

African Politics and Policy

Newsletter

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Editorial

African Politics and Policy was launched to track what is happening in the African continent, to perform some analyses and to forecast possible developments.

In the course of first four years, some of our interpretations, some of our guesses, some of our analyses were correct, others were almost correct, and others still were absolutely wrong.

One of the key claims that APP advanced, from its very beginning, was that Africa, or, to be more precise, Sub-Saharan Africa was at a crossroads. After fifteen years of strong and sustained economic growth and developmental progress, Sub-Saharan Africa had reached a critical point: it could either find a way to grow more, faster and for several more years capitalizing on its recent successes or it could compromise what it had been able to achieve from 2000 to 2014.

At the beginning of 2019, we still have the impression that Africa is at a crossroad. But while it is not entirely clear what's going to happen to the continent as a whole, it's clear that some countries are on the right track, while others are not. Diseases, instability, poor leadership are obstacles to growth and development, and African countries need to find a way to solve them.

Africa's future depends on whether Africa can find a solution for these problems

Riccardo PELIZZO

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Outbreaks and Emergencies

Cholera is monitored in 8 countries: Burundi, Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Measles is monitored in Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda.

Chikungunya is monitored in the Republic of Congo and in DRC.

Congo-Crimean Haemorrhagic Fever is monitored in Mauritania and Uganda.

Hepatitis E is monitored in Central African Republic, Namibia and South Sudan.

Lassa fever is monitored in Benin, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo.

Dengue is reported in Kenya and Tanzania.

Corruption Perception Index 2018

By Riccardo PELIZZO

Transparency International has just released the Corruption Perception Index for 2018. After improving its score for two consecutive years, Kazakhstan's score remained unchanged in 2018. The stability in the score was due to the fact that while Kazakhstan improved in some of the categories that are used to compute CPI, it did not perform as well in some other categories and, as a result, after scoring 31 points in 2017, it scored 31 points in 2018.

In contrast to Kazakhstan, Italy was able to improve its score. After scoring 50 points in 2017, Italy scored 52 points in the 2018 CPI — an improvement that will, no doubt, raise some eyebrows among those who know something about Italy or about corruption or both.

The least corrupt countries in the world are Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland; Germany and the United Kingdom are tied in 11th position; France is 21st and the United States of America are 22nd.

How did African countries perform in 2018? Some of them did really well. Seychelles climbed in 28th position, Botswana remained in 34th position, Cape Verde was 45th, Rwanda 48th and Namibia 52nd. The performance of these countries is particularly impressive because they were all managed to out-

perform Italy (in spite of its improvements) and in some cases did so by a considerable margin.

In 2017, Namibia was tied with Italy, in 2018 — it is ahead. Botswana and Rwanda remained in the same position, Cape Verde climbed 3 positions, and Seychelles gained 8 positions, from 36th to 28th. The political leaders from these countries should be congratulated on such remarkable results.

These very good news are, however, counterbalanced by the fact that in several countries corruption has increased. This is the case of Kenya, Mauritania, Mozambique, DRC, Chad, Congo, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, and Guinea Bissau.

The score for Somalia has slightly improved, but not enough to change Somalia's position in the rankings.

African countries need to do more to fight corruption. If corruption is not eradicated, or, at least, reduced the considerable underground wealth with which African countries are endowed will not translate into proper wealth on the surface. Corruption remains the main obstacle on Africa's development path.

If Africa wants to develop, corruption must be eradicated. We know it, Africans know it, and African political elites should do something about it.

Corruption and Wealth: Are They Always Related?

By **Riccardo PELIZZO**

One of the main conclusions advanced by the literature on corruption is that richer countries have more transparency (and less corruption), poorer countries have less transparency (or more corruption). Conversely, countries where the level of transparency is higher are richer than those countries that have less transparency (or more corruption).

The implication of this is quite simply that countries with roughly the same level of wealth should also have the same level of transparency (or corruption) and conversely countries with roughly the same level of transparency (or corruption) should have roughly the same level of wealth.

Kazakhstan seems to be a major exception to this trend.

