Urban Weakness and Security in Africa

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Abstract

In the 21st century one has witnessed the rate of urban movement which is attributed to many reasons such as social amenities, quest for good education and employment opportunities. However these factors are not peculiar to a particular country, but to the rest of the world .At present one has witnessed in the urban areas lack of social amenities, particularly in Africa. In the rural area there is epileptic power supply compare to the urban area. People need electricity for survival and this is responsible for relocation to the urban area. The same can be said about health care also, there are fewer numbers of hospitals and personnel in the rural areas. These makes access to health facilities difficult. As a result of this most people move to the urban cities. Another reason why people move from rural to urban is the quest for good education. In the rural area there are fewer no of schools and teachers, compare to urban area. The effect of these problems is that people tend to move from rural area to urban area; however it has not solved the problem of the urban area in terms of development.

These can be traced to urban weakness relating to weak and illegitimate governance, limited livelihood opportunities and legal structures that affect land tenure and new business startup .The antidote to Africa's urban weakness cannot rely on security structures but must be part of a broader development strategy.

Key words urban, security and Africa

Introduction

Africa is witnessing a dense network of urban cities mostly with the increase of young people. Some of these urban centers have grown out of old traditional settlements; some of them are new dating back to the years of colonial rule. These urban have become the principal centers where growth and change in nations can be easily observed. They are home to the largest segment of Africa's skilled labor and industrial establishments consequently; they display the transformations that

occur in demographic, economic, social and political structures. These transformations began with colonial rule which triggered an irreversible trend of rural to urban migration. The end of the twentieth century has witnessed increased urban populations and the myriad problems have assisted scholarly and political attention to them. Policy pronouncements over the years have shown that most Africa administration's desire to make urban centers more habitable, but they have been repressed by many challenges. You have more 40% of Africans below the age of 15, many of them destitute, Africa's cities becoming densely concentrated centers of unemployed young men. This is a mixture that can intensify violent crime, gang activity, illicit trafficking, and links to transnational organized criminal syndicates and political instability. The repercussions affect virtually every country on the continent. The slums of Kibera (Nairobi), Karu (Abuja) ,Bonaberi (Douala), and elsewhere are already largely no go areas zones for state security forces.

These challenges including rising cases of religious and ethnic tensions, hate crimes, urban violence and robbery, all part of the ills of described as "pathology of the city" (Laquian 2008). Scholars are wondering whether cities are not becoming obsolete as favored places to live in the present age of technology, speedy communication and the internet (Castells, 2004). The debate has been on the increase in advanced countries, but attention is gradually being drawn to in Africa with its many fast growing centers.

The security ramifications of urban poverty are of growing importance since, by 2025, the majority of the poor in Africa will live in urban as opposed to rural areas-reversing a long standanding pattern. In many countries, moreover, the poorest 20 percent in urban slums have worse human development indicators than the poorest 20% in rural areas. This in turn, amplifies susceptibility to poverty induced instability, including the spread of disease and food shortages. It is estimated that 300 million urban Africans, will be without sanitation by 2020. Roughly 225 million will not have access to potable water. These risks came to the fore in 2007 -2008 urban riots came to the fore in 2007-2008 urban riots in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Senegal and Mauritania among other African countries, which broke out in

response to rising prices of food, clothes, and gasoline. In the process government buildings were destroyed and many people injured with food prices once again raising rapidly, these tensions are likely to resurface.

Despite these mounting stresses, national and international actors have invested relatively little in urban development, livelihoods governance, or programs to help stem the volume of urban migration. These changing demographics however will fundamentally reshape the African security environment for decades to come.

This paper is divided into six fold 1) Conceptualization of concepts 2) The Dynamics of urban weakeness3) urbanization Trend in Africa4) connections between urban weakness and security risks 5) Recommendation 6) Conclusion.

Conceptualization

In the continent the discourse is on the ability of national government to shape urban development in the era of power diffusion to supra- and sub state entities. There are three broad schools of thought .The first school is the much opined erosion of state power, common in literature on globalization. The story goes that the internationalization of financial capital is challenging the national economy as a recognized unit of the global economic order (Jessop 1994). As Michael Mann (1997) illustrates there are essential four ways in which globalization can be seen to be weakening the state. The first is the power of global capital, which continues to strengthen "as the costs of overcoming the friction of distance in the global transfer of information are pushed ever closer to zero" (Brenner 1998:6). The Second is that social and environmental problems exceed the capacity of any single state. Thirdly through the use of technology, transnational movements be it ethnicity based (e.g. Diaspora), Social movements or civil society are strengthening, potentially at the expense of national and class identity. Fourthly, as regional trade agreements, there is an increasing erosion of sovereignty of individual states to international regulation (Macleod 1999).

Other scholars illustrate that states continue to control significant regulatory and political power in shaping national and local economic outcomes as well as shaping

urban development in general (Linn 1983). No doubt the pressure is ambivalent. Taylor (2000) suggests that national –local relations can be both mutually reinforcing in a quest to achieve growth and development, as well as antagonistic via the states desire to centralize power. In terms of the former, well aligned national policies can help a city to flourish .Cities are the economic nodes for most countries, they continue to rely on the national government to navigate and negotiate national, regional and international contexts. They also rely on national governments for the policy resources in trade and investment, labor and land use, for example, in order to attract foreign investment and finance human capital and infrastructure (Satterthwaite 2009).

