

African Politics and Policy

Newsletter
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Editorial

The events of past twelve months lead one to wonder whether we have reached a turning point in Africa's developmental history. The Ebola epidemics has taken a serious toll on the population and the economies Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, while increasing political instability and terror attacks are hurting the economy of Kenya. The fall in the oil price is expected to lead to wider deficits in oil-producing countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon, while food shortages may have a destabilizing impact in the Central African Republic. Djibouti may be destabilized by an uncontrolled inflow of Yemeni refugees, while South Africa is rocked by a wave of xenophobic attacks. The stabilization mission in Mali was recently the target of terrorist attacks, while violence and poverty are endemic in Somalia.

Epidemics, (poor) economic performance, food shortages, and terrorist attacks are all detrimental to the preservation of political order because they erode the legitimacy of the political system regardless of its level of institutionalization.

Sadly, in poorly institutionalized political systems, elections may sometimes pose a threat to the political order. In some cases, such as Togo, the opposition forces support the introduction of constitutional amendments to set term limits in office. In some cases, such as Burundi, term limits exist but the incumbent is not keen to respect them. In all cases, electoral results may be contested, may be used to question the worth of a political system, and may contribute to its destabilization. Even in Nigeria, where the elections went relatively smoothly, there are some concerns about the potentially destabilizing consequences of the electoral results (see Umar's article on page 2).

Instability has economic and developmental costs. The absence of political order prevents countries from securing sustainable growth and from achieving their developmental goals. If the wave of destabilization that is sweeping across the African continent is not stopped, the economic performance of African countries may not remain as dynamic as it has been in the previous decade.

Riccardo Pelizzo

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IN THE NEWS

The facilities of the UN Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) were the target of a terror attack. Mongi Hamdi, Head of MINUSMA, declared that "This attack will not deter MINUSMA in its mission to restore peace and security in Mali "

HEALTH

Since its outbreak, there have been 25826 cases of Ebola and 10704 casualties. The disease, that also made victims in Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain, the UK, and the USA, took a particularly heavy toll in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone that suffered respectively 2346, 4486 and 3857 casualties. From the week ending on March 29, there have not been new Ebola cases reported in Liberia, and the number of new cases reported in Guinea and Sierra Leone is lower than in previous months and constantly declining. In the absence of new cases Liberia will be declared Ebola-free in 25 days.

Nigeria and 2015 Presidential Election: An episode in African Politics

By Aminu Umar

An event occurred in African politics with the electoral victory of the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate Muhammadu Buhari (a former military) as president-elect of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; defeating the incumbent President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). President-elect Muhammadu Buhari's won the 2015 Nigeria presidential elections by a margin of 2, 571, 759 votes after securing a total of 15,424,921 against Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) 12,853,162 votes. The election originally slated for February was shifted to March 28th, 2015 on the excuse of security challenges of the Boko Haram insurgency. Muhammadu Buhari is the first candidate in Nigeria's history to successfully dislodge an incumbent head of state through elections, while President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan stands tall among African presidents in accepting defeat even before the formal declaration of election results. It was a hard-won victory, but uproar still lies ahead as the President-elect and other elected officials will only be officially inaugurated on May 29. Disturbingly, the ruling party has not signed the election result sheets and a few court cases still linger on the candidature of the president elect. The election was the first in Nigeria's history to attempt the use of an ICT-based instrument to curtail electoral fraud i.e. the use of the electronic data capture machine meant to accredit voters with a Permanent Voters Cards - PVC (electronic voter registration card). Geo-politically, President Goodluck swept the polls in the five South-East states and his South-South zone home base by 90 per cent, alongside a state (Ekiti) in the South-West of Nigeria, while Muhammadu Buhari swept the polls in the North East, North Central (with the exception of Plateau and Nassarawa), North West and South Western part of the country (lost Ekiti State marginally). The pattern of voting in the election may not be unconnected with the limiting of the political space by merger of numerous political parties into the opposition i.e. APC. It goes to show that the fewer the political parties in multi-ethnic and religious settings, the better for alli-

ance politics and issues based campaign. This is because the central issue that dominates the Nigeria presidential election revolves around government economic reform, unemployment, dwindling power supply amidst privatization of the power sector, infrastructural decay, corruption, insecurity, etc. Indeed, there were hitches in the electoral process/election, and there were also difficulties in the new technology and logistics. But, largely, the election can represented a major improvement over previous elections. Certainly, the use of the Permanent Voter Card and Card Reader Machine gives credibility to the election. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) deserves commendation as well for its matured conduct during the PDP agent embarrassing objection on the final coalition of the results in Abuja. So far, the European Union, African Union and ECOWAS international observer missions' have pronounced that the election is credible. The election has gone down as one of the most expensive elections in Africa, with billions of Naira (Nigerian currency)/Dollars sunk into the campaigns and election. Monetary inducement of voters was open, as were cases of violence and ballot box snatching. While there are allegations of vote-rigging in some states, alongside voter intimidation by security agents and manipulation of the coalition of result e.g. Rivers State, it appears that most Nigerians are comfortable with the election results. In this respect, the INEC should tidy up and ensure that the newly introduced card readers work flawlessly and address the problem of result sheets or collection of results in future elections. Generally, it appears that Nigerians are waking up to the reality that democracy is about the people and cannot thrive when majority of the electorate face serious development challenges amidst of abundant resources i.e. when public funds are expended without adequate answerability and accountability. The expectations of Nigerians on the President-elect is quite enormous, especially with regards to the fight against corruption. It is vital that the President-elect capitalizes on the overjoyed mood to push for change.



