

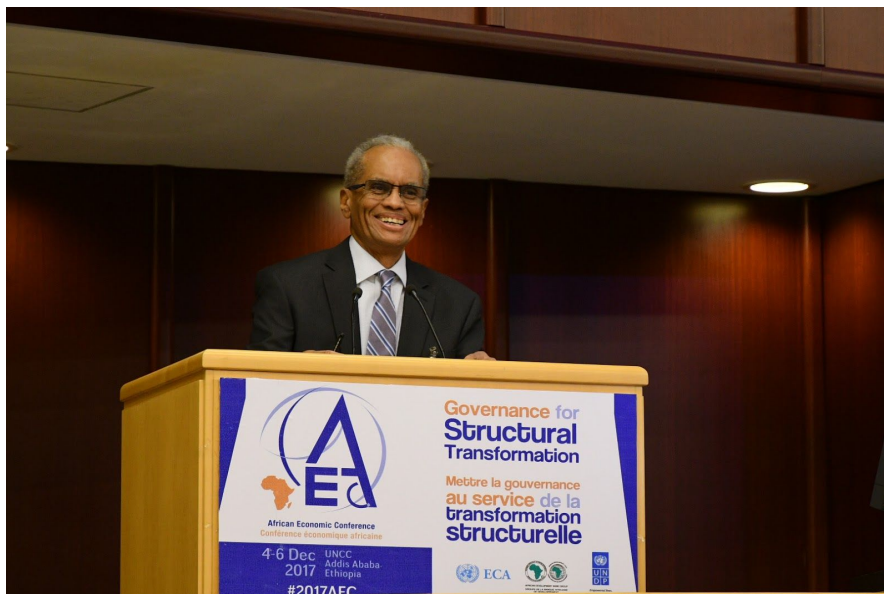
# **Governance for Structural Transformation in Africa: Leadership and Partnership Opportunities**



**By Richard Joseph**

**Plenary Address to the African Economic Conference of the African  
Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa  
Addis Ababa, December 4-6, 2017**

Thank you for inviting me to deliver the plenary address at this important conference.<sup>1</sup> In one month, January 2018, I will celebrate the 50th anniversary of my involvement in the study of Africa. It is an odyssey that has taken me to many parts of the continent and enabled me to confront many of its concerns. I speak as an American citizen during a period when many of our political, civic, and socio-economic gains are threatened. I also speak as a former colonial subject in Trinidad and Tobago who emigrated almost 60 years ago to the United States.



*Professor Joseph speaking at the African Economic Conference of the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, December 4, 2017.*

I will mention a few events relevant to this address: October 1988, when the African Governance Program was formed under my direction at The Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia; October 2006, when I delivered my inaugural address as the John Evans Professor of Northwestern University on the topic “Misgovernance and the African Predicament: Can the Code be Broken?”<sup>2</sup>; and February 2016, when I delivered the guest lecture at the

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<sup>1</sup> Delivered at the African Economic Conference of the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, December 4-6, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> It was also delivered as the inaugural Faculty Distinguished Lecture of the Social Sciences Faculty of the University of Ibadan, November 2006.

inaugural conference of the Ibadan School of Government and Public Policy (ISGPP) in Nigeria on the topic “State, Governance, and Democratic Development in Africa.”

I will quote an early remark in the latest of these lectures:

*Improving governance is recognized as a priority concern of all societies. It is more the case today because of heightened economic competition and increased risks posed by the mismanagement of government revenues. A focus on governance includes government authorities as well as those outside the state sphere. Governance concerns how public goals are established, how they are pursued, and how the power to accomplish them is acquired, utilized, and held accountable. The bundle of these practices - and the norms that frame them - are what we call institutions.*

I agree with Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, when he notes that “poor governance and lack of public accountability have always been among the main causes hindering Africa’s structural transformation.” Governance and misgovernance have been at the forefront of my reflections on Africa, especially since I elaborated the concept of prebendalism in 1978-79 in response to the debilitating political practices I witnessed in Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> Four decades later, we still wrestle with the contradiction between prebendalism as a mode of accessing revenues through capturing government offices and building institutional and developmental capacity. During this period of flux and uncertainty, bold policy initiatives should emerge from Africa to confront these and other persistent challenges. We need a new wave of policy analyses and prescriptions grounded in African realities. This conference, and its central themes, are therefore extremely timely.

