

Constitutional ‘Coups’ and Democratic Consolidation in Africa: Wither Democratic Values

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Abstract

The democratic appeal lies in its enduring intrinsic and instrumental values as a form of government. Foremost among these are the healthy competition for access to public office as an opportunity for service to society and the broader chance for citizens’ participation in public life. In these values are expressions of the guarantee for civil liberties and the protection of minority privileges against the tyranny of the majority. These are values that globalization has sought to reinforce in the market democracy since the 1980s in Africa. It is argued here that entrenching these democratic values has proved daunting especially in consolidating democracy principally with the emergence of the phenomenon of ‘constitutional coups’ that seeks to alter governance term limits. Reinventing unregulated long term personal rule far more than any factor undermines democratic values and development. Building a critical mass of democrats and tightening constitutional amendment requirements are necessary conditions for preserving and entrenching democratic values in Africa for sustainable growth and development.

Key words: constitutions; coups; globalization; democracy; values

Introduction

Democracy as a system or form of rule is assuming a ‘universal value’ in itself and is widely considered a ‘de fault’ government (Sen, 1999) due largely to its intrinsic, instrumental and constructive values (Rostboll, 2013). While democratic form of government is increasingly being considered with global acceptance as a value (Sen, 1999; Fukuyama, 2010) it has been popularized as a preferred form of rule due to what it means for citizens and what benefits it creates. Democracy is first valued for guaranteeing participation in the political life of a community or country by a broad spectrum of citizens. These represent the functional activation of citizens’ freedoms undergirded by the constitution. This freedom resonates with citizens’ autonomy for self rule as individuals and in the collectivity as a community. Participation in public life represents the undiluted function of democracy in the Athenian city state being the etymological roots of ‘people rule’. It is in this sense that democracy has been accepted and transformed from Greece by the revolutionary eruptions in France, the enlightenment age in England and the American Revolution (cite source).

The instrumental value of democracy that entrenched responsive and coercive accountability through the mechanism of election also took roots in Athens but has also been transformed and refined since the 19th Century. The signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 followed by the French and American Revolutions entrenched the power of the electorates to sanction representatives who fail to perform to their satisfaction. Democratic accountability in the 21st Century is seen as the most enduring function of democracy and a value in itself. The power of citizens to shape public policy and influence operations of government in response to their needs is activated by democratic accountability (Schmitter & Karl, 1991).

Constructively, democracy guarantees engagement by citizens through exchanges and debates that shape societal values. Democracy provides the incentives for the formulation of

values and in the understanding of needs, rights and duties (Sen, 1999). The intrinsic importance of political participation and freedom; the instrumental relevance of ensuring a responsive and accountable government and the constructive role of democracy in formulation of values are essential to democratic consolidation in the era of globalization in Africa (Schmitter, 2007).

Though in fits and bursts, Africa joined the Huntingtonian ‘third wave of democracy’ that began in Portugal in 1974 and later also spread to Latin America and even Asia. The relapse of democracy in Africa in the 1980s was ignited in the 1990s that coincided with the influential forces of globalization and the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. The surge for democracy has remained strong ever since. However, consolidation of democracy in Africa for the sustenance of democratic values has been challenged by the emerging phenomenon of ‘constitutional coups’ to further entrench or protect personal rule and undermine the functioning of genuine democracy. Elected presidents have devised means of reinventing personal rule in Africa earlier rejected through democratization by seeking to amend their constitutions to extend executive term limits. This is the central argument here. It is widely referred to as ‘third term’ in the continent. More than 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa have tried this with 18 successful cases against three failed attempts.

Against this backdrop, this paper explores the phenomenon of ‘constitutional coups’ in Africa with a view to highlighting its impact on the continent’s fledgling democracies. To this end, the rest of the paper is structured to as follows: the next section relates globalization as a concept and process in the development dynamics of the continent to the spread of democracy in Africa; then the emergence of the phenomenon of ‘constitutional coups’ is used to show how in the face of globalization, it is undermining democratic values; while the conclusion argues for building strong and resilient democratic institutions that would act as a bulwark against the resurgence of authoritarian tendencies in African democracies.