Tourism and Political Stability: the case of Kenya

Political instability, for instance, is known to affect, inflation, investment strategies, the level of foreign direct investments, the outcomes of foreign direct investments (Clark, 1997), and tourists' choices. Tourists tend to avoid destinations that are or are perceived to be plagued by high level of political instability.

The April 2 terrorist attacks, that resulted in the death of 148 students of the Garissa University College, are expected to deter tourists from coming to Kenya.

The number of tourists has dropped dramatically dropped over security concerns in the past three years.. The recent attacks may hurt the tourism industry even further and significantly undermine the potential for economic growth in the country.

RP

In the Press

Fall in oil prices: two sides of the coin for Africa

Right after the dramatic decline of the oil prices in the second half of 2014, Olivier Blanchard, the IMF Chief Economist, and Rabah Arezki, the head of the commodities team in the IMF's Research Department have asked and answered several questions about its impact on global economy. Looking at the effects of oil prices on Africa in particular, one can immediately identify the winners and the losers.

On the winning corner are the consumers, who will have access to cheaper energy. Just like the gain in the global economy (Blanchard and Arezki projects World GDP to be up by 0.3 to 0.7 per cent), most of the Sub-Saharan African countries will benefit from the declining cost of imports. The region's growth rate might go above 5 percent in 2015, up from 4.5 percent in 2014.

The relief from the burden of higher oil prices is not the only benefit for some African countries. Net oil-importers like Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda look more attractive destinations for international investors as well. Of course, the oil exporting economies, like Nigeria, experience the opposite effect and their stock markets are in decline.

According to estimates by the IMF, U.S. Energy Information Administration and the Wall Street Journal, the cost of oil imports will go down from 6.3 percent of GDP to 4.1 percent in Tanzania, from 6.2 percent to 4.1 percent in Mozambique, from 6.0 percent to 4.0 percent in Kenya and from 4.8 percent to 3.1 percent in South Africa. On the other hand, revenue for exporters will substantially go down: from 56.0 percent of GDP to 36.8 percent in Angola, from 15.7 percent to 10.3 percent in Nigeria, from 78.1 percent to 51.3 percent in Republic of Congo, from 73.3 percent to 48.1 percent in Equatorial Guinea, and from 45.9 percent to 30.2 percent in Gabon.

Oil exporters, like Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Angola will feel the most hardship due to their dependency on oil revenues. The governments need to cut their budgets, reduce their spending and subsidy programs. In addition to the cuts in public spending, they might face the challenge of currency depreciation, which will further elevate the downside risks.

The region has already been facing a number of political challenges and instability. The decline in oil prices will further restrict the oil revenue dependent regional governments, like Sudan and Nigeria. The last thing that the already unstable region needs is the danger of having more failed states on the political side.

Omer F. Baris

In the first issue of the Newsletter we noted that African economic growth was set to slow down in 2015. We suggested that the falling price of oil, political instability and potential risk epidemics would take a toll on African economies' ability to sustain the high rate of growth experienced in previous years. Our analysis has recently been confirmed in several analyses and commentaries published in the African press.

See: <http://www.theeast-african.co.ke/news/Fall-in-crude--commodity-prices-dent-Africa-s-growth-prospects/-/2558/2685238/-154ea9w/-/index.html>

Forecasting Deficit

Low oil price will lead to higher deficits

The fall of the oil price is expected to have mixed effects on Africa. In oil-importing countries it is expected to stabilize/reduced inflation, while in oil-exporting countries, however, it is expected to lead to widening deficits. Analysts believe that the deficit will amount to 2.8% of the GDP in Nigeria, to 4.6% in Cameroon and 4.3 % in Gabon where it is expected to increase even further in the following years.



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Job Openings

International IDEA is seeking a Senior Programme Officer for West Africa: http://www.eurobrussels.com/job_display/102270/Senior_Programme_Officer_West_Africa_International_IDEA_The_International_Institute_for_Democracy_and_Electoral_Assistance_Advisory_Ababa_Ethiopia_Outside_Europe

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Conference Call

Call for 2015 MENA Workshop Fellows
May 17-21 in Qatar; December in Kuwait
“The Resource Curse in MENA”

APSA is seeking applications from PhD students and early-career scholars who would like to participate in the 2015 MENA Workshops program on "The Resource Curse in the Middle East and North Africa. This two-part workshop program is a unique opportunity to network with colleagues from across the MENA region and develop discreet research findings related to the impact of rent wealth on democracy, state-building, political stability, and state-society relations.



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