

# Reflections on Liberal Democracy and International Debt in Post-Cold War Africa<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction: Main Issues, Objectives, and Approaches

International debt problems, involving the arcane operations of the world's financial system, may appear abstract and far removed from peoples' daily lives, but those problems have had severe, pernicious, and very concrete impacts. In the third world, debt problems have increased hunger, illness, and degradation; debt has become a barrier to progress, dashing hopes and solidifying misery for millions of people. – MacEwan, 1990, p. 14.

The central observation, which is used in this paper as a reflective hypothesis, stipulates that although liberal democracy as a form of governance has been applauded and welcomed with a high level of enthusiasm and optimism the world over as a necessary global dogma or remedy for 'good governance', the moral foundation embodied in this dogma has proven less convincing. And its ideology can also be teleologically questionable. As is well recognised, the economic basis of liberalism has created serious degrading social conditions in most African societies and among the majority of the African people. These conditions have started to engender among some social groups a certain level of scepticism concerning the abilities of liberal democracy to perform after the first phase of 'democratic euphoria' has passed. Despite this illusion, however, most people

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still firmly believe that democracy is the way out of poverty, social instability, and war. I think that the appropriate question should be: What kind of democracy will produce what kind of society?

In general, this article tries to tackle the above question. It is divided into five sections. The first part deals with my objectives in writing this article, the elements of theoretical approaches used to guide the analysis, and the identification of relevant social and political issues affected by the pursuit of liberal democracy and the mechanisms and policies of foreign loans. The second section analyses liberal democratic theory as a global electoral issue. I also discuss other developing regions of the world to reflect the global dimension of representative democracy. Given the technical and philosophical nature of the relationship between foreign loans and the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stabilisation programmes since 1981 in Africa, and how these programmes have influenced international and national politics and policies, the third section discusses the ways in which the concept of liberal democracy, from a realist perspective, has been projected on, or incorporated in, structural adjustment programmes. The fourth part examines the question of the nature of international debt in Africa. Here, I also compare some figures and percentages among the African countries and other countries in the Global South to contextualise the question of African debt. The conclusion considers the question of what should be proposed as remedies to solve the puzzle of international debt and democracy effectively and comprehensively and how they can be changed with other socially productive systems.

The main objective of this article is not to economically articulate the correlations between the consequences of international debt and liberal democracy. I am basically interested in making a critical and theoretical analysis about the implications of foreign debt on the development process. How would African social conditions effectively support or be conducive to liberal democracies that are being technically reduced to electoral procedures? I will elaborate on the assumption that foreign debt is a key factor that has helped to impede any consistent local and regional efforts toward mobilising human and material resources needed to actualise a development agenda. I also further discuss how liberal democracy, in its current

form, despite its massive support and high level of 'revolutionary' expectations among various segments of African societies, is likely to produce meagre positive social results in light of the current marginalisation of Africa. It should be emphasised that this article is generally theoretical. However, it has also supportive empirical illustrations to clarify my views.

What is most likely to happen in African politics and societies, especially in the area of liberal democracy, if African states collectively default or deliberately fail to honour their financial obligations because they are simply unable to pay their loans and their debt service as agreed upon with the so-called donors? Whose debts are they? Who contracted them and in whose names were they contracted? Would they be collectively punished as a result of defaulting? Would international law and trade relations as articulated by the World Trade Organization (WTO) alienate them all? The option of defaulting is still explorable and possible, as with Argentina in 2002, in international relations. As of 2003, among 42 countries which are classified as heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC), 34 are located in Africa. Four are in Latin America, three in Asia, and one in the Middle East. Also as of 2003, it should be noted that among these 34 African countries, 20 have serious manifestations of inter-and intrapolitical conflicts, which have led to wars, a high level of social explosion, and political instability. In the same period, wars in various parts of Africa cost about US \$15 billion per year. Among 46 African countries which are members of the World Health Organisation (WHO), 23 countries have been experiencing some kind of serious emergency situations, which had created, at least, nine million refugees and over 35 million internally displaced persons across the continent. The human loss in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, has reached an unprecedented magnitude with an estimated 4 million casualties between 1998 and 2003 as a result of military invasions by Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi.

Since the 1990s, several factors, which have variously affected the African states' policies of development, people's efforts at attempting to articulate social programs, and the quality of the governing structures, have coexisted in a complex, interrelated form. These factors include the increase of foreign debt; the activism of the so-

called donors in making sure that the foreign loans are systematically paid, or at least the debt service is paid; the publicity of the ideas and policy of debt-relief programs; and the intensification of popular demand for democracy and multipartyism. While the number of democratic elections has significantly increased in Africa, the quality of the life of the average African has been at the same time systematically degrading for the past 20 years or so. The debt-relief programmes essentially revolve around how the so-called donors should deal with Africa's economic and social problems. Despite the publicity, it is argued that debt-relief or forgiveness often simply amounts to clearing the way for the acquisition of new loans. It should be noted that some countries, Japan in particular, view debt forgiveness almost as default and withdraw confidence in those countries, creating a loss of trust by private corporations as well.

In post-Cold War Africa, is international or foreign debt still an important factor in the Africans' search for development paradigms and strategies that should be relevant and appropriate to current African objective conditions? Within the context of the euphoria associated with the promotion of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an initiative which is claimed to be African and which was officially adopted on October 23, 2001 by African heads of state, is liberal democracy adopted in Africa equipped with the moral support needed to eradicate poverty, as demanded by the African people? Furthermore, within the framework of the newly established African Union (AU), seemingly an imitation of the European Union at least in its current form, will the issues concerning African debt continue to be central as a way of dealing with the total integration of African economies, markets, and politics?

Another important issue to be mentioned, which constitutes a serious ongoing debate related to foreign debt, is the question of reparations. Many African scholars, political activists, and politicians both in Africa and the Africa Diaspora, especially in the United States, have argued that Western powers and their multinational corporations which subjected the African people to slavery for hundreds of years must pay, in the form of cash, damages related to this enslavement. Indeed, this enslavement contributed to the development of capitalism in the West. Although this dimension is not the object of this paper, it must be mentioned because from an

Afro-centric perspective, African states and people should not pay debts which were accumulated under the conditions of collective servitude of the African people.

Additional philosophical questions must be posed in this context. What kinds of people and societies can be promoted by liberal political theories and practices, as they are applied in African conditions? How are the values and principles of liberal democracy supported by the advocates of international debt? I critically discuss whether the rise of liberal democracy and multipartyism and the newly promoted debt forgiveness agenda by the G-7 countries (the major highly industrialised and democratic countries) are likely to create the conditions conducive to genuine political debate on development at the national and continental levels. (It should be noted that with Russia on board, the group is now referred to as the G-8.)

Can the national and international technicalities and conditionalities set up for applying for foreign loans, the domestic/internal financial constraints such as deficits, the payment of arrears, social conditions, and the ideological determinism related to the international debt in Africa support the claims of 'genuine' liberal democracies? Are there really any international debt problems in relationship to people's efforts to actualise democracy or any other type of progressive society? With the current internationalisation of the principles and the actions and policies of global financial donors, are we witnessing the end of the progressive movements in Africa? If so, what will the alternatives be and can they lead to development?