According to the World Bank's Development Indicator Kazakhstan's Gross National Income per capita (Atlas method, current US \$) is 7970 US Dollars and Kazakhstan received 31 points in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

If we apply the received wisdom countries as corrupt as Kazakhstan should be as rich as Kazakhstan, countries more corrupt than Kazakhstan should be poorer than Kazakhstan, while countries less corrupt than Kazakhstan should be richer than Kazakhstan.

A cursory analysis of the data made available by Transparency International reveals that there are many exceptions to the rule.

Djibuti also received a score of 31 from Transparency International in spite of the fact that its GNI per capita is just 1880; Mali, Liberia and Malawi received a score of 32 though their GNI per capita was respectively 770, 620 and 320 US dollars; Transparency international gave a score of 34 to both Niger and Ethiopia whose GNI per capita is respectively of 360 and 740 dollars, Tanzania scored 36 points in the CPI with a GNI per capita of 910 dollars; Gambia scored 37 points with a GNI per capita of 680 dollars; Benin scored 40 points with a GNI per capita of 800 dollars; Burkina Faso scored 41 points with a GNI per capita of 590 dollars and Rwanda scored 56 points with a GNI per capita of 720 dollars.

Only Mauritius and Seychelles had a higher CPI score and a higher GNI per capita than Kazakhstan. All the other countries in Sub Saharan Africa that outperformed Kazakhstan on the Corruption Perception Index were either slightly and considerably less affluent than Kazakhstan. The CPI score of the very virtuous Rwanda was no even one-tenth of the Kazakhstani GNI per capita.

These findings are somewhat perplexing. They suggest that either corruption/transparency is unrelated to wealth (GNI per capita) falsifying what scholars and practitioners have long suggested or the World Bank data on wealth and income per capita are not terribly good (as Jerven for instance suggested) or the measurements of corruption are not very good and need to be improved.

Africa's Economy in 2019

By **Riccardo PELIZZO**

In 2019, Africa's economy is expected to grow by 3.8 per cent. This is at least the opinion of some international organizations which, on such issues, are usually correct.

The question that this forecast is unable to answer is whether an economic growth of 3.8 per cent is what we are going to get in the worst possible scenario, if things stay pretty much the same, or if all goes well. One is bound to ask such question because, given the way the year has started, it is not entirely clear whether and how well things will go in the remainder of the year.

Nigeria's economy is not in a terribly good shape and the upcoming elections may end up making things worse. The Democratic Republic of Congo has become, in the wake of the latest Presidential elections, a little more democratic, but whether the new president will be able to fix all the troubles that DRC has experienced for so long is far from clear—especially if, in order to govern, he will have to join forces with the (former) ruling party. Kenya will eventually start preparing for elections and this may somehow destabilize the country. To make matters worse, Kenya has already experienced terrorist attacks, public debt is skyrocketing, and it is not entirely clear whether it will be able to pay off the Chinese loans. Tanzania is believed to be doing well, at least in economic terms, in spite of the collapse of Bank M, but in political terms is not doing well at all—and Tanzania's political troubles may eventually have serious economic implications. In Uganda, things seem to be doing rather well, except for a soaring debt that Uganda may struggle to repay. Mozambique has experienced its fair share of terrorist attacks, the economy of Zimbabwe is collapsing, Sudan was swept by a wave of protests, Gabon experienced a coup, Cameroon is mishandling its Anglophone population; in Angola, the President has fired governors and ministers; and analysts wonder whether South Africa is on the verge of becoming a fragile state.

So, given what's happened in the first two weeks of 2019, Africa has already had its fair share of troubles and seems well on its way to have some more in the remainder of the year—and with all these troubles, it's not entirely clear whether an economic growth of 3.8 per cent can actually be attained.

Tanzania and Seychelles: Least Likely to Have a Coup

According to the article by Besaw & Powell [1], Seychelles and Tanzania, along with Gabon, were the least African countries to experience a coup. Gabon, of course, has its failed coup—contrary to what models had predicted. The authors of this article claim that given coups' unpredictable nature it's very hard to predict a coup. It's nearly impossible.

And that's of course a good way to look at it and to be happy with having developed predictive models that ultimately fail to predict anything worth predicting. The alternative, however, is to try to understand why these models fail and to find ways to design or build and use better models.