Equally, a poor enabling framework such as a lack of funding or insufficient incentives to dissuade rural urban migration can risk over burdening cities (El-Khishin 2003, Uyanga 1982). In terms of the antagonistic relationship, local national funding agreements and national regulatory mechanisms are not simply used to maximize capital accumulation but can also be used to secure political hegemony by rewarding those who toe the line and pushing those who do not, on instance that will become remarkably clear in the case of Lagos, Nigeria (Jones 1997, Stone 2005).National government retains power even in the face of an increasing global-local world. Nevertheless, proponents of dynamic scales demonstrate that while state regulatory frameworks still exist their power has become less exclusive (Sassen 1997). The advent of the post –fordist era, State power has been re-territorialized and diffused up and down the scales (Brenner 1998, Mabogunje 2008). Many countries are increasing reliant on their cities for national growth and development. The result of this reconfiguration is the known shift from welfare states which focused on social compromise, to neo-liberal productivist states which intentionally re-shape their regulatory institutions" to function as the institutional home for 'global capital' and 'global capital market" (Sassen 1997:9) and uneven development is "no longer viewed as a limit to capital accumulation but rather its very foundation" (Breenner 2000:372). The discourses

on local pressures demonstrate such a reconfiguration can have serious impacts on urban inequality and the process of civic participation.

Urban weakness is a form of state weakness a context of deteriorating governance and prolonged political crisis or conflict with a locus in urban areas. You find a situation where weak governments lack either the will or capacity to deliver basic services and provide security for their citizens. Grievances around this lack of essential services, coupled with increased insecurity, crime and lawlessness, contribute to greater levels of urban violence.

Urban centers especially capitals and regional cities are seats of government and sites of intense competition for political power and resources, African urban areas are represented by all of the major ethnic groups in a society. They are arenas for defining national identity and testing the state's capacity to balance the demands of competititing political communities .The high population densities of urban areas, moreover ,facilitate political mobilization and challenges to national power, the aftermath pose a direct threat to the stability of African states.

Security as a concept has been a subject of broad and rich debate due to its multi-dimensional nature .For years, the history of mankind was interspersed by the frenzied search for the best way of ensuring the security of people ,their property their territories their states, their institutions etc. For Imobighe,Security has to do with freedom from danger or from threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests (Imobighe;1990;224). Stephen Walt, however, emphasize a very narrow view of security .To the question of what is security? Waltz answers that: it is the phenomena of war, the threat of use and the control of military force .As Ochoche (1997) suggests, understanding security, and one must evaluate the prevailing threat situation. This depends on the values and interests of a nation as they are of perceptions. Threat situations are also dynamic and in most cases highly politically determined.

Balogun (2003:1) observed at a forum that "man's primary and engaging concern has been that of survival and protection; from the vagaries of nature, natural

disasters and from the ill-intentions and misdeeds of his fellow men. A secure nation is one that is able to protect and develop itself so that it can develop its core values, meet the needs of its people and provide them with the right atmosphere for self improvement".OBC Nwolise (1988) posits that:- security refers to safety, freedom from danger or risk. Arnold Wolfers (1962) defines security as follows: security in an objective sense is the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense the absence of fear that such values will be attack may involve it".

Robert McNamara (1968) posits that:"in a modernizing society security means development; security is not military force, though it may include it. Security is development and without development there can be no security". It is being understood that security also concerns the individual and groups and not just states alone. When individuals are not secured, then the states cannot be secure. The testimony to this is the rise of non military sources of threats to security at the individual, societal, state regional and global levels. This has led to the broadening of the concept of security to include non-military dimensions such as social, economic, and political factors now poverty, human rights, political disputes, political sucession, bad governance etc also constitute issues affecting peace and security.

Urbanization Trend in Africa

A historical period of demographic change has taken place in Africa .In the early 1990s; two-thirds of all Africans live in rural areas. In 2025 one expects that more than half of the population will live in urban areas. Africa's three giant urban agglomerations, Cairo, Kinshasa, and Lagos, continue to increase rapidly in their ranking among the world's largest metropolitan regions. In 2007, the urban metropolis of Cairo had 11.9 million inhabitants, Lagos 9.6 million and Kinshasa 7.8 million. In 2015, Cairo will have 13.4 million, Lagos 12.4 million and Kinshasa 11.3 million inhabitants ranking 11th 17th and 19th respectively among the world's largest metropolitan regions. Projections show that Kinshasa with 16.7 million inhabitants will be Africa's urban agglomeration in 2025 (UN-Habitat). It has been

observed that Africa has the world's highest rate of urbanization; it also has among the lowest rates of urban economic growth. Accordingly urbanization in Africa differs from other regions of the world in important respects. In other regions, urbanization followed jobs created as a result of increased investment and economic activity generated from the agricultural sector. Africa has been consistent underinvestment in agriculture leading to low productivity gains. It has limited availability of assets that should have been invested in off-farm economic activities in urban areas. The combination of growing economic globalization and expanded industrialized country agricultural subsidies by constricting markets for Africa's agricultural exports has worsened this predicament in the past decade.

