tensions triggered by fast-shifting world consumption patterns and growing land scarcity.

Beyond dreams and well wishes, a clear and feasible three pillar agenda

Remaining inequalities between landlocked resource-poor countries and fast-growing coastal growth poles are deftly handled thanks to regional integration, migration of skilled labor, resource transfers and the rapid development of a high-tech service sector. Once threatened by fast development, Africa's forests and biodiversity have been safeguarded by sound environmental policies and management practices. Regional security arrangements enforce peace and common norms regarding inclusive politics, respect of minority rights, and systematic checks and balances. Failed states such as Somalia have recovered their unity thanks to a mix of successful regional mediations and African military interventions. Criminal networks have been dismantled. The last surviving warlords are in prison in the Hague. Fragile institutions based on a neo-patrimonial logic and feeding corruption networks have long ago been replaced by accountable modern, merit-based organizations. A remaining unresolved problem is how to stem the flow of illegal immigrants from a stagnant Europe attracted by the job opportunities offered by fast-growing African metropolises. The path to convergence has however not been an easy one. Difficult issues had to be forcefully addressed, and an extremely ambitious agenda had to be implemented based on three main pillars:

- (i) Strengthening, or even building from scratch, fragile and conflict-affected states,
- (ii) Diversifying fragile economies and providing jobs to a fast-growing youth population,
- (iii) Addressing the specific plight of resource-poor landlocked countries.

1) Strengthening fragile and conflict affected states

A first critical issue in fragile and conflict affected countries has been to address the "politics of the belly" where "big men" used to feed their clientele thanks to elaborate corruption networks that penetrated all state institutions and rendered them dramatically inefficient. A new generation of technocrats has progressively taken over the levers of power in most fragile and

conflict-affected countries. Deliberately moving out of neo-patrimonialism, this new generation of African leaders began developing successful merit-based state organizations, starting with the critical state institutions providing law and order. Refusing the lessons of history, which supposedly required generations to seriously improve state institutions in emerging economies, they devised short cuts to drastically improve their performance. The progressive emergence of modern state apparatuses and the first positive economic results brought by restoring security facilitated an acceleration of such processes as the most fragile countries, often competing regionally for influence, could not afford to be left behind.

In parallel, this new generation of African leaders realized that security needs required moving towards more inclusive political and economic systems despite long ethnic rivalries and suspicions. Restoring broad security and justice also required limiting the power of the state and progressively introducing proper checks and balances as well as adequate transparency in formerly autocratic and opaque political systems. Macroeconomic and fiscal stability brought political support to the new elites. Improved transparency in natural resources income and overall growth provided the resources to restore state presence and authority over previously uncontrolled territory and provide basic services even in remote areas transformed mining and oil wealth into human capital and better infrastructure, thus reinforcing a virtuous circle. Transparency in the management of natural resources also fostered a greater sense of fairness among the population and allowed old grievances to die out.

Complex regional security issues had to be addressed, which required devising pragmatic responses to cross-border problems and practical approaches to the management of security and conflict at regional levels. Common norms regarding inclusive politics and political legitimacy were progressively enforced at regional levels, mostly through peer pressure. However, regional security arrangements had to be established and backed by continent-wide commitments and African standby security forces. Restoration of state authority allowed for dismantling the main criminal networks and the internationally-connected criminal economy. But the last complex challenges still insufficiently addressed in 2050 are implementing the vast ambition of transforming multiethnic societies sometimes fragmented along religious fault lines into cohesive nations with common purposes and visions.

2) Diversifying economies to meet the jobs challenge

Providing jobs to a fast-growing urban population has been a huge challenge, facilitated by internal migration and the transformation of the large coastal cities into international growth poles connected to international financial and industrial centers. Thanks to considerable improvement in the business environment, transport and energy bottlenecks were progressively addressed through public-private partnerships with international private sector involvement. Progressively, as costs of production in China and India became uncompetitive for a wide range of products, the large African port cities became integrated into the vast world industrial value chains, and technological short cuts allowed the development of a vibrant service sector making the best of IT technology.

Fast development of slums is still an issue due to demography and migration, despite considerable improvements in urban planning and management. Managing the disappointments and frustrations of the remaining unemployed youths is temporarily addressed through public works and social transfers. Adapting education systems to fast-evolving job requirements is also challenging. Mounting inequality between rural and urban areas is forcing governments to devote more resources to rural development.

While political risks to regimes were usually located in the capital cities, the wide dissemination of cheap light weapons has been a source of constant concern in poorly-controlled rural areas where common land disputes easily turned into full scale armed clashes. In such places characterized by instability and insecurity, providing hope and stability in rural areas has been a key challenge. Development of modern export-based agriculture has been a first answer, even though production of traditional export commodities relying on poorly paid labor did not meet the expectations of the younger generations.

Huge investments in rural roads and marketing facilities and in telecommunications and the dissemination of cheap motorized transportation using mostly Chinese technology allowed a “reconnection” of urban centers, first with their hinterlands and later with more remote and forgotten regions. Finally, general access to market-based agriculture, small and large-scale irrigation, electricity and safe water, as well as basic health and education services in the remotest locations allowed states to administer their periphery and control their borders.

Global warming has unfortunately increased environmental risks in many regions and definitely put the green agenda at the forefront. New, modern, environmentally-friendly forestry management practices tested in Central Africa at the beginning of the century have been systematized. Local populations have been sensitized to the importance of protecting biodiversity and now make a living out of it thanks to rapid development of both ecotourism and game ranching. Genetically modified cultivars provide a temporary response to increased periods of drought and new pest infections. Protecting fragile lands and fighting desertification are still a serious issue.

3) Addressing the specific plight of resource poor landlocked countries

Addressing the plight of resource-poor landlocked countries confronted with a fragile agriculture, global warming, lack of jobs and a huge demographic shock is still a concern in 2050. Making the best of marginal agriculture has required huge investments in land improvement and rainwater management, in agricultural research, as well as in the systematic search for alternative rural incomes. Fortunately, in the main cities, a vibrant modern IT-based export service sector has developed, but as in India in the 2010s, it provides too few jobs. A better integration of such landlocked countries with coastal urban growth poles is needed but resented by coastal populations already struggling with urban proliferation made more unstable by increasing energy and urban transport costs. Specific training programs have been developed to upgrade the technical skills of migrants and adapt them to the demands of foreign affluent economies, following the Philippine model.

African medical doctors and surgeons are now common in most of aging Europe. Remittances from these skilled migrants are critical to fund a vibrant service sector fully integrated with world business centers. Resource transfers are also coming from affluent emerging African countries to these landlocked regions, a new sense of common interest in regional stability taking precedence over charity. Managing Dutch disease in order to maintain agricultural competitiveness is still problematic. Addressing the demographic challenge is also a problem despite much progress in girls' education. But formerly fragile Africa is now clearly out of the area of risk.

This is not a dream. It is just an agenda for action...

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