The total African external debt at the end of the 1998 was \$324.6 billion. The issues concerning this international debt and its social, economic, and political implications have been intensively debated in international, regional, and national forums between the 1980s and the 1990s. Practical actions have been organised by various local and international groups; for instance, the Jubilee 2000 held one of its protest meetings in Dakar, Senegal, in December 2000 and the author was invited to attend it. He wrote a critical paper on the debt issue for the meeting. Furthermore, interesting and provocative books related to issues of debt, which have received positive reviews such as *A Fate Worse than Debt: The World Financial Crisis and the*

*Poor* by Susan George, *Debt and Disorder: International Economic Instability and U.S. Imperial Decline* by Arthur MacEwan, and *World Debt, Who is to Pay* by Jacobo Schatan, and Opoku Agyeman's *Africa's Persistent Vulnerable Link to Global Politics*, have also been published. However, philosophical and developmental issues associated with the debt question have not been fully explored in Africa. Yet the results of the international forums and intellectual discourses in terms of the impact of the debt have been pragmatically either negligible or totally negative. Thus, they are still debatable. What is clear is that the amount of debt has been consistently increasing since the end of the 1980s as Table 1 shows.

As alluded to earlier, it is difficult to set out with precision the nature of the implications of the relationship between the forms of democracy movements that are taking place in Africa, the magnitude of Africa's international debt in general terms, and the deep cuts in national budgets as part of the SAPs. My concern is not necessarily about the narrow issue of analysing the amount of the debt accumulated in Africa. Rather, I am interested in examining the nature of power relations between the so-called donors of the loans and the receivers, and the abilities or possibilities of payment of the debts by national governments at this time of global political uncertainty. Thus, I argue that the analysis of the nature of the relationship between the availability of the existing national resources in each country and the implications of policy decisions on the institutionalisation of liberal democracy is essentially a matter of distributive capabilities and the political will of a given political regime and in a given society. In addition, it should be noted that there are different types of international debt, for example, bilateral, multilateral, concessional, official non-concessional, and loans originating from private creditors and commercial banks. This analysis reflects on foreign debt at large.

Elements of my approaches can be summarised as a combination of historical-structuralism with a dose of systems analysis. Social systems do not simply change by their own volition. They must be changed by either internal factors or by pressure from their ecological circumstances. As is argued here, genuine or quasi-permanent changes are first of all structurally internal, although they may have important external support. The way states and societies function in

Table 1: External Debt of Net-Debtor Developing Countries, 1989-1999 in Million \$

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>Africa</b>											
Total External Debt	275.5	288.8	291.1	287.5	290.1	315.6	335.2	330.1	315.4	324.6	---
Long-term Debt	241.5	254.5	257.6	251.6	250.2	275.6	290.3	282.8	269.5	276.5	---
Concessional	77.1	84.9	91.8	95.8	100.8	110.6	119.2	125.2	122.8	130.4	---
Bilateral	51.8	56.6	60.1	62.2	64.2	68.8	72.0	76.1	73.0	76.4	---
Multilateral	25.2	28.3	31.7	33.6	36.6	41.9	47.2	49.1	49.8	54.0	---
Official, non-concessional	79.8	81.4	84.1	82.5	81.1	91.5	97.2	90.1	82.7	84.5	---
Bilateral	51.8	50.6	51.7	50.5	47.8	55.3	60.7	55.4	52.0	53.3	---
Multilateral <sup>1</sup>	21.4	24.6	26.6	27.0	28.2	30.4	31.3	29.2	26.1	26.9	---
IMF	6.6	6.1	5.7	5.0	5.0	5.8	5.2	5.4	4.5	4.3	---
Private creditors	84.7	88.3	81.8	73.2	68.4	73.4	73.9	67.6	64.0	61.7	---
Of which:											
Bonds <sup>2</sup>	2.0	3.6	3.1	5.1	2.9	4.5	5.3	5.9	9.7	9.8	---
Commercial banks	31.9	31.1	29.4	22.9	21.3	21.9	22.9	25.1	22.3	21.3	---
Short-Term Debt	34.0	34.2	33.5	35.9	39.9	40.0	44.9	47.3	45.9	48.1	---
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>											
Total External Debt	123.8	140.0	145.9	149.5	153.7	162.5	172.1	170.6	165.8	171.1	175.7
Long-term Debt	108.4	121.3	125.7	127.1	129.2	140.0	147.4	145.1	141.8	147.4	149.9
Concessional	50.0	58.4	63.1	66.3	69.8	77.9	82.2	84.6	84.6	90.5	94.2
Bilateral	29.0	33.0	34.5	35.8	36.7	38.4	39.8	40.3	39.9	42.3	42.7
Multilateral <sup>1</sup>	21.0	25.3	28.6	30.5	33.1	39.5	42.4	44.3	44.6	48.3	51.5
Official, non-concessional	33.7	37.4	37.3	36.7	35.3	37.2	39.5	36.6	33.0	33.6	33.0
Bilateral	20.0	22.8	22.9	22.8	21.7	24.7	25.8	24.8	22.6	21.1	22.9
Multilateral	9.3	10.5	10.9	10.8	10.9	11.2	11.1	10.0	8.8	8.7	8.1
IMF	4.4	4.1	3.5	3.0	2.7	1.3	2.5	1.9	1.6	1.8	2.0
Private creditors	24.7	25.6	25.3	24.1	24.1	24.9	25.7	23.8	24.3	23.3	22.8
Of which:											
Bonds <sup>2</sup>	4	.3	.3	.2	.2	.2	.3	.2	.2	.2	3.2
Commercial banks	8.1	8.7	8.5	8.2	8.2	8.5	9.3	12.2	10.1	9.9	10.2
Short-Term Debt	15.4	18.7	20.2	22.4	24.5	22.5	24.8	25.5	23.8	23.7	25.8

1. 'Including concessional facilities of IMF' (p. 278).

2. 'Government or government-guaranteed debt only' (Ibid).

Source: from Table A.25 (Pg. 276-278), United Nations, *World Economic and Social Survey, 2000*, New York, based on IMF, OECD, and World Bank's data.

the world system is the result of the internal and external dynamics of their location. But this location is far from being historically fixed or static.

The world is a system and an organic whole, which is conditioned by the actors' location and history. Despite the fact that European-imposed political and economic transformation created a peripheral Africa since the nineteenth century, Africa is perceived as a complex political system that has its own history and its own internal social dynamics. This history is cumulative, and not necessarily deterministic, in relationship to the ability of the system to change or to engage in the process of change. I am more interested in the history of social production and reproduction than in a descriptive history. It is argued in this article that the way in which a system produces and reproduces itself in a given environment is likely to inform the nature of the system itself, its weaknesses, and its strengths. This information is vital in engaging change. That is to say, I am interested in contradictions, not necessarily as pathological tools of destruction, but as signs or reflections of objective conditions needed for any kind of constructive endeavour to take place. Within the logic of the historical structuralism as used in this study, it should be stated that one cannot fully study and understand any aspects of any region of the world, in this case the African region, without relating them in a critical manner to those of other regions either through imperialism, colonialism, or humanism (Windschuttle, 1999: 71-75).

The conceptual elements that support the above approach can be summarized in the following three constructive premises, which I borrowed from another work, 'Reconceptualizing the State as the Leading Agent of Development in the Context of Globalization in Africa', (*African Journal of Political Science* Vol. 7 No.1 June 2002).

The first premise is that 'regardless of the good intention of many African leaders, activists, and people in trying to continuously copying or imitating the European experiences and their unilinear models of development, and regardless of the quality of their imitations at a given time, Africa will never organically and ontologically develop out of the European history and the European languages and metaphysics. However, no society can develop out of autarky. People also can learn or borrow from others but whatever can be borrowed from other people's experiences has to be selectively injected into the

African projects, appropriated, and owned by Africans before it can positively be part of the African metaphysics, ethos, and the African experiences' (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002: 84).

