Democratic evolution in Africa in an era of globalization

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ABSTRACT

Africa's democratic evolution, beginning as elsewhere in the late 1980s, has been marked by significant changes within the global international system that led to the birth of an entirely new international order. It has been a period characterized, among other things, by the massive appeal for democratic change and political liberty, as well as an overwhelming desire to banish authoritarianism. Concurrently, the period witnessed, more than any other time before, the increased emphasis on, and the accelerated drive toward globalization as a *sine qua non* for economic development. This article sets out to trace the causes and origin of the current democracy movements, the initial reactions encountered to this new wave, and then proceeds to paint a not-too-rosy picture of the current state of affairs, while noting some positive and encouraging developments. It concludes by emphasizing the necessity for African states to rise up to the challenges of globalization as an unavoidable imperative as well as a precondition for economic development and political stability.

Key words: democracy, democratization, globalization, governance, new international order, multipartyism, transformation, replacement, transplacement.

RESUME

L'évolution démocratique en Afrique, déclenché comme partout dans le monde à la fin des années 1980, a été marquée par des grandes mutations dans le système international qui a vu la naissance d'un ordre international complèment rénové – période caractérisé, entre autres, par des revendications populaires en faveur d'un renouveau démocratique et plus des libertés politiques et le désir ardent de bannir le système autoritaire. En même temps, cette période a, plus que jamais été marqué par un accent mis sur la mondalisation aussi qu'une dynamique irrésistible en faveur de cette concept comme conditions essentielle du développement économique. Cet article a pour but d'esquisser et d'établir les cause et origines des ces mouvements démocratiques, les réactions initiales face à cette vague et, plus, décrit une situation actuelle qui amene au découragement, mais en même temps note aussi les mutations positives et encourageants. En conclusion, il souligne la nécessité aux pays africains de se mobiliser face aux grands défis de la mondialisations qui un même temps est un impératif incontournable et une pre-condition, pour le développent économique et la stabilité politique.

Mots clés : démocratie, démocratization, mondalization, gouvernance, nouvelle ordre international, multipartisme, transformation, remplacement, transplacement.

INTRODUCTION

African states came into being during a new era in international politics that, though foreshadowed by the pervious era, was distinctive in many ways (Pearson and Rochester, 1984). The arrival of the atomic age and of other weapons of mass destruction in 1945 was an occurrence that from the start had profound consequences for world politics. Initially, it fostered two related developments that were virtually unprecedented in international politics and that, more than anything else, distinguished the post-World War II system from previous international systems. One of these developments was the emergence of only two states as the dominant powers in the international system – the United States and the Soviet Union. The two were labeled "superpowers" to distinguish them first from the second tier of powers, (including Great Britain, and France, which had experienced economic devastation in World War II, Germany and Japan, which had experienced military defeat, and China, which had yet to industrialize), and, secondly, from the bottom tier of states. What particularly separated the United States and the Soviet Union from all the rest were the enormous nuclear arsenals the two states built after World War II.

The second related development was the emergence of a highly polarized system in terms of alignment configurations. Reference is here being made to the appearance of the East-West conflict and the "Cold War" waged between two cohesive blocs organized around competing ideologies and led by the two superpowers. One bloc, the so-called "First World, (or the "West), consisted of the United States along with the economically developed capitalist democracies of Western Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The other bloc, the "Second World", (or the "East"), consisted of the Soviet Union, along with the relatively developed Communist states of Eastern Europe as well as Communist China. Accusing each other of seeking global hegemony, the Americans and the Soviets organized the two blocs into opposing alliances, with the members within each bloc becoming closely linked not only militarily but also economically. Dependent on the United States and the Soviet Union for both military and economic support, the members of the respective coalitions adhered rigidly to the policies established by the bloc leaders, at least initially. The other states in the system tended also to gravitate toward the two "poles". This system was labeled "bipolar" to refer to both the power and alignment structure.