After observing the funeral of the late President Quett Masire of Botswana in June 2017, a former student of mine, Professor Amy Poteete of

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<sup>3</sup> *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (Cambridge University Press, 1987/2014; Spectrum Books, Nigeria, 1991).

Concordia University, Canada, wrote me: “It felt like the end of an era.” This era began with the liberalizing and liberation movements of the 1980s and the ending of the Cold War. It led to Western triumphalism regarding the prospects for liberal democracy and the unfettered expansion of capitalism. In recent years, however, world affairs have grown more complicated. No system of government, or economic philosophy, predominates. The “liberal international order” and its political and economic ramifications are increasingly contested.

Three decades ago, economic stagnation in Africa contributed to the imposition of the Washington Consensus of reduced state economic management and pervasive marketization. What Nicolas van de Walle of Cornell University called “partial reform syndromes” resulted in political economies that were semi-liberalized versions of former patrimonial autocracies.<sup>4</sup> The Singapore industrial policy model, energetically implemented by a rising China, has altered the global calculus. In recent years, moreover, as Western post-Cold War triumphalism has ebbed, security concerns have grown.

The Great Recession of 2008-2009 forced many European nations into a decade-long search to reverse declines in employment and social equity. During the past two years, Brexit, the American presidential election, large emigration waves from the Middle East and Northern Africa, and burgeoning nativist movements have undermined the coherence and confidence of the Western bloc of nations.

For Africa, there is no bright policy light shining from abroad. While several large and mid-level powers compete for influence in Africa, none is currently able to impose its political and economic preferences. Apart from securing access to natural resources and pursuing trade and investment opportunities, their efforts usually aim at protecting religious affiliates,

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<sup>4</sup> *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

strengthening transborder security operations, stemming illicit emigration, and snuffing out nurseries of violent extremism.

How, we must ask, can African countries advance politically and economically in this uncertain environment? Are there windows of opportunity for African organizations and their external partners to provide dynamic leadership despite the head- and cross-winds? I will identify several key opportunities and challenges: first, sharply reducing warfare; second, promoting institutional efficiency; third, enhancing electoral integrity; fourth, scaling back corruption; fifth, protecting the environment; sixth, guaranteeing basic incomes; and seventh, widening access to knowledge. This cluster of commitments is encapsulated by the rubric “Life More Abundant,” a mantra of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria.

## ***I. Reducing Warfare***

Too many Africans are dying in conflicts large and small. We must use known mechanisms and devise new ones to reduce warfare. I first traveled to Sudan to join the University of Khartoum as a lecturer in 1974, during the pause in the north-south civil war following the Addis Ababa agreement. In addition, I first came to Ethiopia in 1989 with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter on peacemaking missions. Many trips were made to Liberia in the early 1990s to try and end that grinding and largely pointless war.



Professor Joseph, Hon. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and Dr. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

In too many parts of the continent today, lives and livelihoods are cut short by war. What can be done? One suggestion is the need for new approaches to governing Africa's conglomerate nations. Diverse peoples were thrown together within imperial and colonial boundaries. Secession, as Eritrea and South Sudan have demonstrated, is not a panacea. In many countries, there is a need to reconfigure political systems. In my current internet volume, *The Nigerian Crucible: Politics and Governance in a Conglomerate Nation*,<sup>5</sup> I am drawing insights from 40 years of study and reflection on the governing of one of Africa's most diverse nations. These insights can be applied to other plural nations in Africa.

## **II. Promoting Institutional Efficiency**

In my Ibadan lecture of February 2016, I posed the question: "Why can Nigerians build and operate mega-churches but not quality public transport, public universities, public energy utilities, and other service organizations?" As a consequence of extensive involvement in Nigeria over four decades, I am aware of the widening gap in institutional efficiency between countries with optimizing cultures and those in which they steadily diminish. The

<sup>5</sup>[https://arch.library.northwestern.edu/collections/rb68xb902?utf8=%E2%9C%93&sort=system\\_create\\_dts\\_i+asc&per\\_page=20](https://arch.library.northwestern.edu/collections/rb68xb902?utf8=%E2%9C%93&sort=system_create_dts_i+asc&per_page=20)

issue is perhaps more nuanced because of the variance in such cultures and social structures within particular countries. Knowledge bases, inside and outside Africa, can be tapped in search of answers to two fundamental questions: What has been learned about building sustainable institutional capacity for development? Second, how can this learning be transmitted and become transformative in specific country contexts?