The second premise, which is also similar to the scientific and historical premise, stipulates that: "no people, a nation or a continent can socially progress without building the foundation of its actions first, on its own history and culture" (*Ibid.*). European kings, the nobility (commercial classes/petty bourgeoisie), and the churches from the medieval era up to the renaissance and even in the eighteenth century, fought each other to acquire or share power in Europe. But it should be emphasised that the emergence of modern state structures in Europe since the Westphalia peace accord in Prussia in 1648, was essentially an internal/ regional process and a collective decision. In this case, the notion of collective sovereignty implies survival, respect, and autonomy. European monarchs and nobility forcibly appropriated the Mediterranean city-states' histories and cultures, as well as technologies and resources from China, India, and Africa. Martin Bernal (1987) traced Greece's roots to Africa, whose semiotic and spiritual innovations had been channelled to the Aegean Sea by Egyptian boats. This second premise promotes a perspective that African history and culture and their internal contradictions must be critically reexamined to avoid either their romanticisation or a lack of awareness. As compared to a historical and sociological analysis, which is reflected in Bernal's thesis, romanticisation of any culture and history is as dangerous phenomenon as fascism, racism, or any kind of biological argument in a nation-building project. Fascist, racist, and biological arguments are generally deterministic and often stereotypical. It should be emphasised that the contradictions should not always be perceived and defined as infinitely pathological. Out of the contradictions or science of dialectics, humans have historically made synthetic judgments on what directions to follow in defining and redefining themselves.

The third premise is that even with the advancement of genetic engineering or newly developed cloning experiments, people have not consciously chosen for themselves the place of their birth, their gender, and the colour of their hair and eyes. People are who and what they are as a result of historical accident, biological structures, revolutionary and evolutionary processes. An individual's infant

conscious contribution to this historical determinism at the beginning of life has a probability of zero. What is more important in the definition of humans, however, is what we can or should do after we have been projected out into 'the jungle' by the forces of historical and natural accidents. That is to say, human beings' choices and decisions are transcendently more important than what gods or divinities did or do in their single objective on our behalf. Further, social consciousness is a valuable determining factor in the ways people define and redefine themselves in a given physical and social environment. Without such a social consciousness, humans may not be very much qualitatively different from other animals. Social consciousness is a determining factor of what we can become.

It should be noted that at the end of the Cold War, judicial activism, the rise of demands for democratic rights, grassroots movements, the popularisation of human rights, the globalisation of a liberal economy, and widespread state reforms, have significantly contributed to the struggle for some type of democracy the world over. These factors, in one way or the other, have also challenged the mechanisms related to the payment or acquisition of more foreign debt in Africa. Debt as an analytical tool, or a unit of analysis in the international political economy, is not new in the social science lexicon. Historically, it has taken different forms depending on its nature and origins, its beneficiaries and social and political implications in a given society, and its social classes and gender. However, when nation-states start to spend between 30 percent and 40 percent of their gross national product (GNP) to either pay for the principal or to service foreign loans, then international debt becomes part of the world crisis. A country like Mozambique until recently had to save only \$10 million a year out of its GNP to pay a debt service bill of \$120 million. Before the adoption of the newly defined HIPC guidelines from the G7 since 1996, Zambia, for instance, spent around 45 percent of government revenues on debt service alone. What are the social and political consequences of this crisis in HIPC?

In general terms, Cold War politics can be characterised by the influence of two interrelated factors, namely the building of international debt and the escalation of the politics of militarism. Most African countries gained their nominal political independence during the Cold War era (1945–1991). The dominant ideology during

that period was militarism. The military victory of the allied forces over Nazi Germany and Japan projected international militarism as a tool for producing political peace and capitalist development. In Africa, peripheral capitalism was fully supported by the militarism of both civilian and military regimes. The world, especially the Global South, was essentially ruled by the institutionalisation of the military in state apparatuses. The debt that African states accumulated took place when liberal democracy was either functionally very weak or totally absent in Africa. However, it is not the lack of liberal democracy that led to the accumulation of foreign debt in Africa; rather, the contradictions of liberal economics supported the states' loan projects, thus reflecting the logic of push-pull theory. The global financial institutions that organised and provided loan programmes such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund themselves are functionally undemocratic.

Global capitalism as promoted by the above institutions has created a *global apartheid* system that consists of the established centres (European Union and NAFTA), the emerging peripheries (East Asia, South Africa), struggling peripheries (much of Latin America and the Middle East), and stagnating or regressing peripheries (much of Sub-Saharan Africa). For instance, about 14 percent of the world population use more than 80 percent of the world's resources. The bulk of global resource flows is confined to the dominant capitalist centres. While the African continent accounts for 10 percent of the world's population, its economies account for only 1.1 percent of world GDP. According to Keet (1997, p. 23):

Fully 84% of all Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) originates within such countries, with a large proportion (of almost 40%) originating in just two countries, the USA and the UK, in 1996. [...] (Almost 60% of global FDI in that year was still moving between the most developed industrialized countries of North America and Europe. [...] 98 out of the 100 largest TNCs, globally, originate in the OECD. [...] Fully 87% of all TNCs are headquartered in the EU, the US, and Japan; and in 1996, 88% of their 'foreign assets' were actually located in each other's economies.

In the 1970s and 1980s at the time of accelerated militarism in most developing countries, especially in Africa, issues concerning social and human rights, development, and individual and collective security were timidly articulated, often in grassroots movements or in underground circles of civil societies. In this context, militarism took shape as an ideology that highly valued war and warlike social situations and in so doing, legitimised state violence. It implied the subordination of the cultural values of civil society, even in truncated form, to military values and the subordination of civilian control of the military to military control of civilians. In most cases, militarism was associated with political instability, rigid bureaucracy, arbitrary decision-making, totalitarianism, and autocracy. Between the 1990s and 2003, popular demands for social and political rights and gender equality have intensified. These quests have been incorporated into the behaviour and actions of opposition political parties and opposition discourse. Thus they have become part of action platforms and the means through which people and their local leaders are requesting social changes.

The debates on what kind of democracy or multipartyism and what kind of development for Africa are not new. These debates should continue to help redefine and refine the old question of what kind of social and political systems may fit the African socio-historical and cultural imperatives. These questions have been examined within the framework of debt issues as global issues and the recent movement of ideas on debt forgiveness or debt relief programmes.

The question of international debt and its implications in relationship to the practices and values of liberal/representative democracy must be critically examined within the context of the failures of the states in Africa to produce, to promote, and to sustain systematically any consistent agenda or policies that articulate development or social progress.

### **Electoral Democracy as a Global Issue**

There are some people, including scholars, who are still sceptical about the possible success of electoral democracies around the world (especially among countries in the South) in terms of their contributions towards the improvement of people's social conditions.

This scepticism is based on the nature of the global economy and new orbits of power. Some have perceived the theatre of global democracy and its dominant dogmas as an operational scene or procedure that resembles a Japanese Kabuki drama in which on a *karaoke* stage, the visible singers come and go, but the songs remain the same, selected from a limited, rarely changed menu (Jain and Inoguchi (1997, p. 2). Japanese democracy has been called ‘*karaoke* democracy’. It is my position in this article that the notion of “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” is intellectually inadequate in examining a dynamic social concept such as democracy. Internal and local alliances of forces based on the formation of local interests are as important as the external factors in the definition and allocation of foreign debts in Africa. This is an area where social science scholars have emphasised the interactive intellectual perspectives as the most relevant to the study of African politics.