Upon ascension to independence at the beginning of the early 1960s, most African states by design or omission found themselves aligned to one of the blocs. Except for a few, the leaders of these newly independent states, in a bid, (so they claimed), to consolidate the hard-won independence as well as national unity and integrity, went on to introduce the single-party system. The idea sounded quite laudable from an initial perspective. However, these leaders, as things eventually turned out, were only propagating such an idea as a camouflage of their real intentions which in reality was to enrich themselves at the expense of their peoples and to perpetuate themselves in power by curtailing any semblance of political opposition or criticism. This order of things would not long thereafter lead to authoritarianism, the rise of personal despots, gross abuse of power and human rights, as well as corruption and clientelism or patronage as the order of the day in all areas of political life. Within the perspective of the Cold War and superpower rivalry, however, the authorities in both blocs by and large turned a blind eye and to ignore all this development inasmuch as they did nothing to unsettle the balance of power. The net result by the 1980s therefore was economic decay, under-development, and dependency on external aid.

The Dawn of the New International Order and the Imperatives of Globalization

The sudden transformation of Eastern Europe by the end of the 1980s, the unification of Germany following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the Warsaw Pact, and the consequent decline of the Soviet Union combined to break up the post-war Yalta arrangement in Europe, bringing to an end the Cold War confrontation between the two military blocs of the East and West. Changes in the Soviet Union tipped the international balance of power in favor of the United States. The United States' subsequent victory in the 1991Gulf War boosted its advantage. A new international order was thus born with the United States assuming the leadership position. Confrontation between the United States and USSR and the duel for world hegemony was largely brought to an end. By and large, their relationship henceforth became characterized by mutual cooperation (Li Luye, 1991). This new international order was eventually marked by two significant and interlinked phenomena, namely, the global clamor for democracy within an environment characterized by the concomitant accelerated drive toward globalization.

Globalization in Perspective

The concept of globalization, it must be noted, is not a recent phenomenon. It, however, only became a buzzword since the 1990s and has largely been considered as an economic phenomenon propagated by recent astronomical progress in communication technology that has reduced the world to what has come to be known as the "global village" (Tayong, 2002). Coined some fifty years or so ago, *globalize* and *globalization* for the first time entered the dictionary in 1961 (Scholte, 1997). In the 1980s concepts of *global governance, global environmental change, global gender relations,* and *global political economy* were little known. Today there is general understanding and usage of the word *global,* found in the daily vocabulary of journalists, politicians, bankers, advertisers, officials and researchers all over the world. For Scholte (1997) the phenomenon of globalization leaves nothing and nobody unaffected and everybody and every state wants to be involved in the process.

In this regard Ian Clark (1997) maintains, *inter alia,* that above all, the twentieth century was characterized by the greater interconnectedness of events on a global scale, while simultaneously being subject to political processes of rupture and disintegration. It has been an age of globalization.

Globalization as a phenomenon may thus be perceived as networks of interdependence at worldwide distances (Friedman, 2002). Friedman defines it as the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before, enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world further, faster, deeper and cheaper. It is a system of economic activity for which national boundaries do not form the framework or limits (Johnson, 1991). It has as principal feature the integration of the national economies into the global production system and the replacement of the U.S. – Soviet bipolarism with the U.S. unipolarism. Such a unipolarism is viewed by some as a transitional phase in the geopolitical re-ordering that would inevitably culminate in a multipolarism (Edoho, 1997).

Globalization according to Griffin (1996) also denotes movements in both the **intensity** and the **extent** of international interactions. In the former sense, globalization overlaps to some degree with related ideas of integration, interdependence, multilateralism, openness, and interpenetration; in the latter, it points to the geographical spread of these tendencies and is cognate with the globalism, spatial compression, universalization, and homogeneity. Conceived as the transmission belt for liberal democratic values, globalization may be regarded as a powerful, desirable cause of political development. In turn, this drift to homogeneity may be thought to reinforce international stability and to make international organizations more effective (Griffin, 1996).

As an all-empowering concept, globalization has political, economic, social and institutional dimensions. As it breaks across national boundaries, globalization means different things to different people and has been used in various areas of intellectual inquiry. Globalization is therefore a result of the dispersal of economic activities across national boundaries. This phenomenon has hastened the shrinkage of international space by tightly linking national economies and rendering their borders porous as trade, services, people, values, ideas, and technologies flow across them with relative ease and unrelenting intensity. Globalization thus entails an accelerating rate and/or a higher level of economic interaction between peoples of different countries, leading to a qualitative shift in the relationship between nation-states and national economies (Baker et al., 1998).