Globalization: Conceptual Exploration

There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between globalization and democracy as demonstrated by the ascendance of both movements since the 1980s (Genyi, 2014). As the former Soviet Union collapsed and capitalism soared, so was democracy which accelerated in its spread much across Africa. As political reforms and economic restructuring coincided in their unleashing in Africa, globalization impacted significantly on the rule of law, respect for human rights and basic freedoms (Mubangizi, 2010; Genyi, 2014). Globalization in its basic meaning is considered as the intensification of economic integration of world economies through free trade, massive movement of finance capital, and interaction and services facilitated by the new wave of information technology (Stiglitz, 2002; Brysk, 2002). It is driven by its forces which are transportation and communication, trade and foreign direct investment (FDI). These forces of globalization create a worldwide market and intensify competition. Globalization’s forces by implication spur the growth of its economic, political, social and technological components. Earlier Outtara (1997, p.1) described globalization in basic terms as “the integration of economies across the world through trade, financial flows, the exchange of technology and information and the movement of the people”. Integration is exemplified by the growing importance of world trade and massive capital flows to investment destinations anywhere in the world.

Globally there has been a phenomenal growth in cross border trade and financial flows in equity and portfolio investments at an intense level since the late 1990s. At the centre of this movement is the revolution in transportation and communication technology as well as improved availability of information. Brysk’s (2002, p.4) notion that ‘globalization is the growing integration of states, markets, communication, and ideas across borders’ resonates with Stiglitz’s (2002, p.18) version that it is “closer integration of the countries and peoples of

the world, - the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge". These conceptions relate to economic globalization which is believed to be the fulcrum of the entire process. In its wake, globalization evolves political elements one of which is democratization especially for Africa and many of the countries in the developing world. It was noted that free trade and capital flows require stable democratic governments with institutions that would guarantee security of investments. In democracies are elements of predictability, stable political conditions, established rules and a fair judicial system that mediate competition. Capital flows seek such environments and for Africa to fit such destinations, it needed to be democratized. Thus by the 1990s, many African states became part of the Huntingtonian Third wave of democratization in tune with Dunn's (1992) observation that the modern secular constitutional representative democracy must be founded on an essentially market economy. And this dominates the political life of the modern world.

Seen as the shift toward a more integrated and independent economy (Hill, 1999), the phenomenon can be identified by apparent characterizations which include; intensification of cross border trade, increased financial flow through foreign direct investment. These are undergirded by accelerated economic liberalization and advances in information technologies (Daouas, 2001). Globalization can be described and also be prescribed. By description, its main features such as flows of trade, finance and information can be readily identified as facilitating the integration of a global market. The methods or mechanisms of the realization of globalization relates to liberalization policies that facilitate the free flow of trade, information and finance capital (Ajayi, 2001). This is the prescriptive side of the process. The primary purpose of these flows is to induce economic growth for improvement in human conditions. Globalization exponents believe and hope strongly that by pursuing the seamless integration of the world economy, through the free flow of trade and financial resources, citizens would benefit from emergence of accessible new ideas for wealth creation and unleashing of opportunities.

The point for Africa in the globalization process was to become integrated through global trade. By adoption of a liberal trade regime, it was hoped that the continent would attract foreign direct investments and enjoy availability of improved material products through trade. The continents' poor economic performance up to the late 1980s was blamed on the inability to leverage the global market place through the globalization of international trade (Ajayi, 2001; Haile, 2004). The attractiveness and relevance of the appeal of globalization for Africa have been predicated on the availability of business opportunities it promised through expanded markets and access to new technologies and ideas. A productive and functional mix of these, it was hoped, would raise economic productivity and by extension improve living conditions across Africa (Ajayi, 2001; Haile, 2004 and Genyi, 2014).

The hopes for a promising future through globalization seemed to have been misplaced for Africa when the continent relied on primary commodities to engage in international trade. Africa's domestic economies were far from industrial production and remained largely undeveloped. Besides, Africa's infrastructure central to attracting FDI were at very weak levels and rapidly decaying in many countries. In others it was stagnant. In others such as Nigeria it was deteriorating due to lack of maintenance. In addition to being weak and decaying, they were not expanding. Thus reforming the continent by dressing it in the new garb of rising infrastructure within the framework of liberal policies was going to take time. As has been rightly observed, it would seem that global capital was in a hurry to open up Africa for motives other than economic growth and creation of economic opportunities especially in the interest of Africans. For instance the continents share of global trade by exports in 1960 was 5.3 percent and imports 5.0 percent. Between 1990 and 1998 these figures dropped to 2.3 percent and 2.0 percent respectively (Haile, 2011). By 2013, Africa's share of world merchandise exports dropped by 2.5 percent having achieved a rise to 6.5 percent in 2012