Since the fifteenth century of the existence of the world system, which expanded unevenly through a complex system of mercantilism, transnationality, Western culture, and market forces. The twentieth century was essentially the century of large-scale wars, massive migration of refugees, colonisation, and decolonisation. But, at the same time, we should not repudiate the view that it is at the end of the twentieth century we started talking about global democratisation in terms of its defined claims and demands, the number of the actors involved in the democratisation process, the internationalisation of the values of democratic policies, and the social implications of such policies. Obviously, slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and global corporatism are all structurally anti-democratic. Their contradictions, the levels of exploitation of labour, and the pillage of the material resources, have historically led to the rise of the struggles for democracy in various forms.

There are some pragmatic and historical difficulties that can be pointed out in studying democracy, as a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” at the global level. For instance, despite the fact that democracy is globally acknowledged as a desirable end, no single model of democracy can claim to be universally acceptable. Different regions, subregions, and countries have produced their own democratic forms based on the imperatives of their histories and geographies. Each democracy among the

existing liberal democratic societies, for instance, has its own technical mechanisms and procedures that define its uniqueness and particularities. The systems of social control also differ from country to country. People's attitudes, expectations, and responses to democratic institutions, and the nature of the democratic institutions and their values in those countries, also all vary from country to country. In a broad sense, however, Robert Dahl (1971) provides a generally agreed upon definition of democracy, with the following characteristics: (a) an extensive competition among individuals and organised groups; (b) a highly inclusive level of participation in the selection of leaders and policies; (c) and a high level of civil and political liberty. It is "a political system, separate and apart from the economic and social systems to which it is joined" (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1999: 6) and a system that supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and that permits the population to influence major decisions by choosing the holders of political office.

What factors associated with electoral democracies have been globalised? Have the demands of democracy and the processes of producing democracies become global? Through a new wave of democratisation, democracy has been claimed by most people. Theoretically, the demands have become global. In 2000, the movements that started in the 1970s from the demands for democracy the world over could be characterised by what Victor Hugo once said: "On peut résister à une armée mais jamais à une idée dont le temps est venu". ("One can resist an army but never an idea whose time has come.")

After the end of World War II, many countries in the South were still under the domination of the colonial powers. The new processes of globalisation were set up with the creation of three major United Nations agencies, namely the World Bank, the IMF, and the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) now the World Trade Organization (WTO). In fact for more than 40 years, these global forces not only produced undemocratic effects and behaviour, but more important, they have themselves functioned undemocratically. Thus, while there was high economic growth between 1945 and 1960 in colonial Europe and the United States, democracy was not a consistent part of the economic equation as a global force. Even

in Western Europe, the priority of the reconstruction movement was essentially based on a free market economic determinism, and military and security policies.

Although some countries in the colonial world gained their independence by building or borrowing from the dogmas of liberal democracy, establishing fragile institutions such as chambers of representatives or national assemblies, in general the struggle for democracy, as a specific issue about political rights, was not a unique movement that was philosophically different from the overall strategic struggles for independence. The principle of self-determination at the international level, which was articulated and promoted by the United States since the end of the nineteenth century, was essentially adopted in many countries as a national liberation objective or nation-state building dogma. This principle became popular and was considered legitimate, especially by newly emerging states, between the end of World War II and the 1960s, as a result of the military intervention of the United States to save Western Europe from Nazism and Fascism, the American reconstruction of Western Europe through the Marshall Plan, and the establishment of its Peace Corps and Fulbright programmes. But soon the militarisation and privatisation tendencies of United States foreign policy prevailed as they started to challenge the considerations related to the principle of self-determination in other countries.

The priorities of most movements, focussed more on building nation-states and promoting the ideas of constitutional rights and political sovereignty than on the pursuit of individual political rights. The rights of the nation-state were perceived as superior and eventually more important and comprehensive than the rights of individual citizens. It was assumed that the dynamics of the states would subsequently create the conditions for the institutionalisation of democracy. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, composed of a preamble and 30 articles adopted by the Third General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, is one of the most important international positions that contributed to the rise of the struggles for liberal democracy.

The advent of the Cold War was not conducive to the consolidation of democracy in Africa. Undemocratic states were promoted in the name of capitalism and militarism. In most cases, during the Cold

War era, states' apparatuses, especially ruling political parties and executive branches of governments essentially served as national intelligence agencies for the super-powers to collect information, and to intimidate progressive forces.

Many aspects of this culture are still functionally alive today. In the 1970s, one-party regimes and military dictatorships of various sorts, supported by multinationals, the World Bank and the IMF, the United States, and the Soviet Union, held power in Africa, South America, Asia, and Eastern Europe. In contrast, in 1999, there were electoral democracies in about 180 countries. The number has been systematically increasing. This movement has swept over every region of the globe. And three-quarters of the countries in Africa have organised national elections mostly on a multiparty basis (Adejumobi, 2000: 6).

Not only have the claims of liberal democracy become global, but also democracy itself is perceived as a global value. The propaganda about the values of liberal democracy from the global financial institutions, the European Union, and the United States, has also intensified. In March 2003, the United States waged war against Saddam Hussein of Iraq basically in the name of liberal democracy.

There are high expectations about what these electoral democracies should do and how fast they should deliver services to the people. For many people in developing countries, for instance, this democracy has become a saviour in their minds. It is perceived either as another dimension of development or as a complementary force to it. It should also be recognised that its expansion between 1970 and the 1990s has been unprecedented in contemporary world politics. For instance, in just 25 years since the mid-1970s, the number of electoral democracies has more than doubled. During this period, approximately 74 countries changed from non-democratic to democratic regimes based on electoral democracy criteria. According to the survey conducted by James Holston of the University of California in San Diego, in 1972 there were 52 electoral democracies, constituting 33 percent of the world's 160 sovereign nation-states. By 1996, the number rose to 118 democracies out of 191 nation-states, or 62 percent of the total, for a net gain of 66 democratic states. Among the larger countries, those with a population of one million or more people, the number

of democracies nearly tripled during the same period. Significantly, the number of non-democratic states has declined by a third since the early 1970s, after rising steadily from the beginning of the century. In the Asia-Pacific region, only a handful of countries, including Australia, Fiji, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Sri Lanka had some democratic practices. Others such as India, although it has been often presented as the largest or most populous democracy, Pakistan, the Philippines, and South Korea had suffered from democratic reversals in the 1960s and the 1970s. Furthermore, the recent military coups d'état in several countries in the South have reflected a new trend of democratic reversal, for instance, Côte d'Ivoire since the military coup of December 1999, Fiji since May 19, 2000, the Democratic Republic of Congo since the assassination of Laurent Kabila on January 17, 2001, and the military coup d'état in the Central Africa Republic on March 16, 2003.

However, it should be noted that by the end of the 1990s, among 35 states that compose the Americas, 31 had electoral democracies (89 percent). In South and Central America, of 20 nation-states, only Peru and Mexico could not be clearly considered democratic despite some partial elections. Of 53 countries in contemporary Africa, the number of electoral democracies increased to 18 (34 percent). (It should be noted that Western Sahara is not counted among these countries.) But there have been several democratic reversals in countries, which previously have practised some liberal democracy, such as Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic (CAR), Liberia, Niger, and Sierra Leone. The recent movement of Islamisation in northern Nigeria, for example, can seriously threaten the foundation of Nigerian electoral democracy. Despite this dimension, however, electoral power and its multiparty basis seem to be larger than the religious configuration in the north of Nigeria. Thus, despite protests by the so-called opposition parties, Nigeria had its elections in April 2003, and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria's ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) was re-elected president. In countries involved in war in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, practices of electoral democracy have been illusory. Nevertheless, some countries such as Benin, Mali, and Cape Verde, have made significant progress in the opening of the political space. In the Asia-Pacific region, 24 of its 38 nation-states are now politically democratic (63 percent).