### **III. *Enhancing Electoral Integrity***

The global crisis of democracy, following scholar Larry Diamond, requires responses pertinent to each world region. I referred a few years ago to “eddies,” rather than waves, of democratic advances and retreat.<sup>6</sup> Today, with regard to democratic governance, no specific institutional construct can be forced on the continent. In fact, there is wide institutional variance among established democracies, and even between their central and subnational entities.<sup>7</sup> Virtually all African countries today conduct regular elections, but only a handful of these exercises are fairly and reliably conducted. It was a former official of the East Africa Commission who brought my attention to the negative economic consequences of violence and insecurity now unfortunately associated with competitive elections.

The recent electoral disputes in Kenya reflect these dilemmas. If a nation of the size and complexity of India can conduct fair and efficient elections with minimal violence, surely African countries ranging from 1-10% of its population can do likewise. We have to steadily increase the number of African countries that emulate Ghana’s transition to conducting free, fair,

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<sup>6</sup> “Democracy and Reconfigured Power in Africa,” *Current History* (November 2011). On the crisis of democracy see Larry Diamond, “The Democratic Rollback: The Resurgence of the Predatory State,” *Foreign Affairs* (March, 2008); and “Promoting Democracy: Enduring Tensions and New Opportunities,” in *The Search for Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Jacqueline Behrend and Laurence Whitehead, “The Struggle for Subnational Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 27, no.2 (April 2016)

and legitimate elections. Electoral integrity is fundamental to democratic construction in Africa.<sup>8</sup>

#### **IV. *Scaling Back Corruption***

Paralleling the crisis of democracy is the crisis of corruption. The Panama and Paradise Papers provide extensive information about what has long been known in policy and scholarly circles. The balance has tipped significantly with the use of offshore havens and other wealth-concealing practices to deprive nations of the resources needed to generate jobs and improve livelihoods. This observation applies also to business corporations and affluent individuals in my own and other western countries.<sup>9</sup>

Innovative mechanisms should be designed to re-channel illicit capital flows to meet the daunting challenges on the continent.<sup>10</sup> There are increased efforts underway to track these illicit flows and the properties and shell companies in which they are lodged. Their recapturing and re-investment in Africa could increase significantly the stock of development finance. The work being done by intrepid organizations in this regard can be multiplied greatly to stem the outflow of public revenues and return those lodged abroad.

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<sup>8</sup> On the achievements of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the leadership of Prof. Attahiru Jega between 2010 and 2015, see <https://arch.library.northwestern.edu/downloads/2v23vt41x?lolimpsecale=en>.

<sup>9</sup> Revelations of the lattice of bank accounts and dummy corporations used by Paul Manafort of the U.S., former agent for many governments, provide a glimpse into these practices.

<sup>10</sup> Alexandra Gillies of the Natural Resource Governance Institute of the Open Society Foundation is writing a book on the misuse of revenues from extractive industries. It will add significantly to our understanding of these processes.





*Protesters attend a demonstration organised by The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in Johannesburg, South Africa, September 27, 2017. (Photo courtesy of REUTERS/Siphiwe Sibeko)*

## **V. Protecting the Environment**

Two significant windows of opportunity for African innovation concern Climate Change and Renewable Energy. It is well known how vulnerable African countries are to climate change, desertification, ocean warming, and rising sea levels.<sup>11</sup> We are also aware of the dire consequences in the form of shrinking livelihoods, the exacerbation of group conflict, and the increase of catastrophic disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and forest fires. Solar power, hydropower, and natural gas are clean energy sources abundantly available and under-exploited in Africa. The transformative potential of these resources can alter the energy profile of the continent, accelerate electrification, and reverse environmental degradation. During this period - when climate change and renewable energy are treated as political footballs in global conferences - Africa, with its vast land mass,