(WTO, 2013, p.14). Intra African trade in merchandise by 2011 was 11 percent compared to Asia's 50 percent (UNCTAD, 2013). Though over all trade has grown steadily up to 11 percent by 2011, the continents' share of world's poverty has also been rising. While 51 percent (World Bank, 2013, p.2) of Africans were estimated to be below the poverty line in 1981 the figure rose to 57.5 percent in 1996 and dropped to 50.4 in 2005 (Sundaram, Schwank and Von Arnim, 2011). Between 1999 and 2010 extreme poverty rate had fallen to an average of 10 percent and hovered around 48 percent between 2011 and 2012. Perhaps this trend reflected rather the quality of growth which instead of accelerating or maintaining even a medium level rise, it decelerated in 2009. It is important to stress that even though poverty rates had fallen significantly in sub Saharan Africa, it remains the only region for which the aggregate number of poor individuals had continued to rise rather dramatically between 1981 and 2010 (World Bank, 2013, p.1). Africa had accounted for 11 percent of the global total poor in 1981 but by 2010 the region sadly became home to a third of the world's extreme poor. This combined with rising inequalities and vulnerabilities to external shocks, account for violent conflicts in Africa (Miguuel, Satyanath and Sergenti, 2004).

Democracy: What Values?

Recognized in its commonplace meaning as collective self rule (Warren, 2008), democracy as a form of rule is enjoying unprecedented and extraordinary legitimacy as a universal system of governance in the 21st Century. Modern democratic institutions and practices are traced to Greece, Rome or Medieval Europe. Its wide or near global movement began after World War II. The phase that appears to have a universal character dates back to the 1990s. Since then more than half of the World's population now live under one variation of democracy or the other (Fukuyama, 2010). The democratic appeal lies in greater freedom, wealth and development enjoyed by citizens as opposed to those who live under non-democracies. It is also argued that citizens of democratic countries experience less violence, deprivation and domination (Warren, 2008). Violence, marginalization and deprivations widely exist in Africa, India or Pakistan, but these are explained as exceptions with a hope that sustained democratic rule would alter the scale over time.

Conceptions of democracy vary with emphasis on the politics of governance and development dominating the ends of the continuum. Generally however, democracy is "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples vote (Schumpeter, 1942). The emphasis here are on the politics of decision making that seem to be streamlined by a method of access to choice by way of elections. In this, Schumpeter laid the minimal condition for democracy; elections. In towing this minimalist line of a democratic tradition Robert Dahl (1971) offered a prescription for democracy by identifying its major criteria. These include;

- a. Control over governmental decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected officials
- b. Relatively frequent, fair and free elections
- c. Universal adult suffrage
- d. The right to run for public office
- e. Freedom of expression
- f. Access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolized by either the government or any other single group
- g. Freedom of association which include the right to join independent associations such as political parties, interest groups, cultural associations etc.

These prescriptive criteria defines Dahl's 'polyarchy' synonymous with democracy and underscores two critical elements; namely political representation achieved through the mechanism of elections that undergird popular participation. Then the elaboration of equality

of citizens expressed through the activation of basic freedoms guaranteed by upholding the rule of law. It was Robert Dahl that set up what is contemporaneously referred to as principles of democracy.

The increasing importance of elections as the most important minimal condition for democracy further exposed or projected its value for democratic accountability. This fact is given prominence in Schmitter and Karl's (1991, p.67) description of democracy as "a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives". The emphasis on elections in modern democracies has led to their recognition as electoral democracies (Dahl, 1998) in which elections is used as a mechanism for activating accountability of rulers and regulations of competition for representation. Participation in the voting process or competing at elections appear to be the highest function of citizens in a democracy because the activity represents engagement with decision making in a polity. The ability of citizens to function effectively is predicated on the ability to access the right to basic freedoms; association, speech, religion assembly guaranteed by the rule of law. Modern political democracies are sanctioned by a fundamental law; the constitution in which the rule of law, basic freedoms of citizens are enshrined to be protected and upheld in a democracy in order to empower citizens to participate in the polity as equals. Here lie the values of democracy.

With specific reference to liberal democracy Fukuyama (2010, p.4) stresses that "it is more than majority voting in elections; it is a complex set of institutions that restrain and regularize the exercise of power through law and a system of checks and balances". Citizens of a democracy are equal and enjoy elaborate right to basic freedoms enshrined by law and therefore capable of participating in decision making and influencing decision makers. Put differently, under a democracy citizens enjoy equality, basic freedoms, wealth and development, the rule of law and on this basis can functionally participate in the life of the polity.