Within the new nation-states of the former Eastern Europe, out of its 27 nation-states, 19 have become formally democratic (70 percent) (Holston, op. cit).

Although democratic debates and local democratic projects are not absent in the Middle East, it is the only region of the world that has been comparatively stagnant in terms of engagement in the pursuit of liberal democracy. But even the Palestinian Authority (PA), which has been described by the Western dominated media and politicians as being essentially undemocratic, with the selection of a newly established Prime Minister by the name of Mahmood Abbas in April 2003 is showing some signs of public debates. He seems to accept the language of liberal democracy in his discourse on peace and nation-state building. However, only Israel and Turkey, (14 percent) have had solid political debates on democratic and systematic elections and functioning liberal democratic institutions. In short, there is no doubt that the electoral processes have been globalised and multipartyism has been perceived as an instrument of liberal democracy.

## **Liberal Democracy within the Framework of the Realist School of Thought, and the Claims of the Structural Adjustment Programmes**

### ***(a) Arguments and Assumptions Related to the Realist School of Thought***

The realist school of thought as the dominant paradigm for analysing state formation and international relations at large in the North has been influenced by the Hobbesian state of nature perspective, theories of anarchism, and libertarianism, and also by the Hegelian idea of the divine foundation of statehood. My objective here is not to expand the discussion on the historiography of liberal democracy within the realist school of thought. Rather, I would like to identify some general characteristics of liberal democracy and examine whether they have been projected or incorporated into the logic of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in Africa.

In comparison to idealists, realists in the political science literature tend to perceive and define the world mainly in the state-centric

paradigm. Idealists argue that in addition to the state as an important actor, there are other actors that should equally participate in the management of world politics with legitimacy. As it is also called power politics theory, and as it developed within many dimensions of the European-American scholarship, the realist school of thought as reflected in the works of Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes, Niccolò Machiavelli, Hegel, E. H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger, for instance, is essentially a state- and Euro-centric phenomenon (Lumumba-Kasongo 2003). States are fundamentally self-interested and competitive phenomena (Newman 1996: 17). As an irreducible element in international politics, the underlying condition for the state's development is conflict.

In international relations, the state's expansionism is the motive for the interactions among states and nations. It is in the name of the national interests that states interact with one another. It is in the name of those interests that they also take arms against one another. So-called national interests are defined as natural and organic. Humanity is considered secondary to the interests and actions of actualisation of the state power. In this tradition, the state is perceived as a rational political animal, despite contradictions that may emerge from its actions and means. As Ann Kelleher and Laura Klein state:

While the state primacy perspective of the world does not define the superiority of types of systems, it does privilege a specific type of political organization: The state is viewed as the most important unit for both national and international interaction. According to those who hold this perspective, the primary political identity for all groups and individuals should be as citizens of the state of their birth or adoption. The state primacy perspective does not argue for universal similarity in cultures or centralized power between states. In fact, it gives states a tremendous amount of autonomy in deciding the nature of their realms (p. 41).

Within the state primacy school, realists emphasise the sovereignty of the state. No matter how this state was created and whether it is located in the North or the South, as a reflection of human nature, the state has to be a self-centred entity. David Held has written that "Modern liberal and liberal democratic theories have constantly sought to justify the sovereignty power of the state while at the same time justifying limits on that power. The history of this attempt

since Thomas Hobbes produced the arguments of balancing might and rights, power and law, duties and rights. On the one hand, states must have a monopoly of coercive power in order to provide a secure basis on which trade, commerce, religion and family life can prosper". (1993: 18)

What does that mean in a competitive world economy? To be able to discuss how realists define and characterise some elements of liberal democracy, it is necessary to briefly describe the classifications of the functions of government as reflected in the structures of the industrial societies. Realist scholars (known also as functionalists and neo-functionalists) have defined the role of government in a "perfect competitive society" in the following manner:

- to protect our freedom from the enemies outside our gates,
- to preserve law and order,
- to enforce private contracts,
- to foster competitive markets (Dodd, 1955: 219), and
- to undertake those public projects like road construction, that are clearly of general value to the whole society and cannot be readily undertaken under private auspices (Franklin, 1977: 47).

First, however, it should be emphasised that the concept of a 'perfect competitive society' is ahistorical even in the United States after the Great Depression. Second, it should also be mentioned that the idea of a government that should function as a balanced wheel through appropriate monetary and fiscal policies is important for the functioning of any government in the capitalist world. Another notion that the realists, especially the mainstream economists, have put forward is of government as a so-called neutral, impartial institution. Government can represent the general interest of society as a whole and hence steer capitalism in the social interest (Franklin, 1977: 48). In short, the best government should be the government that does not govern or that governs the least. In the United States, for instance, the idea of 'small government' has been part of the political lexicon during recent election campaigns. As Dick Howard stated: "The government is best that governs least" (2002: 177). However, despite controversies, the United States qualifies the notion of the strong government paradigm. Contrary to the common illusions regarding the total laissez-faire principles of realists, the United

States government, for instance, has significantly and consistently intervened in the mobilisation of resources and the sponsorship of development projects since the 1930s. It is still more visible in the public arena than many people would imagine, especially after the tragedy of September 11, 2001. As Ned Boudreau stated:

According to the neo-liberal bible, countries must 'liberalize' their economies by eliminating barriers to free trade; specifically, tariffs, quotas and subsidies. Yet Japan, the United States, and the European Union heavily subsidize their farmers, allowing agribusinesses from the developed North and West to sell surplus grains and produce in less developed countries at artificially low prices. This practice wrecks entire sectors of indigenous farming economies by making local rice, maize and wheat more expensive than their imported counterparts, thus driving farming families from their land. Furthermore, tariffs and quotas imposed by the industrialized nations block imports of textiles, leather goods and agricultural products from less developed countries. If free trade were truly free, these commodities are the very items that would form less industrialized nations' most competitive comparative advantages. This situation will not change in the near future. The United States, for example, this year passed what *The Economist* (June 29-July 5, 2002 issue) called 'an appalling new farm bill', which raised subsidies to American farmers to \$170 billion over ten years – a staggering rise of 80%. In Europe, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) shows little signs of changing any time soon. The CAP eats up 48% of the European Union's annual budget on farm subsidies. In 2002, CAP subsidies totaled \$39 billion. The issue of agricultural subsidies in the industrialized North and West is so fraught that even mainstream conservative business media are predicting subsidies could and most likely will de-rail the Doha Round of negotiations for further expansion of free trade based on neo-liberal principles (2002, pp. 1-2).

What are the characteristics of liberal democracy based on a realist's perspectives and assumptions? For instance, how does a citizen interact with the state in a liberal democracy? How should a citizen pursue his or her personal interests? How should his or her interests be protected within the framework of state sovereignty? A brief comment on the above questions helps construct a theoretical framework of the nature of the relationship between citizen and liberal democracy.

Citizenship is a territorial and ideological concept. In the territorial boundary context, citizens are people who are legally born in a given country or naturalised individuals. They have civil rights, duties, and obligations to the society and the state in terms of respecting laws, paying taxes, and maintaining the 'equilibrium' of the society. From a realist perspective, these individuals are also buyers and sellers, and producers and consumers. Within the logic of the self-regulated market or the invisible hand of Adam Smith, buyers and sellers are free to buy and sell whatever they have and wherever they choose to. In principle, what is important is the quality of their goods that should allow them to compete effectively with each other. The buyers and sellers (citizens) should be able to participate freely in order to sell and buy their services and labour according to their abilities.

