

African Politics and Policy

Newsletter
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Do the right thing!

The news that did not make the news yesterday is that Africa has a problem with corruption. Transparency international yesterday released the 2016 Corruption Perception Index. The scores were computed for 176 countries, including for 45 African one.

The 2016 Corruption Perception Index paints a rather troubling picture for Africa. It shows that many African countries are affected by high levels of corruption, that corruption is pervasive, that five of the ten most corrupt countries in the world are in Africa. Four of them are in Sub-Saharan Africa and one in North Africa.

Of course some Sub-Saharan countries have acceptable levels of transparency. Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Rwanda, Namibia are among the 50 most transparent countries in the world and they're all more transparent or less corrupt than advanced industrial economy such as Italy.

But with these few exceptions, Sub-Saharan Africa is not doing well. Corruption is high, is not decreasing and in way too many cases it is actually increasing.

The level of perceived corruption did not change in seven of the forty-five Sub-Saharan African countries (Rwanda, Zambia, Liberia, Togo, Malawi, Uganda, Eritrea) and it increased in 20 of them. In other words, only in 40 per cent of the countries in SSA corruption has decreased, while in the remaining sixty per cent it either remained stable or increased.

Given the high developmental costs that corruption has and has had for the continent, it is clear that governments from SSA should do more and should do better to fight corruption. Reducing corruption is essential for consolidating the progresses that many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have made along the developmental path in the course of the last 15 years. The time to fight corruption in SSA is now. Political elites in the continent should not miss a historic opportunity to do the right thing.

Riccardo Pelizzo

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Diabetes in Liberia

The data on diabetes in Africa and in Liberia simply do not add up and make no sense. In 2016 Africa's population had 1.2 billion people, Liberia has roughly 4 million people. In Africa there are 25 million people with diabetes, in Liberia there are 3 million people. So while only 2 per cent of the African population has diabetes, 75 per cent of Liberians have allegedly diabetes.

It is hard to reconcile these two numbers and one can only come up with three possible explanations: 1) the statistics concerning the incidence of diabetes in Africa dramatically underestimate the problem; 2) the statistics on the incidence of diabetes in Liberia are wrong; or 3) there is something in Liberia that is responsible for this diabetes pandemics.

The Strange Case of Equatorial Guinea

By Riccardo Pelizzo

In some of our previous articles, we discussed the paradox of Gabon: a country that has a relatively high income per capita and is yet plagued by high level of lived poverty.

We suggested that this paradox could only be explained in one of two ways: there was either a methodological error in computing the country's income per capita or its level of lived poverty or the wealth that the country is able to generate, is not equitably redistributed among the Gabonese population. The paradox of Gabon, is not exceptional as our previous articles suggested. In a recent articles, the African media noted that Equatorial Guinea is also paradoxical in her own right. It has a very high income per capita –

the article indicates that it has the highest income per capita in the continent- coupled with a high level of poverty.

Poverty, argues Daniel Bekele, is the result of the fact that eighty per cent of the country's revenue is used to build infrastructures, while only modest investments are made for education and health. Worse, Bekele argues, high ranking officials have engaged in systemic corruption and have embezzled a lot of public money.

It is this combination of corruption and bad budgeting that explains the paradox of a country in which people are poor in spite of a very high income per capita.

APP celebrates achievement

We are proud to announce that we have readers from 143 countries. Our readers come from: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bermuda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo (Republic), Congo DRC, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibuti, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jersey, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Korea, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, USA, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Une année qui commence Bien et Mal... pour ADO

By Ornella Ohoukoh

Après la victoire du OUI aux urnes le 30 Octobre 2016 passé, le peuple Ivoirien a fait son entrée solennelle dans la 3ème République. Le référendum avait été adopté à 93,42% marquant ainsi le début d'une nouvelle ère politique pour le pays. Le débat était au bout de tous les lèvres une nouvelle constitution, un Vice-président, un sénat ; mais la question fondamentale était : lequel de ses protégés ADO allait-il gratifier. Le 18 Décembre, le peuple était encore une fois aux urnes, cette fois pour les législatives, avec un très faible taux de participation de 34%. Même si la majorité des sièges a été remportée par l'Alliance fragile, le RDR (Rassemblement des Républicains) constitué par le RHDP d'Alassane Ouattara et le PDCI du feu Président Houphouët Boigny aux commandes desquels étaient jusqu'à la nouvelle alliance, son digne successeur Henri Konan Bédié, les indépendants se sont illustrés avec une entrée remarquable de 75 sièges à l'Assemblée Nationale Ivoirienne. Jusqu'alors, nul ne se doutait du changement de décor au théâtre politique du pays.

