

What do we need to understand about FIC in relation to the Global and African perspective on issues of society, ecology, inequality and governance.

1. Definition of FIC: what does the theme convey

I would submit that the notion of capabilities entails more than just individual capacities to explore possible futures but institutional capacities as well to do so and an environment which is conducive to learning, interacting with broad range of stakeholders and taking appropriate action for triggering or managing transformation. In other words, capacities to act in a proactive and strategic manner.

To know more about it, please refer to the abundant bibliography on approaches of the future, particularly the work of M. Godet.

2. On the issues of FIC and issues of society, critical uncertainties include the following

- How will social inequality be addressed, bearing in mind that forms of social inequality may vary from region to region and over time. For Africa for example, access to knowledge, digital divide certainly, along with gender issues, feature highly.
- In what form will distinct identities emerge? The question is two-fold. One aspect of it has to do with sources of identities. There is a multiplicity of sources :

participation to markets (consumer/producer/intermediary) participation to political life (political activist, leader), participation to cultural activities are some of the possible sources of construction of identities. They may be mutually reinforcing or in some cases divergent, if not totally contradictory.

The other aspect of identity is that there may be a tension between the desirable, i.e. the long term aspiration and the current objective reality. Case in point is the tension between the African identity, or personality referred to by social scientists, political leaders and advocates of the regional/continental integration and the reality of multiple identities which may be national or infra-national (ethnicity-based for instance)

- How will religious institutions and practices evolve :structural analysis carried out in Africa has assigned somewhat unexpected weight to this factor. New religious communities have emerged. Communities from other continents have been warmly embraced. This shows that the role of religious institutions and practices must not be underestimated, particularly as some of these new institutions emphasize individual responsibility and / or see the success of entrepreneurs as a sign of Heaven's blessing and proclaim that poverty is the spawn of Satan and that to seek prosperity is to seek God.
- Population growth: estimates paint the picture of a SSA with a population of 1,1 to 1,2 billion people in 2025 in round figures. With just under 15% of the world population, Africa will have continued to reclaim its place in the world. The UN's

medium variant estimates Africa's urban population at 560 millions. This urban population will have multiplied by 2,5 in 25 years. This means that slightly less than one in two Africans will live in cities in 2025. This also means that around 550 million Africans will still live in rural areas, compared with 430 millions in 2000. Rural areas will continue to be populated, more densely than ever before. Will not that trigger or accelerate migration particularly if the production systems do evolve quickly towards greater productivity?

- Lineage structures do play an important role in much of Africa. The logic that characterizes these structures is quite well known: stakeholders prefer to minimize risks than to maximize profits. This especially leads people to invest in social relationships, to diversify them, and to prefer them to investing in productive capital. The functioning of lineage structures has however been disrupted in the last decades because foreign cultural influences were introduced to Africa societies. Lineage structures developed without radically altering production systems. What does the future hold? New cultural balances will certainly emerge. But will they change how people live together? In particular will there be a profound change in production methods?

3. With respect to governance

Changes in the international environment make it unlikely that African authorities will enjoy greater flexibility in the future. Before the Berlin Wall collapsed, we lived in a bipolar world. That world is a thing of the past. The U.S.A may face economic

crises in the next 25 year, but U.S military technology is so advanced that any hallenge seems unlikely. There is no power anywhere on the horizon that could constitute an opposite pole.

Since the collapse of the URSS, Russia has fallen too far behind to be able to play this role. Europe will definitely become more powerful, not without growing pains. But, Europe will not have the means to recreate a bipolar world. China aspires to become a superpower. But China will have too many internal problems to be able to play this role. Japan's model of growth is running out of steam. A new model is slow in coming. Japan too will lack the means to rise to superpower status. Six major blocks will likely coexist. They will comprise the US, Europe, Russia, Japan, China and India.

Global free trade, and freer commercial and financial flows, will remain a well-established bend. On the other hand, we probably will not see a freer flow of people.

- Market regulation will be only one aspect of more general regulation of the dominant capitalist system. Capitalism will find in itself the means to remedy the weaknesses and even its contradictions. It seems most likely that there will be no large-scale generated, long-lasting economic crises which would trigger a return to protectionism that would not fail to affect Africa.
- There will be a growing number of global problems. These problems will relate to the environment, natural resource management, health and security of the planet as a whole. In particular, we are unlikely to see an end to international terrorism. It

may become an even stronger force. But it will not succeed in destabilizing the global system.

- The concept of global public goods should emerge more clearly. It will become more effective. It will carry more weight in international relations. But progress in global governance will be hard to achieve. The UN system might carry more weight, but this is far from a sure thing. Even so, the major blocs will continue to play a dominant role in seeking solutions to global problems.
- Aid to developing countries in general, and especially SSA, will not dry up altogether. Developed countries have too much at stake for this to happen. Aid thus seems unlikely to collapse permanently, barring any long-lasting global crises. It seems most likely that the volume of aid will fluctuate depending on the economic and political situation. At the same time, donors are likely to be more selective and impose more conditionalities.
- Major shifts are also possible. Significant weight may be given to global public goods. These are of interest to all countries, especially developed countries. This may be at the expense of aid directly targeting the economic growth of developing countries.