Liberal democracy is the system of governance that, in principle, claims to protect citizens' rights and the instruments of production (land, machinery, factory buildings, natural resources, and the like) that are privately owned by many individuals. The institutions of state should produce social equilibrium. This democracy is called procedural democracy. As Robert D. Grey, citing Joseph Schumpeter, states:

The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote (1942). Scholars who adopt this procedural, or elitist, version of democracy tend to be concerned primarily with stability of the system. Once the rules are in place, is the system able to maintain itself without experiencing outbursts of violence or becoming oligarchies? Rule of law and constitutionalism help regulate both government and citizens activity to limit abuses of power and keep the system running (Grey, 1997: 83).

Do people, as citizens, really matter in this type of democracy? The question is relevant but will not be expanded on in this article. Still, in general terms, it should be confirmed that people as consumers or voters matter. The routine ritual of elections brings political elite and electors closer for a short period of time in many social contexts. The vote is partially a commodity and partially a civil and political right. It is an exchangeable phenomenon. A fresh start can bring new inspirations and also can offer new possibilities for the ordinary people. But mass values are articulated through elitist filters through which important issues are selected and elevated from

their individualistic origins to the local or national agenda. With its concern for reason, law, and freedom of choice that can only be properly upheld by recognising the political equality of all mature individuals, this democracy limits to a large extent the power of the state (Held, 1993: 18).

While realist politics puts the emphasis on the state, its economics has been articulated in terms of individualism and the free market. But in its pragmatic dimension in the West, state-centric power has prevailed over individual choice and the claims of self-emancipation. The question of whether liberal democracy effectively functions in the way liberal theorists tend to project is a complex matter that is not the object of this article. In short, in a liberal democracy, individuals' rights, free choice, freedoms (or civil liberties), and democratic accountability are among the most important characteristics. How have these elements of liberal democracy and the notion of a strong state been projected in the SAPs?

***(b) Liberal Democracy within Frameworks of  
Structural Adjustment Programs and State-Centric  
Logic***

In the 1970s and 1980s, SAPs were implemented through very centralised political structures with a high level of technical secrecy in Africa. But even before the implementation of these programmes in Africa, an anti-democratic formula was preferred in the name of efficiency and growth. As it was stated in *World Development Report* of 1991: "Authoritarianism often has been seen as a useful, if regrettable, expedient for effective policy-making in the face of political instability. A strongly held view through the 1970s was that development policies took time to bear fruit, and that this was inconsistent with the politics of short-term electoral cycles. Democracies were seen as having a built-in inclination toward populist policies" (1991: 132).

In most cases at the initial stages of SAP adoption, there were no serious debates on how to implement them and what the long-term the consequences of their implementation would likely be. Even when they were wrapped in the African policy symbolism of

‘nationalism’, their content tended to be ‘universal’, or they were articulated in the Americo-European development orientation. Their implementation was basically a technical operation by selected members of the political elite in the ministries of finance, economy, planning, and in other cases, the office of Prime Minister. As Ali Mazrui has written:

When I served on the World Bank’s Council of African Advisors, I repeatedly asked the Bank to devise a calculus of democratic indicators by which an African country would be judged democratically before a loan was granted. Vice- President Edward Jaycox of the World Bank repeatedly protested that it could not be done. Partly because market ideologies have been pushed with greater vigour and consistency than has liberal democracy, the market is almost triumphant by the end of the 20th Century. There are more countries that have been forced to privatise and adopt structural adjustment programmes than there are countries that have been penalised for not democratising (1998: 2).

Although the political situation in the world has changed since the 1990s and there is a space for political debates in most countries, the SAPs are still very much elitist technical programmes in Africa. That is to say that the majority of Africans, especially those who live in the countryside, have not been able, directly or indirectly, to participate even in a reactionary manner in their local formulation and implementation.

Furthermore, since the early 1990s, as a result of popular movements, intellectual critiques by both liberals and organic intellectuals, and the brutal end the Soviet Union and its socialist bloc, the World Bank has been obliged to revise some of its requirements for gaining access to its financial resources and to those of its affiliate institutions. In the process of producing new reform guidelines, the technocrats and policymakers at the Bank started with what they called “rethinking the state”. Thus, the World Bank started to insist on ‘good’ governance as one of the prerequisites for admitting states to its credit lines and loans. As it states in its Report: “The agenda for reform that emerged in the course of this Report calls for government to intervene less in certain areas and more in others – for the state to let markets work where they can, and to step in promptly and effectively where they cannot” (*World Report Development*, 1991: 128).

The notion of a strong state that was defined by a militaristic and personalistic power structure and that prevailed throughout the 1970s and 1980s, is no longer a rigidly defined central dogma of the World Bank. The state that can maintain 'law and order' is the one that the Bank can do business with. 'Law and order' is a legalistic expression that has been well articulated in the literature of functionalist sociologists and in the modernisation of school of thought as the state's coercive power. Even Leopold II of Belgium used 'law and order' to govern the Congo as his personal property.

It should be noted that despite the fact that the World Bank has started to engage the non-governmental institutions, it still believes in the power and organisation of the state in the process of implementing its programmes. It should also be emphasised that the notion of 'law and order' does not necessarily imply liberal democracy – or any type of democracy for that matter. It implies, rather, institutional stability and political coercion more than liberty and equality. Another notion that has been central in the discourses and the lexicon of the Bank is 'good' governance. Projected in normative terms, it includes building state institutions and accountability. In the past, the World Bank supported notorious dictators in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

It is clear that liberal democracy within the SAPs means periodic elections at most levels of societal organisations within multiparty politics as well as political stability of some kind. Concerning elections and multipartyism, the rules have not been generalised over Africa. Some countries with limited electoral democracy, such as Uganda until recently, are still considered despite questioning their performance and calling for possible restraint on the flow of money into their coffers. These are *les enfants chéris* of the so-called Western donors, including the Paris Club and the World Bank. The 'World Bank revolutionaries', as some scholars have characterised leaders like Museveni, have very little, if any, social revolution in their SAPs. As recently reported and confirmed by the Office of the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian regarding Museveni's government's level of corruption:

Donors and civil society organisations have joined together to deplore corruption in Uganda's government, which they say is endemic from the top right down to local administrative levels. A statement issued

by Uganda's Development Partners at the annual donor conference in Kampala, read by Netherlands ambassador Matthew Peters, spoke of the widely held perception in Ugandan society that corruption is pervasive, institutionalised and on the increased. Uganda continues to rank amongst the most corrupt countries in international indices, the statement added. Large scale corruption and embezzlement at the top, which is carried out with impunity, has worked to encourage the proliferation of administrative corruption at the grassroots, it said. 'This has led to a disturbing trend of increasing tolerance of corrupt practices within Ugandan society. Citing the findings of a Uganda Debt Network investigation into government accounts, Peters noted that some 200 billion Ugandan Shillings (US\$ 40m) is lost or misused each year, leaving 7.5 percent of the budget unaccounted for. It is becoming increasingly difficult for us, as donors, to explain this to our taxpayers at home who currently provide just under half of the government of Uganda budget', he warned (IRIN, 2003: 1).