En Janvier 2017, Peu après les perles des lumières de la capitale Abidjanaise, et alors que yeux et oreilles s'apprêtaient à savourer le spectacle de la nomination des nouveaux fils et filles du pouvoir, dans leur marche vers une nouvelle ascension, une mutinerie au sein de l'armée ivoirienne vit le jour. Dans la nuit du Jeudi au Vendredi 06 Janvier 2017, une mutinerie militaire débutait à Bouaké, ex-fief de l'ex-rébellion des Forces nouvelles. Les premiers tirs avaient été entendus aux environs de 01h30 du matin dans la deuxième capitale ivoirienne et se sont plus tard étendus à Daloa, Korhogo, Man et à Dabou, villes à l'Ouest et au Nord du pays. En effet, dans la parution N°5499 du journal Notre Voie, les éléments révoltés sont des ex-rebelles devenus Frci (Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire), aujourd'hui Faci (Forces Armées de Côte d'Ivoire) qui se scindent en deux groupes : les uns avaient combattu au sein de la force armée ouest africaine (Ecomog) pour le compte de la rébellion armée contre le régime de Laurent Gbagbo et l'armée régulière de l'époque et les autres des Frci au nombre de 4200 ayant bénéficié d'une récompense de 5 millions chacun et du grade de Sergent, de la part du chef de l'Etat Alassane Ouattara pour l'avoir conduit au pouvoir. Ainsi, c'est cette première partie des ex-rebelles devenus Frci au nombre de 8400 personnes qui réclamaient une somme de près de 10 millions de Francs CFA ainsi que le grade d'Adjudant et le paiement des primes diverses dont celle de logement.

La samedi 07 Janvier 2017, le Président de la République Alassane Ouattara s'exprimait en ces termes : « Je confirme mon accord pour la prise en compte des revendications relatives aux primes et à l'amélioration des conditions de vie et de travail des soldats », affirmant ainsi son accord pour le paiement des primes. C'est ainsi que l'ouverture des rideaux du 09 Janvier 2017, a laissé place à la continuité du bal gouvernemental. En effet en cette date, le Premier Ministre Daniel Kablan Duncan

alors en exercice, présente sa démission au Chef de l'Etat et est nommé le 10 Janvier en qualité de Vice-Président de la République. N'étant pas le seul acteur à cette représentation, le 09 Janvier Guillaume SORO est réélu à plus de 95% des voix à la tête de l'Assemblée Nationale Ivoirienne. Le nom du nouveau premier Ministre Amadou Gon Coulibaly sera aussi connu dans la nuit du Mardi 10 Janvier 2017. Tout ceci était sans prévoir un nouveau revirement de la situation.

Les premiers mutins ayant réussi à avoir 5 millions par soldats dans un premier virement le lundi 16 Janvier 2017, avec 8500 soldats en tout, une nouvelle mutinerie voit le jour. Des militaires qui n'appartenaient pas au groupe des anciens rebelles font une entrée très remarquée sur scène en réclamant à leur tour leur part du butin. En effet 12 millions en menaçant par les armes est une simple et belle affaire à ne rater sous aucun prétexte en un début d'année car, comme le disait le Comédien Ivoirien le Magnifique, « L'argent ne fait du bruit, mais les tirs accélèrent l'argent. » et cette assertion se confirmait malheureusement vu que la grève générale alarmante des fonctionnaires semblait passer inaperçu. Le Nouveau Réveil déplorait une situation « critique dans les CHU » avec des « décès en cascade ». Par ailleurs à Abidjan et dans les villes du pays, « les élèves se soulèvent contre les enseignants grévistes » et selon certains grévistes « Ouattara n'aura plus de tranquillité jusqu'à ce qu'il parte ». La Sortie « ratée » des éléphants champions en titre de la Coupe d'Afrique des Nations venait ajouter une touche particulièrement sombre à ce tableau déjà dramatique.

Tout ceci était sans compter sur la capacité du peuple ivoirien, à se relever de ses moments difficiles car un adage populaire dans le pays le dit si bien « La force d'un homme ce n'est pas de ne jamais tomber, mais de se relever à chaque fois qu'il tombe ».