For his part, Robert Lacey, former World Bank Resident Representative to Cameroon distinguishes four phases of the globalization phenomenon, with each phase reinforcing the others. First, is the growth of trade since the end of the Second World War much more rapidly than world output. The second phase has to do with the phenomenal growth in cross-border financial flows, in comparison to the past, particularly in the form of private equity and portfolio investment. The third phase is the revolution that has occurred in information technology thereby making the world a true global village as far as knowledge and information sharing is concerned. Finally, there is the institutional dimension by which the global economy is increasingly dominated by private sector institutions which, as earlier mentioned, owe no *de facto* allegiance to any nation or government. Large multinational corporations, banks, mutual funds, insurance companies, etc., decide the location of their factories, their offices, and their communication centers in accordance with their own needs and interests, whether or not these interests coincide with those of national governments (Lacey, 1998).

The Causes and the Trend Toward Democratization in Africa

It is therefore within the context of globalization as

described above that this paper sets out to analyze the political changes or democratic evolution that has taken place in Africa since the late 1980s. The sustained challenge to authoritarianism in Africa drew tremendous inspiration not only from the democratization process in Eastern Europe, but also from global political and economic change which was beginning to have impact on the development process, together with ways to improve development policies. Among the main elements of this change were the worldwide movement towards democratization of government and participatory development.

Stephen Ellis (1993) suggests that the trend toward democratization in Africa was precipitated by events late in 1989: the collapse of Soviet power, most dramatically symbolized by the breaching of the Berlin Wall, the overthrow of Nicolae Ceaucescu of Romania, and the publication of the World Bank's long-term perspective study of sub-Saharan Africa. The former event revived desires to institutionalize new forms of political accountability in Africa; the latter introduced the notion of placing new conditionalities on international aid to Africa.

The collapse of Soviet power was instrumental because of the powerful demonstration effect it exerted on African opinion. In addition, it changed the attitudes of aid donors. With the ending of the Cold War, donor countries began to demand ***good governance*** – a process in which 1989 will be a key date in history books of the future. Time had run out for the one-party state in Africa. The Soviet donors were no longer able, and the Western donors no longer felt obliged, to bolster corrupt and tyrannical regimes on grounds that those regimes were friendly allies. Equally, the tyrants could no longer count on such support.

A variant of this point is that in the West the time had come to find a new basis of public support for aid. In Africa, at least, aid had signally failed to propel economic take-offs. Now it was no longer needed to hold Communism at bay. What then was it for? The answer, particularly agreeable to American opinion, was to promote democracy and civil rights (Lancaster, 1993).

Thus, according to Ellis (1993), it is possible to make some broad generalizations about both the longer-term and the most immediate reasons for the rapid demise of the one-party state in Africa as well as its replacement in many places by a formal multi-party system of a type that many people in Europe and North America instinctively label "democracy". One of the most pressing reasons for the decline of the one-party state in Africa was, as is well known, the change in the international climate. African heads of state, their cronies, as well as their publics followed these events closely, and did not fail to see the parallels with their own situations.

A second key event which occurred at almost the same time was the publication of the World Bank's 1998 report ***From Crisis to Sustainable Growth.*** In it the Bank for the first time linked aid flows to the question of what it termed ***governance***, which it defined as "*the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs*". The World Bank and most of the donor governments that adopted the Bank's approach with alacrity were careful to avoid connecting good governance explicitly with multi-party systems. However, it was a clear implication of their argument as they referred to the desirability of freedom of speech, transparency of decision-making, and open political debate. Most African heads of state had by then become highly sensitive to the whims and sensitivities of the Western donor countries as these countries were the source of much of their foreign exchange. As such, they (the African leaders) were quick to seize upon the implications of the argument regarding the connection between politics and economic development.

Democratic Evolution in Africa

It is thus accurate to refer to the role of external actors as one of the immediate causes of the current wave of democratization in Africa. But the deeper and more important causes undoubtedly lie in Africa's own experience over the past few decades. Pressure for a new form of political accountability had been increasing over the years, long before 1989, as one-party regimes showed themselves unable to give a satisfactory account of themselves to their constituents. This was not always apparent to outside observers because one of the main elements shoring up the one-party regimes by the 1980s was superpower support and backing. In the context of the Cold War, Western governments reasoned that a one-party state that was stable, and controlled by a strong individual, who could be dealt with on a personal basis, was preferable to the uncertainties of multi-party competition.[1] Behind this impression of stability, Africans were nevertheless pressing for new forms of political accountability.