Here also lies the normative logic of democracy. First, all individuals enjoy an equal moral worth. All societies consist of individuals with relations among them, which is the essence of society. By maintaining these relations, what is good for one, so it is for the other hence the collective good of all. In this lies the moral equality in collective rule (Warren, 2008). Thus each individual life is an end in itself and so collective decisions should recognize, respect, and benefit individual's interest and values on an equal basis to the extent most possible as in a democracy. The second relates to the notion of inclusion or exclusion. Citizens are equal and territorial boundaries that define inclusivity or exclusivity for electoral purposes need not be extended to other issues such as race, ethnicity, class or sexual orientation. It is these issues that accentuate further political struggles or even democratic ones (Philip, 1995). In whatever way these issues are resolved, the ultimate goal should be to ensure majoritarian inclusion.

It is therefore on the basis of these democratic values of equality of citizens for participation in decision making through competition, the extent of access of freedoms and rule of law that the globalization and democratic values nexus shall be explored with a focus on contemporary Africa. Whereas it is within your democratic rights to describe democracy in such glowing terms, you must not lose sight of the fact that recent studies have clearly shown that democratic nations are in retreat in the realm of geopolitics, and that democracy itself is also in retreat. The latter phenomenon has been well documented by Freedom House, which has recorded 'declines in freedom in the world for ten straight years' (See for instance Kagan, 2015 and Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2016*).

Globalization and Democratic Values in Africa

Greater integration of African economies with the global economy through trade and attraction of FDI was expected to induce economic growth and create wealth and opportunities that would improve overall citizens' welfare (Haile, 2011). By improving income and access to new technologies and ideas, citizens would then be able to functionally participate in the political activities of their countries including democratic processes such as elections.

The accelerated push or 'democratic optimism' of the late 1980s to the early 1990s is therefore inextricably associated with the triumph of capitalism and liberal democracy. Between 1989 and 1994 a combination of exogenous and endogenous pressures for democratization had led to democratic openings in 41 of 47 sub-Saharan African countries. These democratic reforms saw to the introduction of multi-party systems that witnessed 65 Presidential elections between 1989 and 2000 (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994). External factors such as withdrawal of aid to authoritarian regimes for refusing to democratize and emergence of strong civil society challenge for African countries to democratize led to these achievements (Joseph, 1997). The democratization outcomes have however been mixed and have followed at least three broad trajectories. The first set of countries had moved towards democratic consolidation where democratic rules have become the norm. Political elites and a broader segment of citizens have accepted democratic rules, institutions and procedures for mediating competition and resolving conflicts. Consolidated democracies experience transitions that are a product of the defeat of incumbents by opposition parties like Senegal, Nigeria, Zambia, Benin and Tanzania.

There is a category of democracies constituting hybrid regimes that have straddled the authoritarian-democratic continuum. In the 1990s, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda and Rwanda were perfect examples of this arrangement. Democratic elections did occur in these countries, but democratization did not lead to institutionalization of formal rules. It was also obvious that uncertainty characterized these rules. Under these democracies, political parties were poorly institutionalized and functioned incoherently (Rakner, Menochal and Fritz, 2007).

The third category constitutes the political melt down where the quality of democracy wanes rather than improve. For a variety of reasons, including the maintenance of personal rule values, key political institutions malfunction continuously and simultaneously as in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, DRC, Malawi are in this category.

What these categories have shown is that the threat to democratic consolidation is real and has been expressed within the democratic genre of constitutional coups. This is the sudden arrangements to amend a constitution to alter an executive term limit from which an incumbent would benefit by competing in the next election. This context was not originally encapsulated in the Lome Declaration for an Organization of African Unity (OAU) response to unconstitutional changes of Government adopted in July, 2000. The Declaration classified the following as unconstitutional changes in government. They include;

- i. Military coup d'état against a democratically elected government;
- ii. Intervention by mercenaries to replace a democratically elected government; replacement of democratically elected government by armed dissident groups and rebel movements; and
- iii. The refusal by an incumbent government to relinquish power to the winning party after free, fair and regular elections AHG/Decl.5 (xxxvi) quoted in Omotola, 2011, P.16).