The point to be made is that multipartyism and liberal elections are still used as ad hoc principles within the World Bank and other global financial institutions and their sponsors. In a situation where multipartyism has become almost routine in some African countries, the World Bank does not seem to care much about whether this multipartyism is autocratic or a democratic. I defined multiparty autocracy as a system of governance with more than one political party in which the ruling party has monopoly over political and financial resources; it controls them to advance its causes, and it also determines the direction of discourse of other political parties and those of national politics at large (Lumumba-Kasongo, 1998: 22-23). This kind of multipartyism was developed in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Togo. Multiparty autocracy has been deliberately confused with liberal democracy.

### **International Debt**

The African debt crisis is part of a larger world debt crisis. Nevertheless, given the local and regional particularities associated with the dynamics of the world economy, the implications of African debt should be analysed through geopolitical regional paradigms and the role of Africa in world capitalism. International debt issues

should inform our understanding of capitalism. Another aspect of African debt, which has been extensively popularised and which is an integral part of African debt, concerns the debt relief programmes. What are the socioeconomic and political dividends at the state and people levels directly associated with these programmes? Who actually gains from these new programmes?

The issue of foreign debt forgiveness, known also as debt relief, has been internationalised since the 1999 G-8 conference in Germany, although debt relief itself was introduced earlier. At the April 2000 conference in Cairo, Egypt, President Jacques Chirac announced that France would forgive the totality of bilateral debts to the poorest and most heavily indebted countries and that other countries should follow suit. In the following 15 years, France would make an effort to forgive about \$23 billion to heavily indebted countries. The process of selecting the first group of countries was completed. Eleven poor countries already qualified for debt relief from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and other creditors. These countries include Benin, \$460; Bolivia, \$2.1 million; Burkina Faso, \$700 million; Cameroon \$2 billion; Honduras \$900 million; Mali, \$870 million; Mauritania, \$1.1 billion; Mozambique, \$4.3 billion; Senegal, \$850 million; Tanzania, \$3 billion; and Uganda, \$2 billion. In the case of the United States, the debt-relief package was pending in Congress, which must approve the US share. It should be noted that it is not clear how the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank calculated the above figures. However, many speculate that the debt-relief scheme is basically part of bilateral debt.

Other countries that were also in the pipeline and expected to obtain debt relief before the end of 2000 included Chad, \$250 million; Gambia, \$130 million; Guinea, \$1.2 billion; Guinea Bissau, \$700 million; Guyana, \$1.1 billion; Malawi, \$1.1 billion; Nicaragua, \$5 billion; Rwanda, \$800 million; and Zambia, \$4 billion. Countries under consideration for debt were Ethiopia, \$1.5 billion; Madagascar, \$1.5 billion; Niger, \$700 million; Sao Tome and Principe, \$170 million. It should be noted that conditionalities for debt relief are similar to those of the SAPs discussed earlier, with an emphasis on electoral democracy, poverty alleviation, and women's issues. But these conditions have been used in ad hoc fashion depending on the unwritten geopolitical factors that shape the major powers'

interests in the discourse of the global economy and their security paradigms. What do all the above figures represent out of the total African debt?

In order to form an idea of what debt relief may represent in the African debt saga – and without data for 2003 – I decided to use 1998 data to calculate the relief as a percentage of total debt. It should be noted that the selected nations in my sample are likely to have continued to increase their loans between 1998 and 2003, making the percentage not representative of reality. However, the exercise gives a general idea about the statistical constitution of debt relief (see Table 2). Unless in the past three to four years countries selected here doubled or tripled their loans, it is clear that the debt relief scheme may have had a significant reduction of between 20 percent and almost 100 percent of the total debt in some cases in some countries. The effort seems to be on the positive side. However, the impact of debt relief has to be assessed within the framework of the performance and structure of the total African political economy. As indicated below, Mozambique has become an exceptional case.

It should be noted that among those African countries that qualified for the relief programmes in 1998, Benin, Mali, Senegal (long before the other countries), and Tanzania implemented multipartyism in the 1990s. This has produced acceptable processes of presidential and legislative elections without any major social clashes. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Mauritania have produced what I have characterised earlier as ‘autocratic multipartyism’. Uganda rejected multipartyism, and its leadership has maintained a one-party state (even when consistently supported by the West as previously indicated), a common characteristic of most African states in the 1970s. However, upon continuous pressure by his international mentors and the actors associated with major wars, Museveni announced in February 2003 that he would amend the constitution towards the implementation of multipartyism, the absence of which did not deprive his regime of loan and even massive grants.

Why do nation-states, companies, and people take foreign loans? Who is to pay back these loans in Africa? One simplistic answer is that some nations, companies, and people are at a given time in need of cash in order to run the business of public administration and to correct their budgetary problems for investment. It is also obvious

**Table 2: Debt and Debt Relief in Million \$ and Relief as Percent of Debt in 1998**

Country	Debt Relief (\$ millions)	Debt in 1998 (\$ millions)	Debt minus relief	Relief as % of Debt
Benin	460	1,044	584	44.1%
Bolivia	2,100	4,933	2,833	42.6%
Burkina Faso	700	826	126	84.7%
Cameroon	2,000	8,198	6,198	24.4%
Honduras	900	3,220	2,320	28.0%
Mali	870	2,183	1,313	39.9%
Mauritania	1,100	1,423	323	77.3%
Mozambique	4,300	2,731	-1,569	157.5%
Senegal	850	2,710	1,860	31.4%
Tanzania	3,000	5,682	2,682	52.8%
Uganda	2,000	2,371	371	84.4%
Expected 2000				
Chad	250	630	380	39.7%
Gambia	130	269	139	48.3%
Guinea	1,200	2,512	1,312	47.8%
Guinea Bissau	700	695	-5	100.7%
Guyana	1,100	1,078	-22	102.0%
Malawi	1,100	1,371	271	80.2%
Nicaragua	5,000	5,238	238	95.5%
Rwanda	800	682	-118	117.3%
Zambia	4,000	5,317	1,317	75.2%
Under Consideration				
Ethiopia	1,500	8,733	7,233	17.2%
Madagascar	1,500	3,273	1,773	45.8%
Niger	700	1,114	414	62.8%
Sao Tome and Principe	170	144	-26	118.1%

Source: World Bank, *Global Development Finance*, 2000.

that people are paying back their loans with their labour. But in Africa it should be emphasised that many governments have been paying their financial obligations with people's 'blood and lives'. Many people are being socially and physically tortured as they are deprived of basic human needs and dignity so that governments can pay back loans. And many people are dying as the result of policies related to loan scheme payments.

Since the 1970s, along with the oil crises, international debt has become an issue not only of international relations, trade arrangements, and diplomacy, but also of fiscal policy management, and resources allocation, internationally and domestically. In principle, executive branches of the states, from the views of both realist and idealist schools of thought, have an obligation to secure resources for the social progress of their citizens. This complex issue has to be examined within a structuralist perspective.

