

II.

The 2008 Results:

Index of African Governance

This year's Index of African Governance results are remarkably consistent with those of the first, 2007, Index of African Governance. Mauritius and the Seychelles again rank first and second, followed by Cape Verde, Botswana, and South Africa, which rank third, fourth, and fifth, respectively, in the 2008 Index. This year, in contrast to 2007, Cape Verde and Botswana have switched places, although their scores remain close. South Africa's rank has not changed. Namibia, Ghana, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Senegal, in that order, round out the top ten of the 2008 country rankings, Namibia moving ahead of Gabon, and Senegal and São Tomé and Príncipe switching places. However, the score differences remain slight among this second group.

The bottom ten of the forty-eight countries this year also show consistency, all with scores below 50. That list of nations most "needing improvement" includes, for 2008, Nigeria, Guinea, Eritrea, Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, Angola, the Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia, in descending order. Somalia's "government" in fact collects and makes available so little information about the country that its Index score must be calculated with considerable data missing; although its rank at the bottom appears to be reliable, its score should be treated as a rough approximation. New to these lowest rankings in 2008 are Eritrea, Nigeria, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, all of which slipped a few places, while Sierra Leone, Burundi, Liberia, and Guinea-Bissau have moved up several places in the 2008 Index as compared to the 2007 Index.

The 2008 Index of African Governance has benefited from several improvements, and new and enhanced sources of data. The next essay, "Measurements, Methods, and More," explains the exact ways in which the 2008 Index of African Governance is more robust than the 2007 Index. Additional and better information, as discussed in the next essay, may have driven some of the changes up or down, especially where the numerical distinctions are small. To make it possible to study carefully improvements and declines in governance for each country, all changes have been incorporated retrospectively for all years in the 2008 Index. Analysts, as per usual practice, should refer to this latest version of the data when making comparisons over time.

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Improvements and Regressions

The 2008 Index shows clearly that Liberia is the “most improved” in terms of governance performance over the last two Index years (2005 and 2006), as shown by a more than 10 point improvement in its score, thanks largely to its dramatic improvement in the area of Participation and Human Rights, as well as modest improvements in Security, Sustainable Economic Opportunity, and Human Development. Burundi is the second most-improved, thanks to improvements in all categories, and especially in Participation and Human Rights. Uganda, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, the Comoros, Burkina Faso, Swaziland, and Djibouti, among others have also demonstrated upward gains in their overall scores. Mauritania, followed by Chad, has notably gone backward the most in its scores. Using the differences between 2002 and latest Index year (2006) as a measure, Burundi, Liberia, Angola, and Rwanda were the most improved and Mauritania and Chad the most disadvantaged.

In terms of improvements in rankings (not scores) over the last two Index years, Uganda and Burundi tied for most improved, jumping eight places each, followed by Guinea-Bissau (seven places), Liberia (six places), and Djibouti and Burkina Faso (three places each). Changes in rankings differ from changes in scores because rankings reflect the relative positions of other countries as well, while scores highlight a country’s performance against its previous record. Mauritania (by eleven places), the Gambia (seven places), and Guinea (six places) fell the most in the rankings. Looking at 2002 as compared to the most recent year (2006), Rwanda gained seventeen places; Cameroon, nine; and Burundi and the Comoros, eight. Mauritania fell by thirteen places, followed by the Gambia, which fell ten places. (Listings of all sub-Saharan African countries with their scores and ranks for each year follow.)

Anomalies and Chronological Problems in 2007 and 2008

As was the case for the 2007 Index of African Governance, this year’s Index is based on the most complete statistics available, which requires a two year lag. The 2008 Index thus is based on international and locally acquired data for the 2006 year and does not reflect the myriad social, economic, and political upheavals affecting sub-Saharan Africa during 2007 and 2008. The events and alterations of 2007 will be captured in next year’s Index.

As a result, the recent massive deterioration in Zimbabwe’s security, rule of law, human rights record, economy, and human development is not reflected in the 2008 Index. Nor are the troubles following the Kenyan election of 2007, the coups in Mauritania, the battles in the Comoros, the security enhancements in Uganda, the political shifts in South Africa, a flawed election in Nigeria, the continued hostilities in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, and so on. For timely reports on these events, we refer readers to the very useful qualitative analyses provided by the International Crisis Group, Freedom House, the Institute for Security Studies, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, among other sources.

That said, the 2008 Index does faithfully capture governance (as defined in the preceding essay in this volume) throughout all of sub-Saharan Africa. A few of the individual country results merit additional explanation, particularly in light of events in 2007 and 2008, however. In the case of Zimbabwe, because Human Development numbers change slowly over time and because there was no substantial intrastate violence before 2007, scores are higher than impressionistic inference (even for 2006) would suggest. Likewise, again driven by Gabon's intrinsic security and its relatively robust human development and economic opportunity scores, Gabon remains ranked among the top ten in the 2008 Index, as in the 2007 Index. However, in both of these special cases, other category scores show the alterations that anecdotal evidence would imply, in particular for Gabon where it has unimpressive scores in the Participation and Human Rights category (ranking 26th of 48 countries). Zimbabwe's rank and score have dropped only slightly between 2005 and 2006, which seems improbable, but we expect the decline to be greater in 2007. It is also likely that some recent changes in performance indicators have not yet been captured adequately in the government statistics provided to international organizations, even with the data currently available.

Somalia, in last place this year as it was last year in the rankings, has slipped in scores as well, falling to below 20, but that very low score may reflect the difficulty of gathering accurate numbers for a country that still lacks a government, and therefore (according to the methodology of this Index) cannot—by definition—supply political goods. This year the makers of the Index had intended to include Somaliland as a forty-ninth sub-Saharan polity, breaking out that unrecognized, politically organized, de facto state from the larger geographical expression of Somalia, but even local research carried out in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, could not supply sufficient data points to include Somaliland in our Index. At present, this insufficiency seems to reflect the difficulty of setting up a national statistics system from scratch rather than a lack of will or lack of cooperation with our researchers.