Following attempts in some countries to manipulate their constitutions to achieve alteration to executive terms, the African Union (AU) in January, 2007 through the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) expanded the definition of unconstitutional changes of Government in Africa to include 'manipulation of constitutions and legal instruments for prolongation of tenure of office by an incumbent regime (Article 25 of ACDEG, 2001). As has been noted by Omotola (2011), tenure elongation or third term

agenda popular in Africa had become very attractive between 1990 and 2005. During the period nine presidents attempted to effect the third term agenda, including Nigeria. The result was failure in six countries with three successes including Cameroun, Uganda and Gambia (Posner and Young, 2007). Between 2000 and 2015 many Presidents in Africa have sought to amend their countries' constitutions to extend their presidential terms.

Table 1: Outcome of Third Term Agenda 2000-2016

S/N	Countries	Sitting President	Mechanism/Date	Outcome
1.	Algeria	AbdelazizBouteflika	Constitutional Amendment 2008	Successful
2.	Cameroun	Paul Biya	Constitutional Amendment 2008	Successful
3.	Djibouti	Ismail Omar Guelleh	Constitutional Amendment 2010	Successful
4.	Chad	Idris Derby	Constitutional Amendment 2010	Successful
5.	Gabon	Omar Bongo	Constitutional Amendment 2010	Successful
6.	Guinea	Lansana Conte	Constitutional Amendment 2010	Successful
7.	Malawi	BakiliMuluzi	Constitutional Amendment 2002	Failed
8.	Namibia	Samuel Nujuma	Constitutional Amendment 1998	Successful
9.	Nigeria	Olusegun Obasanjo	Constitutional Amendment 2006	Failed
10.	Togo	GnassingbeEyadema	Constitutional Amendment 2006	Successful
11.	Tunisia	Zeni -el-Abidine Ben Ali	Constitutional Amendment 2002	Successful
12.	Uganda	Yoweri Museveni	Constitutional Amendment 2006	Successful
13.	Zambia	Frederick Chiluba	Constitutional Amendment 2001	Failed
14.	Burkina Faso	Blaise Compaore	Constitutional Amendment 2014	Failed
15.	Burundi	PiereNkuriziza	Constitutional Amendment 2015	Failed
16.	Rwanda	Paul Kagame	Constitutional Amendment 2015	Successful
17.	Congo-Braville	Denis SassouN'Guesso	Constitutional Amendment 2015	Successful

Source: Omotola (2011) with additional data compiled by author from various sources

Executive term limits in Africa are constitutional provisions that are at the heart of democratic rule because they permit peaceful and regular transition in political leadership which is a measure of political development. These peaceful changes support long term stability (Opalo, 2015). Transitions regulated by term limits allow for elite recycling through their coalitions. Where it occurs regularly, incentives are created to invest in institutions, expand economic

activities by those close to incumbents in a typical African patrimonial system. Where elite turnover is blocked it dis-incentivizes the aforementioned and raises the chances for instability. These fears are already turning out to be real with President IdrisDerby running for a fifth consecutive term of five years having altered term limits in 2010. What may have appeared a new democratic multi-party Chad in the 1990s has been reversed by the constitutional coup as the country is back to personal one man rule now in the pretentious garb of democracy. Typical of authoritarian regimes, opposition is harassed into factions, many opposing figures were detained and organized protests in the country banned (Ogbonna, 2016). Chad is the face of poverty in Africa occupying fourth to the last position on United Nations Human Development Index. The country's GNI per capita is a paltry \$2,085 with inequality in education and income at 41.9 and 30.7 percentages respectively (UNDP, 2015, p. 6). With 13million citizens leaving below the poverty line, opposition to the vitiation of democratic values cannot be undertaken by Chadians. In Africa, given its preponderant fault lines, regular changes in leadership are critical to stability as this ensures distribution of resources along the major fault lines.

Effecting constitutional 'coups' may follow any of the open mechanisms including initiating debates, threat of use of force to coerce opponents, altering other rules that booster incumbents parliamentary majorities or weaken opposition (Rakner, 2004; Dulani, 2011). Parliaments may be corrupted such as in Uganda where every parliamentarian was offered \$2,000 (Opola, 2015).

The mode to adopt in effecting the alteration of term limits differs depending on the context. Circumstances of divisions within the ruling and opposition parties may be critical to the process. Where presidents had parliamentary majorities and could control the institution, the probability of the attempt to succeed would be higher as exemplified in Uganda or Namibia. Judicial interpretation of the constitution or referendum are options that are amenable to presidents not sure of the parliament moving in their favour. In Burundi and Senegal, the constitutional court was used to effect alteration of term limits while in Rwanda, Guinea, Chad and Niger, the referendum was adopted. In Niger the parliament and the courts had failed to produce required results before the president resorted to a referendum, (Opalo, 2015; Alexander, 2015). Togo, Djibouti and Cameroun also witnessed the use of the parliament to alter term limits.

