

Chapter 1 - Introduction: Political Stability, Instability and Crisis: What Are They and Why Do They Matter?

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Political Stability in Contemporary African Politics

Political stability is a situation or environment that almost all actors involved in anything related to Africa desire for the continent. Indeed, political stability is assumed to be a favorable condition for the economic development of any country in the world. It is also an ideal condition for a healthy and prosperous life of any citizen of any country.

Thus, in the preamble of its Constitutive Charter, the African Union cites as a major motivation for the creation of the organization: “the fact that the scourge of conflicts in Africa constitutes a major impediment to the socio-economic development of the continent and of the need to promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of our development and integration agenda” (African Union 2000, Preamble). Consequently, one of the main objectives of the African Union is “to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent” (African Union 2000, Article 3.f). For the African people in general, political stability can be considered one of the public goods that they need to live a decent life, free from the attacks of terrorists, and free from the uncertainty of national and international markets.

For the international donors, political stability in Africa has been also a major concern since the end of the Cold War. Particularly, international organizations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, convinced that Africa would not develop without political stability, have undertaken and supported countless research projects and publications on this issue.

Yet, as of today, Africa is still the most unstable region of the world, and stability appears to be more elusive than ever on the continent.

Political Stability, Instability and Crisis: Some Elusive Definitions

- Some Early Attempts to Assess the Stability of Political Systems

what is supposed to be stable? the **political system** or **regime** or the **government** or **leadership**?

- Some Competing Concepts: “political order/disorder”, “rogue state” and “failed state”, “fragile state”
- “Political Stability” as “Likelihood of Regime Survival”

Why Do Political Stability, Instability and Crisis Matter?

The Purpose and Argument of the Book

The main objective of this book is to identify the conditions or determinants of political instability, along with the actors behaviors that trigger or escalate conflicts, considered to be the main source of political instability.

The Plan of the Book

References

African Union. 2000. "Constitutive Act of the African Union."