Thus, by the late 1980s, both external and internal de-

velopments had conspired to foment pressures for constitutional change in Africa with multi-partyism as the catchword in opposition to authoritarian rule. Internally, campaigns for the creation or restoration of multi-party democracy were organized with students, trade unionists, intellectual and professional organizations leading the bandwagon. These were fuelled by the havoc of the orthodox structural adjustment programmes with their limited tangible benefits. Significantly, too, among the intellectuals, the thesis of such earlier writers as *Apter* or *obrien* was variously attacked as obsolete and irrelevant. Such thesis tended to see authoritarianism as the most appropriate means of overcoming societal heterogeneity, conflict, and discontent in order to forge unity and consensus at least in the early stage of development. Instead, the cry was for greater appreciation of the importance of democratic institutions as a means of extending popular participation and legitimacy.

The wind of change that blew across Eastern Europe, Latin America, and East Asia towards the end of the 1980s onwards did not leave Africa indifferent. In the view of Samuel Decalo (1992) it was characterized by the shift from authoritarian to democratic systems of government. The events of the following years surprised many as much as the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe surprised experts in that area. Nelson Mandela was freed and apartheid crumbled in South Africa. Mandela went on to become the first ever democratically elected president of South Africa. Elsewhere, Sao Tome, Benin, Cape Verde, Zambia, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, and the Republic of Congo transformed themselves into multi-party democracies. Malian dictator, Moussa Traore, was forced out by a popular uprising. Steps, somewhat hesitant, were taken in Nigeria and Angola. Mobutu, (of then Zaire), Obiang-Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, Biya of Cameroon, and Eyadema of Togo went on the defensive. Few, if any, international Africanists predicted what was happening. The revolution in Africa, however, received much less attention from the international press than that of Eastern Europe, but was equally dramatic if somewhat slower. African autocrats, chastened by the experience of the Honeckers in Eastern Europe and the Kerekous and Kaundas in Africa, began digging in to resist the will of their own peoples, supported often by soldiers reluctant to yield the perks ofpower.

A Third Wave of Democratization?

This "global democratic revolution", in the words of Huntington (1991-92), was probably the most important political trend in the late twentieth century. It was for him the "third wave of democratization" in the modern era.

What then is a "wave of democratization"? Huntington describes it as a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occurs within a specified period and that significantly outnumbers transitions in the opposite direction within the same period. The first wave began in America in the early nineteenth century and culminated at the end of World War I with about thirty countries having democratic regimes. Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922 began a reverse wave and in 1942 there were only twelve democracies left in the world. The allied victory in World War II and decolonization started a second movement (the second wave) towards democracy that, however, petered out by the early 1960s when about thirty-six countries had democratic regimes. This was then followed by the second reverse movement toward authoritarianism which was marked most dramatically by military takeovers in Latin America and Africa and the seizure of power by personal despots such as Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Pol Pot of Cambodia, Augusto Pinochet of Chile, Franco of Spain, and many others in Africa.

The causes of the third wave, like those of its predecessors, were complex and peculiar to that wave. Our discussion shall, however, be limited to the ways in which African political leaders and publics ended authoritarian systems and fostered democratic ones during this third wave. In this regard it should be borne in mind that the routes to change in African states were as diverse as the people and individuals primarily responsible for bringing about change. Moreover, the starting and ending points of the processes were asymmetric. Obvious differences however exist among democratic regimes: some are presidential, others are parliamentary, a third group embodies the Gaullist mixture of the two. So also, some are two-party systems, some are multi-party, with the existence of major differences in the nature and strength of the parties. These differences have significance for the stability of the democratic systems that are created, but relatively little for the processes leading to them. Of greater importance is that in all democratic regimes the principal officers of government are chosen through competitive elections in which the bulk of the population can participate. Joseph S. Nye, (2002) seems to go a bit further in asserting that democracy implies government by offi-

cials who are accountable and removable by the majority of people in a jurisdiction together with protections for individual and minority rights. Democratic systems thus have a common institutional core that establishes their identity. Authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, are defined simply by the absence of this institutional core. Apart from not being democratic they may have little else in common.