Democratic institutions in Africa are still very fragile due to their nascency and the effect of personal rule. African presidents have overwhelming influence on parliaments and the courts as well as what should appear independent human right commissions and even anticorruption institutions. Activation of checks and balances on the exercise of political power is therefore largely ineffective. Opposition politics in Africa is also weak and is hardly tolerated by incumbents. The examples of transitions in Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria are rather exceptions than the norm on the continent. The experiences of the opposition in Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Cameroun or Egypt are telling examples of the travails of the opposition. For example, in Rwanda after the genocide and the adoption of a new constitution, President Paul Kagame has simply wiped off any elements of opposition on the pretext of building a new nation through strong personal rule rather than institutions that can defend societal values. The opposition simply does not exist with the capability to challenge the incumbent government on any political issue and offer alternative policy direction.

Democratic consolidation is proving a daunting task for Africa due largely to structural economic weaknesses. The promises of prosperity have failed to materialize and African political leaders are capitalizing on extreme poverty to manipulate the masses and corner the political space to themselves. Democratic institutions have been severely perverted by political elites that dominant the political space (Omotola, 2011). Poverty levels are still high in Africa with low income, high unemployment and increasing inequalities. The equality value in democracies is therefore a myth in Africa. African democratic politics are clearly divided

sharply between those with economic capacity to participate in the democratic process and those on the sidelines who can always be manipulated. Their votes can always be bought and the seemingly non-existent middle class is apathetic.

Conclusion

The goal of integration of African economies to the global economy through market reforms has largely been achieved albeit peripherally. Africa is opened to global trade though it lacks basic infrastructure that would attract sustained inflow of FDI to a substantial level that can transform the continents' economies into centres of growth and wealth creation. With market reforms also came democratization so that liberal governments would introduce liberal economic policies to undergird a market economy. The triumph of capitalism thus propelled liberal political reforms. Institutionalization of democracy is rather critical to guaranteeing its values of freedom, equality and rule of law. These values are however threatened by unconstitutional changes in government. One of these forms of threat is constitutional 'coups' deployed to amend the constitution by altering presidential term limits in favour of an incumbent who desperately desires to seek additional tenure beyond the legal and constitutional mandate. From one party or military authoritarian rule, Africa is heading into a multiparty authoritarian democratic rule. Elected presidents in Africa are displaying dissatisfaction with existing terms and are stretching the polity by seeking constitutional alteration of term limits. This tendency has affected nearly half of Sub-Saharan African countries with increasing success over extremely limited failed attempts. Unconstitutional changes in government undermine institutionalization of democratic power. By constraining open and free elite transitions in power, tension is mounted, which could snowball into political violence as is being experienced in Burundi. Besides, huge public resources are deployed in settling lawmakers and top politicians to ensure passage of constitutional amendments. The tension generated across society over these changes, the potential for violent conflict and the waste of public resources in settlement of politicians have collectively impacted negatively governance outcomes. The combined effect of these developments is the weakening of broad citizen political participation, a critical variable for activating democratic accountability.

Closely related to undermining institutionalization of democratic power, constitutional coups weaken internal democracy within political parties. When ambitious politicians do not envisage the possibility of rising to new and higher openings in government and the polity, rancour and indiscipline can set in resulting in factionalization of a party with grave implications on stability and democratic consolidation.

For democratic values to be guaranteed and exercised or maintained, the economy must improve to sustain citizens. Improving the economy serves the ends of both citizens and political leaders but more importantly the interest the latter to avoid the degeneration of the polity into anarchy hence the moderation in the plunder of the economy. Without economic improvement that raises living conditions, citizens would have no incentive to participate in democratic processes to activate accountability of elected representatives. Constitutional 'coups' is a product of this leverage on political apathy which can only be checked by a critical mass that cherish freedoms, equality in the political space and the rule of law. Building democratic institutions therefore is a necessary path to consolidation of democracy in the continent if a broader section of citizens are to access and activate democratic values in an era of globalization which appears to be more entrenched. The market economy as professed by Francis Fukuyama shows that globalization holds the promise of high levels of wealth creation but this will be realistic only if it rests on an institutional foundation of property rights, rule of law and a minimum political order. Building resilient political institutions is therefore key to the realization of the gains of globalization which would in turn reinforce democratic values.

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