The amount of African international debt, or public debt, has gradually increased every year since the 1970s. But as compared to other countries in the developing world, especially those in South America, the total African public debt represents only a relatively small percentage of the total public debt of the world. Still, it has had a crippling impact on African lives and economies. For instance in 1998, the total public debt of Nigeria represented 3.485 percent (\$ 23.455 billion) of the total public debt of the world while the total public debt of Côte d'Ivoire was 1.608 percent (\$10.822 billion). South Africa's public debt was 1.579 percent (\$10.626 billion); Ghana's was 0.828 percent (\$5.57 billion); DRC's was 1.330 percent (\$8.949 billion); Kenya's was 0.836 percent (\$5.629 billion); Senegal's was 0.487 percent (\$3.74 billion); and Ethiopia's was 1.429 percent (9.618 billion). In countries in South America, the percentage of the total public debt was higher than in Africa and Asia. For example, in Brazil it represented 14.707 percent (\$98.959 billion); in Mexico, 13.076 percent (\$87.996 billion); and in Argentina, 11.413 percent (\$87.799 billion). In Asia for instance, South Korea represented 8.612 percent (\$57.956 billion), and Indonesia was 9.948 percent (\$66.944 billion). These trends are not qualitatively very different from those of the 1980s. The calculated values in millions of debt countries as a percentage of GDP in 1998 in Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, DRC, Kenya, Senegal, and Ethiopia are as follows:

71.1, 116.3, 291.1, 57.9, 44.7, 174.7, and 133.5. As previously stated, the issue is about the availability of resources to pay back this debt and the origins of loans. In a simple formula, money with which one is paying debt has to come from some other source. What are those sources and how are they related to human conditions in the indebted countries?

Why is debt forgiveness or debt relief an issue at this time? The question is complex as it reflects both cost-benefit analyses and power relation issues. Generally, it is difficult to relate these in a nonlinear reasoning process. How will Africa benefit from this relief in the short and long run? And should the 'forgivers' gain as a result of their actions? It should be emphasised that in capitalist, pragmatic logic, there is no such thing as a free lunch. But Africa may take advantage of the principle of mutuality, which should be examined carefully.

I have tried to show in this article that in the world of the states there is no such thing as 'compassionate capitalism'. To save capitalism some decisions must be made in the various orbits of powers. The specific scheme of debt relief is not a humanitarian action from the industrial countries. It is a corrective process aimed at integrating Africa further into the world of international capitalism. Jacques Chirac clearly articulated this position in the Cairo conference in April 2000, stating that what Africa needs is European investment and further integration into the world economy. And also she needs to compete with other actors. So in order to accomplish these interrelated goals, there is a need for political and juridical stability. This is where the role of electoral democracies becomes vital. The question is: How would this integration, which is based on relief debt programmes, produce and sustain social policies such as food security, self-sufficiency in food production and processing, manufacturing in small and mid-size enterprises, employment, economic diversification, and the protection of human rights and living conditions with basic dignity?

## **Conclusion**

Is post-Cold War liberalism equal to pre-Cold War liberalism in terms of the power associated with international debt? Given the

focus of this paper, no attempt was made to expand on this question. However, a short answer is that militarily, post-Cold War liberalism is directed and guided by the geo-strategic and national interests of the United States. Economically, within this kind of liberalism, capitalism is organised and managed more by the dynamics of regionalism than by the state-centric paradigm alone.

It should be emphasised that Cold War liberalism was essentially an ideology of a military alliance and its bureaucracies and of private corporate complexes that ruled the world with iron, stick, and the ‘controlled “freemarket” tools’. Its major institutions were essentially interested in power, control, and surplus generation – not in genuine democracy. This militarism continues to play an important role in the organisation of the world capitalist economy. The space and options for dealing with economic democracy, which has been demanded by popular, grassroots movements and progressive forces, were limited and in most cases nonexistent in developing countries, especially in Africa.

Many countries in Africa accumulated the larger portions of their external debts at a time when there were no functioning liberal democracies. The state apparatuses were reorganised to support the major objective of debt payment. In the post-Cold War era, these countries have been expected to fully commit to pay back their debts or to renegotiate payments when electoral democracy has become in part the rules of the game or international practice, for better or for worse. It is my view that electoral democracies have been supported by the Western powers and global financial institutions partially to avoid what they may consider as possible occurrences of worst-case scenarios: default, extreme nationalism, or social revolution. Within the existing social and economic conditions, the chance to have an ‘acceptable’ level of people’s political participation in those democracies, with perhaps few exceptions, is at a minimum because of factors such as intrigues within ruling parties for control of electoral processes, the internal weakness of opposition parties, poor technological and social infrastructures; and more important, the involvement of support of the agencies associated with corporate globalisation in the local electoral processes.

It was argued in this article that as long as the structures of the world economy have not been seriously challenged collectively or

regionally in Africa by the African political, social, and economic organisations and alliances, the results of the electoral democracies in terms of substantively changing people's living standards will matter very little. In fact, the involvement of private corporate globalisation in electoral democracies, either by directly supporting the elections of some candidates or through propaganda in the international media, has been worrisome to many people because corporate globalisation is not philosophically and socially interested in any real democracy, development, and people. Its main interests are in labour, power, control, and the accumulation of surplus. In short, if electoral democracies framed within the technical dogma of the World Bank and the IMF are not transformed, by the actions of coalitions among popular and social movements, into social democracies, they will not be able to satisfy the demands for social change that are being articulated in most societies in Africa. Corporate globalisation is interested in the existing electoral democracies because these democracies are, in most cases, a mere façade.

We must search for some forms of working multipartyism and democracy. In the absence of guided revolutions, a combination of the politics of 'consensualism' and 'consociational' democracy (Lijphart, 1984) can contribute to the process of producing humane, productive, and transformative multipartyism and democracy. This working multipartyism has to be constructed on a genuine premise of the 'politics of compromise'. Within the existing levels of social and economic cleavages, this compromise will not be actualised until African systems of governance provide and secure basic rights and needs for all. The *sine qua non* condition for better-functioning multipartyism and democracy is that the state has to provide social security, improve the standards of living, and provide advancement for all. I have argued that African states should be recaptured and transformed so that they are able to support liberties and rights. This can be achieved if social protection is codified. There is a need to create a leadership that is committed and nationalistic and that understands the dynamics of the world economy and its contours. As for proposed solutions to debt issues in Africa, I agree with the logic articulated by McEwan, who stated:

There is no way to determine in advance when a debt burden will

become unsustainable. The debt process is a bit like building a tower with a set of children's blocks. We cannot tell ahead of time how high we can go, how many blocks we can pile on top of each other, but we do know that there is a limit. If we keep going higher and higher, at some point the whole structure will come tumbling down. There are, of course, ways to extend the limit. We can widen the base of tower, for example, or construct some support structures. There comes a point, however, where we are devoting all our efforts and resources to shoring up the tower (1991: 31).

In short, some of the elements of my thinking are reflected in Henry Hart's statement: "Equality among nations and the democratization of international relations, economic, and political. It wants global co-operation for development on the basis of mutual benefit. It is a strategy for the recognition and preservation of the world's diversity" (1977: 360). Africans need developmental democracy (Olukoshi, 2002) and a developmental state (Amuwo, 2002) in order to deal effectively with the implications of international debt in its domestic affairs. It is only when people are able to determine what they can do about the international debt in their specific countries that this issue is likely to be permanently resolved. It is only in a social democracy promoted by an African welfare state, a strong and visionary interventionist state, on behalf of the hitherto majority weak and poor, that people can be in charge of their destiny.

For liberal democracy to be effective, it has to be substantive, it has to correct and permanently eradicate social injustices and gender inequalities, and it has to promote and protect the right to life principle. Therefore, the main question is, given its essence and goal, and in its current form as practised in Africa, is liberal democracy philosophically and instrumentally capable of fulfilling these above criteria? In the absence of compelling philosophical or historical grounds to assert that liberal democracy can positively reach the majority of the African people (the poor people including women, youth, peasants, and working classes), and structurally transform their living conditions, there is a need to consciously and systematically explore and project social democracy as an alternative to the United States model of 'classical' liberal democracy. There will not be any democracy in Africa without an inbuilt national development agenda, a commitment to human dignity, and collective decolonisation.

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