For instance, one problem of forecasters is that they like to play with global datasets, because analyses performed with a large N are preferable to those performed with a smaller N —(law of large numbers seems to be playing a role in dictating such preference...). But in order to create larger datasets, the analyst has sometimes to trade the precision with the extension (of the information), the quality with the quantity. A little knowledge about each of the countries included in a dataset is better than detailed information about a given place—for the statistical purposes—but obviously this kind of (superficial) data cannot possibly lead to the (precise) forecasting that one would wish to do.

In other words, countries can be very stable on the surface but careful examination could reveal that below the surface discontent may be brewing and it may be ultimately conducive to a regime change. This is the kind of information modelers and forecasters should look for, collect and analyze if they wish to increase their predictive power and abilities.

[1] Besaw, C. & Powell, J. (2019). "The coup in Gabon surprised everyone. Why forecasts, and the plot, failed". *The Conversation*, 15th January.

Book Review: *Africa at the Crossroads* by Riccardo Pelizzo

By Salvatore BABONES

In the last half-century, sub-Saharan Africa has grown from a sparsely populated region of 250 million people spread over an area the size of the United States, Mexico, and Canada combined into an increasingly urbanized region of more than one billion people. Though still less crowded than behemoths like India and China, sub-Saharan Africa's fertility rate of five children per woman is double that of India and four times that of China. And the population will almost certainly double again by mid-century, after which it is anyone's guess as to when (or if) Africa's population growth will finally slow down.

Africa specialists like Riccardo Pelizzo, writing in *Africa at the Crossroads*, are keen to convince the world that the economies of sub-Saharan Africa are also booming, but here the case is not so clear. Pelizzo points out that many economies in sub-Saharan Africa have seen sustained growth of 3.5 percent or more over a period of fifteen years, but that seems paltry compared to the numbers being racked up in Asia. With populations expanding at 2.5 percent annually, 3.5 percent economic growth just isn't that impressive. And then there are the periodic busts.

Asian countries like India and Vietnam—to say nothing of China—have managed three decades of consistent growth ever since liberalizing their economies in the early 1990s. In fact, what growth Africa has experienced in recent years seems to have been driven mainly by Asian demand for African commodities. And the one sub-Saharan African country that has managed substantial manufacturing growth, Ethiopia, has done so through Chinese strategic investment. Sub-Saharan Africa may no longer be suffering periodic famines (except in areas affected by civil war), but it is hardly a model of development.

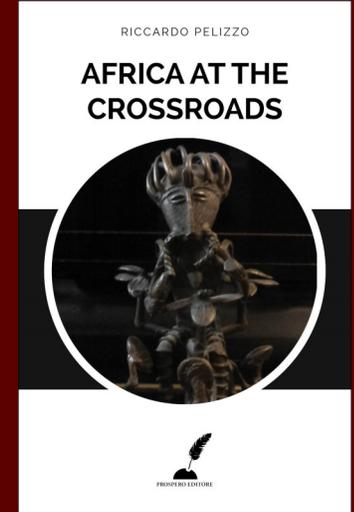
That said, Pelizzo's book offers something much rarer than simple Africa boosterism: it offers deep, data-driven insights into sub-Saharan African politics. Pelizzo marshals data from the Afrobarometer survey for more than two dozen countries on topics like corruption, trust, governance, and even people's approval of their own members of parliament. Unsurprisingly, he finds that corruption is a major driver of people's lack of faith in governmental institutions. He thinks corruption among members of parliament is particularly insidious, since it also contributes to

political instability.

But there's a conundrum here: as Pelizzo himself points out, many African heads of state manage to stay in office for decades on end. When a country is run by a dictator and president-for-life, what does corruption in parliament matter? And how can such countries be considered "politically unstable" when the same politicians have run the country for decades? Even when there is an alternation in power, which recently occurred in Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), it is often between generations of the same party or even the same family.

The DRC is a case in point. It has just completed the first peaceful leadership transition in its history as an independent country, but the new president, Felix Tshisekedi, is the son of the long-time opponent of the father of the old president, who took office on the occasion of his father's assassination. Similar stories abound. It's as if American politics consisted of no one but Clintons and Bushes alternating in power every thirty years. That's nothing if not stability.