A notable aspect of urbanization in Africa is that it has not led to improvements in basic well being .This runs counter to the general theory that urbanization provides greater access to jobs, basic services and social safety nets.Rather, the percentage of people with access to services in many African countries has not kept pace with the rise in urbanization. In other words, while African countries are "late urbanizers", they host some of the most deprived and volatile slums in the world. One has observed tensions been exacerbated by inadequate government capacity and unaccountable governance structures that restrict opportunities for citizens to articulate grievances.

However scholars and multilateral agencies are pressuring urban development to take a different direction one which seeks to balance the benefits of high mobile capital, communication and technology with civic and environmental health. Variously named the inclusive city, (UNHCS 2001a), the livable city' (Douglass 2002) and the 'great city' (Ng and Hills 2003) the concept proposes a regulatory framework based in ideas of good governance and sustainable living. UN- HABITAT even developed a good urban governance campaign, which alongside similar
 Campaigns from the likes of the World Bank and other international NGO-has rapidly transformed the tenets of good governance such as accountability, transparency, participatory governance and sustainability into the new international donor regime (UNHCS 2001a, UNHCS, Habitat 2001a, and b).

The linkage between Urban Weakness and Security Risks

It is of interest to ask if urban growth contribute to urban violence and weakness. However not by itself, violence, insecurity and urban weakness are linked to weak local and national institutions and limited of unequal access to economic opportunities .There are also diverse drivers such as narcotics trafficking in west Africa, political and economic cross border migrants in southern Africa and resource scarcity leading to ethnic conflict in East Africa. This weakness is a manifestation of low levels of legitimacy, repressive government institutions and insecurity at the local level that feed wider alienation and mistrust of the police and government agencies. There are wealth disparities which are reinforced by political clientelism that directs government resources to ethnic and religious allies and further exacerbates these tensions .These challenges affects much of Africa from the national level to small villages.

Research on the links between urban growth and violence in organization for economic co-operation and Development countries has indicated a weak relationship. In Africa, however, other factors are at play, such as greater economic instability, conflict over resources, weak governance, and weak states and hence a lack of ability to address grievances. The lack of government capacity means that even when better policies are designed, they are difficult to implement at the scale necessary. Even resources needed to provide adequate investment in improving urban living conditions are not available non a priority.

Conclusion

It is of interest to note that urban weakness is becoming an increasing greater focus of African security approaches, by themselves will prove in effective in addressing these challenges. However determined efforts are needed to build Africa's local governance capacity and opportunities for urban unemployed youth.

The absence of political and power relations in discourse of African urban development has affected the development of policies in guiding the current rapid population influx into Africa's urban areas. It misses a potential opportunity to

enhance development and political empowerment initiatives in densely populated areas .Governments and international actors need to look at urban policy needs from a wider lens.

Recommendation

1) Basic services delivered effectively can improve perceptions of local government .Yet attention must be given to delivering services to meet immediate needs while strengthening public institutions over longer term to ensure sustainability and equitable coverage. For national governments, these require crafting creative and flexible policies that encourage complementary strengths of local governments and civil organization.

2) The rising levels of violence, crime, fear and insecurity in urban centers have focused attention on the need to address urban weakness. It should be rembered that these are symptoms of underlying problems. According, government should incorporate policies aimed at reducing urban weakness into development planning. In this way they are integrated with broader efforts to strengthen weak infrastructure and expand livelihoods for slum dwellers.

3) Good urban governance is probably the most important factor in enhancing stability. Broad and sustainable urban development depends on political leadership that is committed to a democratic and equitable vision of urban society .In most cases ,this require strengthening and empowering local governments, both elected authorities and local branches of national ministries.

4) Governments and international actors need to invest in livelihood opportunities at an adequate scale to address the large number of unemployed. This include expanding rural opportunities to slow the pace of migration and programs for out-of- school youth so as to diminish recruitment into gangs ,criminal networks ,or extremists groups.

5) In many African countries, the urban poor are still granted only temporary, like occupancy permits, that are not fully bankable and do not promote the emergency of real property markets and corresponding property tax systems that can sustain

local government operations. Thus, central government should work to grant clear titles or other durable tenure instruments. Among the countries that have changed laws and regulations to improve tenure security with some apparent success are Mozambique, Nambia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

6) Improvements in accountability and transparency of local authorities are needed to facilitate citizens' engagement and improve service delivery. In the past, local officials may have been more accustomed to operating behind the scenes (in some cases pursuing narrow personal benefit at the expense of the general public).

7) Urbanization and insecurity are linked by national and municipal government inability to address grievances, combined with the growing strains on housing, infrastructure; basic services and livelihoods still by themselves these factors do not necessarily trigger violent conflict. Qualifying variables include the willingness of elites to compromise, relative strength of civil organizations to promote political dialogue and degree of political stability in neighboring countries.

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