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<sup>11</sup> In this regard, see the remarkable video on environmental decay in Nigeria, “Nowhere to Run,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zuRMxaCrvQ>. In a February 2018 talk, “Environmental and Political Activism in Africa,” I expanded on these arguments: [https://arch.library.northwestern.edu/catalog?locale=en&per\\_page=100&format=html&search\\_field=all\\_files&q=environmental+and+political+activism](https://arch.library.northwestern.edu/catalog?locale=en&per_page=100&format=html&search_field=all_files&q=environmental+and+political+activism).

powerful rivers, extensive shore lines, abundant natural gas, and copious other minerals, should amplify its voice and achievements in this critical domain.

## **VI. *Guaranteeing Basic Incomes***

There was a time when labor in many societies was tied to satisfying basic needs, whether through hunting, gathering, fishing, or cultivating. We are in a period of rapid transition in this regard as a consequence of globalization and automation. A gap is growing between labor demands and the acquisition of income to meet fundamental needs. Even in my own country, the United States, many working families cannot satisfy such needs and spiral into unsustainable debt.

Population growth in many African countries continues to exceed income revenues. Out-migration in such circumstances becomes an option, despite the appalling risks. Digital payment systems and digital cash make it increasingly possible to provide income subsidies directly to families. Along with overcoming operational hurdles that have undermined public services in health, water, lodging, transport, and education, a key intellectual hurdle must steadily be overcome in Africa and elsewhere. It is the recognition that a larger proportion of national revenues from a variety of sources should incrementally flow directly to the citizens of African and other countries.<sup>12</sup> There is increasing awareness, for example, of the important benefits to families and communities in Africa and other regions of remittances from the diaspora. Basic income strategies through informal networks are therefore not new. They can constitute a larger part of the global aid system and national endeavors.

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<sup>12</sup> See Larry Diamond and Jack Mosbacher, "Petroleum to the People," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2013).

## VII. *Widening Access to Knowledge*

Much of what we learn can be transmitted to others, but how widely? I have sought to transmit much that I have learned, especially about Africa, over a half-century. My study of Cameroon's anti-colonial struggle was expertly translated into French and thus made more widely accessible.<sup>13</sup> Although initially banned, my second book on Cameroon has reached a wide readership.<sup>14</sup> My book on Nigeria was made available locally a few years after its publication in a paperback edition.<sup>15</sup>

Too much knowledge generated about Africa, however - even by African scholars and writers - is not easily accessible. In view of the explosion of fake news and reports, we have to accelerate making verifiable studies and documentation more widely available. I therefore salute the important Open Access repository, Arch Library, created at Northwestern University. Gaps in quality education and instruction can be filled by online learning. For anyone who moves between Africa and the developed world, it is disconcerting how wide the gaps are in access to books and scholarly articles.

I will conclude by mentioning what, together with my colleagues and students, is being done and the opportunities they represent for partnering with many of you present and with your organizations. Because of time limitations, details will be made available online. The time has come to consider establishing a Governance & Development Learning Network (GDLN).<sup>16</sup> While the primary focus will be Africa, the GDLN can draw on the

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<sup>13</sup> *Radical Nationalism in Cameroun: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion* (Oxford University Press, 1977); *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun: les origines sociales de l'UPC* (Karthala, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadu Ahidjo* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> Its re-issuance by Cambridge University Press in 2014 was certainly prompted by the determination of Nigerian scholars to bring its arguments and analysis to wider attention in their own country.

<sup>16</sup> A *Governance & Development Study Group* will begin at Northwestern in January 2018. Its deliberations center on the political configurations of particular African countries, examining how they arrived at their current impasse and what paths forward can be envisaged. The first three countries examined were Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon. The *Study Group* follows a "Forum Series on Democracy and Insecurity in Africa" conducted in Evanston and Chicago, Illinois in spring 2017. An

experiences of other regions. I am willing to work with colleagues in academia, policy making, and philanthropy - and many of the organizations represented at this conference - to explore this suggestion.

Thank You.

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archival project on "Peace and Security Initiatives, 1987-1997," took place in summer 2017. It focused on Carter Center engagements in a half-dozen African countries. This work, whose current focus country is Liberia, is being conceptualized as a *Freedom Gates Project*.