Yet according to Pelizzo, political instability is the greatest barrier to foreign investment in sub-Saharan Africa. Interestingly, corruption is not a barrier: Pelizzo finds absolutely no correlation between levels of corruption and levels of foreign investment. That may be because political instability has confined foreign investment mainly to the one sector that gives investors no choice where to invest: natural resources. If you want to strike gold, you have to



Pelizzo, R. (2018). *Africa at the Crossroads*. Milan: Prospero Editore. <https://www.prosperoeditore.com/libri/Africa-at-the-Crossroads-Riccardo-Pelizzo>

The performance of African economies, in the past fifty years, has been cyclical. Economic expansion was followed by contraction, growth by decline and, a result, Africa has never been able to capitalize on its own socio-economic successes. From 2000 onward, African economies have experienced sustained strong growth. And the articles collected in this volume were written because it is clear that Africa finds itself once again at the crossroads.

go where the gold is, not to the country with the best investment climate. If sub-Saharan Africa had more stable countries, then there might be more pressure from investors to clean up corruption, since there would be more competition across countries for their investment.

If dictatorship doesn't create political stability, then what does? Here Pelizzo falls flat. Countries with systems as diverse as those of China and the United States are politically stable, but somehow we all know that sub-Saharan African countries are not. Pelizzo seems to recognize that, but he doesn't offer a definition or test of political stability, and as a result can't offer a path toward achieving it.

Africa at the Crossroads offers unique cross-national insights into sub-Saharan Africa's politics. It also includes deep political analyses of individual African

countries, Tanzania in particular. But it does not pull these together into a systematic interpretation of political instability in Africa—or how to address it. To some extent that shortcoming reflects the structure of the book, which has been compiled from dozens of short essays written over a period of three years. These should have been better integrated for the book. Still, just like African gold, when there's nowhere else to find what you want, then you have to go where it is. *Africa at the Crossroads* delivers the goods.

Salvatore Babones is the author of *The New Authoritarianism: Trump, Populism, and the Tyranny of Experts*.

Review is originally published at *The National Interest*, 5th February 2019. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/book-review-africa-crossroads-riccardo-pelizzo-43362>

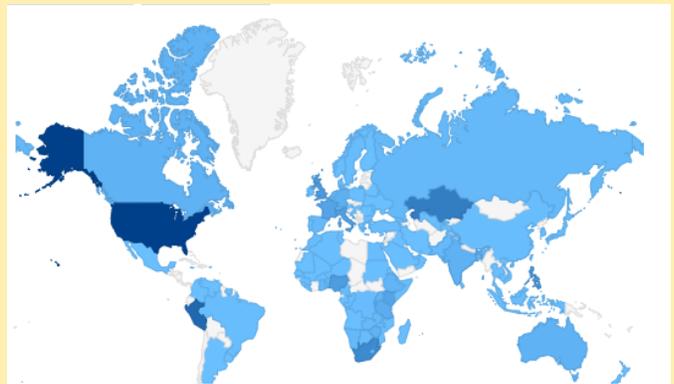
African Politics and Policy: 5 years

Five Years was the first song of David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars. Five years is what we celebrated this January. We are in our fifth year now, having started back in 2015...

From the day we started we made 9602 posts, we had 1098 comments, we produced 35 monthly newsletters (and 12 issues of the newsletter on African culture), we reached hundreds of thousands of readers in 202 countries...

We hope that 2019 is going to be as good as each of our previous years and will give us plenty to celebrate once we reached our fifth birthday in January 2020.

Between now and then we will continue to cover and comment on African news.





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The 12th edition of the Bayimba International Arts Festival that will take place at Lunkulu Island, Uganda, on 1st-4th August, is now open for submissions from artists of all disciplines. Deadline: 30th April. For more information: <https://bayimbafestival.com/call-artists-2019/>

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African Studies Association, USA, is looking for Membership and Communications Program Manager for a full-time position.

Please send a letter outlining interest in the position, qualifications, and experience together with a CV and the

names and contact information of three references to the Executive Director of the ASA, Suzanne Moyer Baazet (suzanne@africanstudies.org).

Job description and position summary can be found at <https://africanstudies.org/asa-job-announcement/>