In the second wave, in retrospect, democratization occurred in large measure through foreign imposition and desalinization. In the third wave, as we have seen; those two processes were less significant. While external influences often were significant causes of third wave democratizations, the processes were overwhelmingly indigenous.

For analytical purposes Huntington (1991-92) groups the cases into three broad types of processes: ***Transformation***, (or in Linz's term, *reforma),* occurred when elites in power took the lead in bringing about democracy. ***Replacement,*** (Linz's *ruptura*), occurred when opposition groups took the lead in bringing about democracy, and the authoritarian regime collapsed or was overthrown. What might be termed ***Transplacement,*** (or Linz's *ruptforma*), occurred when democratization resulted largely from joint action by government and opposition groups. In virtually all cases, groups both in power and out of power played some roles, and these categories simply distinguish the relative importance of government and opposition.

As with regime types, historical cases of regime change did not necessarily fit neatly into theoretical categories. Almost all transitions, not just transplacements involve some negotiation – explicit or implicit, overt or covert – between government and opposition groups. At times, transition began as one type and then became another. In the early 1980s, for instance, P. W. Botha appeared to be initiating a process of transformation in the South African political system, but he stopped short of democratizing it. Confronting a different political environment, his successor, F. W. de Klerk, shifted to a Transplacement process of negotiation with the principal opposition groups. Every historical case combined elements of two or more transition processes. Virtually every historical case, however, more clearly approximated one type of process than others.

How did the nature of the authoritarian regime relate to the nature of the transition process? Both research and experience show that it was more or less a one-to-one relation. Yet the former did have consequences for the latter. Military rulers took the lead, at times in response to opposition and popular pressure, in bringing about the change in regime. The Malian case involving the overthrow of President Moussa Traore by the then Colonel Ahmadou Toumani Toure, (now President), could be cited as an excellent example. Military rulers were also better placed to terminate their regimes than were leaders of other regimes.[2] The military leaders virtually never defined themselves as the permanent rulers of their respective countries. They held out the expectation that once they had corrected the "evils" that led them to seize power they would exit from power and return to their normal military functions. The military had a permanent institutional role other than politics or governorship.[3]

Military leaders, however, almost invariably posited two conditions or "exit guarantees" for their withdrawal from power or return to civilian rule. First, there would be no prosecution, punishment, or other retaliation against military officers for any acts they may have committed during their stay in power. Second, the institutional role and autonomy of the military establishment would be respected, including its overall responsibility for national security, its leadership of the government ministries concerned with security, and its control over other economic enterprises traditionally under military authority. The ability of the withdrawing military to secure agreement of civilian political leaders to these conditions however depended on their relative power.

Replacement and *Transplacement* also characterized the transitions from one-party systems to democracy throughout the early nineties, (except for such countries as Senegal, Gambia, and Botswana which in principle were multi-party states, but had always had one ruling dominant party). One-party regimes had an institutional framework and ideological legitimacy that differentiated them from both democratic and military regimes. They also had an assumption of permanence that distinguished them from military regimes. The distinctive characteristic of one-party systems was the close interweaving of party and state. This created two sets of problems - institutional and ideological - in the transition to democracy.

During the process of democratization the institutional problems were most severe with Marxist/Socialist-oriented parties. Constitutional provisions for the

"leading role" of the party had to be abrogated. In these party systems major issues arose concerning ownership of physical and financial assets: did they belong to the party or to the state? The proper disposition of those assets was also in question. Should they be retained by the party, nationalized by the government, sold by the party to highest bidder, or distributed in some equitable manner among social and political groups?[4]

In some countries, (e.g. Malawi), party militias had to be disbanded or brought under government control, and in almost all one-party states the regular armed forces had to be depoliticised.[5] The question of whether party cells within economic enterprises should continue also became a highly controversial issue. Finally, where the single party remained in power, there was the question of the relation between its leaders in government and the top party bodies such as the Politburo and the Central Committee. In the Marxist/ Socialist state the latter dictated policy to the former. Yet this relationship was hardly compatible with the supremacy of elected parliamentary bodies and responsible cabinets in a democratic state.