La semaine du 23 au 27 Janvier a progressivement marqué un retour au calme. Après l'élimination des éléphants en la date du 24 Janvier 2017 sur un score de 1 but à 0 en faveur du Maroc, le pays demeura dans un calme louable. Cependant des tensions internes restent à régler notamment le gel des comptes des sociétés d'agro-business du pays, le paiement des montants investis et des retours sur investissement des souscripteurs, le paiement du reste des primes des mutins, la satisfaction des fonctionnaires et j'en passe. Même si la situation précaire du pays semble de nouveau stabilisée à ces heures ou le mois de Janvier 2017 fait son bouquet final, il serait judicieux de rester à l'écoute de l'actualité politique et publique de cette nation émergente dont la situation économique prometteuse ne cesse d'attirer à elle d'innombrables investissements étrangers.

The Lusaka and its secrets

By Kristina Bekenova

One of the most interesting objects exposed in African Museum in Verona is a Lukasa, or memory board of the Luba people, from the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo-Kinshasa). A Lukasa is a small wooden tablet decorated with different beads (of different color, size and shape), shells or with a single carving. The wooden board first captures the viewer's attention because of its aesthetic features/appeal, but later it reveals many interesting secrets about African culture in general and Luba society in particular.



Two issues that might be understood by investigating the lukasa memory board are: how the past is preserved and/or how the memory works; and the second is the idea of preservation of knowledge through the art in African society. In other words, the article makes an attempt to understand how the lukasa as an art object visually represents history (memory) and knowledge (secrecy).

How does one recall the events of the past? In our European tradition the first and the most obvious answer is through reading history books, thus history and memory are represented as fixed, static and unchangeable. However, the memory-device of the Luba people is not a Kindle e-book; it is a rather essential element of history performance, (re)construction and (re)interpretation, thus showing that “memory is a cultural construction varying from one society to the next” (Roberts & Roberts 1996, 27). The interpretive part of history-telling based on the rich oral traditions and diverse visual mnemonic devices, and dependent on relationship of the objects on the board, audience, political and social circumstances, contingencies and fads, is explained by the idea of applying the knowledge of

the past to face the present issues and share it with the people of the present (Roberts & Roberts).

The concept of indispensable naming of an artist is again devalued in Luba.

The second issue relates to the question of why Luba people use the lukasa to conceal the knowledge. The concept of secrecy according to one group of scholars could be explained from the perspective of past colonization, when people in order to preserve their traditional knowledge had to hide it from devastation and disappearance. However, according to Mary H. Nooter (1993), the concept should be understood in a deeper way as another distinction between European and African approach to knowledge.

Knowledge in traditional African societies such as the Luba is not disseminated as a public good among as many people as possible, nor it is obligatory. It is rather available only to those who are strong enough to hold and protect the knowledge. It is, in a way, a kind of initiatic knowledge, a knowledge which is made available only to those who were initiated to uncover and master its secrets.

The visual language expressed in the aesthetical features of the object vigilantly cover/cloak/veil its true meaning and secret knowledge by scaring away (Komo masks), embarrassing or leaving the viewer indifferent (Boli altars of Bamana people). The object by grasping attention at the same time reflects the concept that “by seeing you do not see”. Art, thus, is inseparably intertwined with secrecy and knowledge, by “being fundamental to processes of teaching and revelation that confer status and disclose information, meanings, and symbols; and second, secrets are often central to the making, ownership, use, and interpretation of art” (Nooter 1993, 58).

Thus, to apply conventional Western concepts of history and knowledge to African culture is to some extent problematic because, as shown by the example of Luba people and their lukasa mnemonic device, different cultures offer alternative value systems and analytical concepts. In spite of the fact that the lukasa as many other non-anthropomorphic objects were not among the favorite artefacts for collectors and were actually neglected for many years, they are now becoming an essential instrument to discover the culture, cosmology and traditional worldview of Luba people. However, such an endeavor in the end still leaves some doubts as to “whether one can ever really know the secrets of other cultures and their art” (Nooter 1993, 69).

Interview with Abdinasir A. Ibrahim, Director of Somaliland Travel & Tours Agency (STTA)

APP: Could you please introduce yourself and the company you are working for?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: I am the Director of Somaliland Travel & Tours Agency (<http://somalilandtour.com/>), together with my best friend and university classmate Khalid M. Osman we founded this company in early 2008 with the vision that the country didn't have a Tourism services provider. It was hard for the Tourists & Foreigners to come to Somaliland unless they work with the government or the local and international NGO's, then we filled that gap and we are proud of what we have achieved so far.

APP: Which tourist tours do you offer? Which place is the most popular? What, in your opinion, is Somaliland's most attractive feature for tourists?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: We provide an extensive selection of tours and excursions such as cultural, classical and historical. We give our customers a wide variety of tour opportunities that will allow everyone to experience Somaliland in ways that are unique and personal.

I would say the most popular place is Laas-Geel and I believe the most attractive feature is that the ancient Cave Paintings are one of the oldest pieces of rock art in Africa, age range from 7,000 – 10,000 years old.

APP: What are the main achievements of your agency in tourism sector, and what are the main problems you face?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: We are the first Tourism Company in Somaliland, and we started from the bottom and next year we are celebrating for a 10 years since we opened the doors for our company, it has been a great experience.

Having said that establishing a new company for an industry which wasn't ready was very challenging.

APP: Who are your tourists? From which countries do they come? What are the areas they interested in?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: Our tourists are mostly from the UK, USA, Australia, Sweden, Canada, Germany and Russia. We have something to offer for all kind of tourists. Somaliland have an 850 km coastline with lots of pristine beaches, beautiful coral reefs, unique archaeological sites, rare birds and mammals, fabulous mountain ranges, and a year-round sunny, warm climate, so we are offering a wide variety of tour opportunities that will allow everyone to experience Somaliland in ways that are unique.

APP: How secure is Somaliland to come?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: Somaliland has a 0 per cent foreigners/tourists crime rate for the last 11 years and the safety and security of our clients are always our number one intention.

APP: Please tell us how to plan a visit to Somaliland?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: To visit Somaliland you only need to plan ahead and visas can be obtained on arrival only by prior arrangement with recognized operator like Somaliland Travel and Tourism Agency (STTA) or to get from Somaliland Missions in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and London, UK.

Tourists can fly to the capital Hargeisa through the following routes: daily from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia with Ethiopian Airlines, twice weekly from Dubai with Daallo Airlines and Jubba Airways, and on Flydubai, who offers four weekly flights from Dubai.

By road, you can enter through Ethiopia and Djibouti, although it's cheaper to fly than driving. A tax of US\$60 is charged on entry.

APP: How can you describe the tourism situation in Somaliland? Is there a tendency of increasing number of

tourist arrivals? How far does the government support tourism sector in Somaliland?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries. According to the data we have when we started, the foreign tourist growth is moving forward slowly and the number is increasing but there is a long way to go. The government recently established a new ministry for Tourism and Culture that shows the government's interest to promote and support formation of successful tourism sector and as tour operator we are welcoming that.

APP: How does tourism affect Somaliland's international recognition? How successful is Somaliland in promoting national tourism?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: Somaliland's lack of international recognition is the biggest factor that holding back our tourism industry, we believe when we get the recognition everything will change and our beautiful country will be open for international investment that make the infrastructure a world class.

APP: What do you want the international community to know about Somaliland?

Abdinasir A. Ibrahim: I would like your readers to know that Somaliland was colonized by the British and got independence on 26 June 1960. On 1 July 1960, Somaliland voluntarily united with Somalia to form the Somali republic. After many years of injustice and brutal dictatorship, Somaliland broke away from Somalia 26 years ago. But to date, no country recognizes it as an independent nation. Now Somaliland has everything a country would require: Peace, An elected government, an army, its own currency and a flag.

APP: Dear Abdinasir A. Ibrahim! Thank you a lot for the interesting interview about your country and the ways we can visit and enjoy the beauty of Somaliland! May we wish you success in your initiatives and more tourists to come and discover the friendly people and fascinating culture!





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ANNOUNCEMENTS:

From February 1 to March 22, the Department of African Languages and Cultures, University of London, is organising African Speculative Fiction lecture series to explore science fiction, fantasy, horror and magic realism from Africa and the African Diaspora. The schedule of the lectures can be found here <https://africaninwords.com/2017/02/01/event-african-speculative-fiction-lecture-series-london-february-march-2017/>

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