The other distinctive set of problems was ideological. In one-party systems, the ideology of the party defined the identity of the state. Hence opposition to the party amounted to treason to the state. Therefore to legitimize opposition to the party, it became necessary to establish some other identity for the state. This called for constitutional amendment. Secondly, several one-party systems, which became faced with the challenges of democratization, were born out of national revolutions. In such cases – as in Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique – the nature and purpose of the state were defined by the ideology of the party.

After democratization a former monopolistic party is in no better position than any other political group to reinstate an authoritarian system. The party gives up its monopoly of power but not the opportunity to compete for power by democratic means. When they return to barracks, the military give up both, but they also retain the capacity to reacquire power through non-democratic means. The transition from a one-party system to democracy, consequently, is likely to be more difficult than the transition from a military regime to democracy, but it is also likely to be more permanent. The difficulties of transforming one-party systems are perhaps reflected in the fact that as of 1990 the leaders of such regimes in Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, and Zambia had initiated the liberalization of their regimes but were moving only slowly toward full democratization.

As with military regimes, when the military give up their control of government, they do not equally give up their control of the instruments of violence with which they could resume control of government. The Nigerian and Ghanaian experience under the regimes of various military dictators may serve as an eloquent example. Democratization of a one-party system, however, means that the monopolistic party places at risk its control of government and becomes one more party competing in a multi-party system. In this sense its separation from power is less complete than it is for the military when they withdraw. The party remains a political actor. Defeated in the 1994 elections, the Malawi Peoples' Congress (MPC) could hope "to fight again another day" and come back to power.

The leaders of personal dictatorships, however, were less likely to give up power voluntarily than those of military and one-party regimes.[6] Personal dictators in countries that transited to democracy, as well as those that did not usually tried to remain in office as long as they could. This often created tension between a narrowly based political system and an increasingly complex and modern economy and society. It also led on occasion to the violent overthrow of the dictatorship and its replacement by another authoritarian regime.[7] In the third wave of democratization, uprisings similarly overthrew personal dictatorships in Mali, Ethiopia, and the then Zaire.

Reaction to the Wave of Democratization

By and large, the responses of African governments to the irresistible forces of change may be categorized fairly simply. By the late 1980s a handful of countries, such as Senegal and Botswana, already had systems in which the ruling party contrived to win elections, multiparty competition notwithstanding. After 1989 such governments could still feel more secure in their legitimacy and under no pressure to change the system of political representation. Elsewhere, some heads of ruling parties to which there was no legal opposition conceded to demands for multi-party rule by attempting, generally unsuccessfully, to create parties by administrative means.[8] Former president Mobutu's attempt to do this in Zaire failed. In the majority of countries, heads of state realized that they could not hope to simply create new parties by decree and that they were obliged to permit the exercise of more or less free

political activity. At the same time, some employed their powers in an attempt to control this process, generally with considerable success.

One technique widely employed has indeed been that of encouraging the formation of as many parties as possible in an attempt to divide and rule. Mobutu's Zaire, for example, was said to have over 250 political parties, Biya's Cameroon close to 200, while yet others, (eg. Gabon and Togo), boast of dozens. Another stratagem used by nervous governments has been the framing of a law forbidding the formation of ethnically-based parties on grounds that they would constitute a danger to public order, national integration, or the unity of the state.[9] Yet another stratagem has been to impose conditions to prevent the easy formation of opposition parties.[10]

Only a small number of regimes, however, refused to change at all in the face of international and national demands for democracy. One of the most prominent in the French-speaking camp, that of former President Habre of Chad paid the price when French troops refused to defend him against his domestic enemies. More successful were Presidents Moi of Kenya and Banda of Malawi. After stubborn attempts to resist all change, both were finally obliged to move in the direction of multi-party elections, leaving only Sudan, Swaziland, and Uganda, as examples of countries which can be said to have made little or no effective moves in the direction of democratic government. Uganda, however, is a peculiar case, in the sense that political parties have existed for over thirty years and are even represented in the government, though their activity is restricted. It can also be claimed to be a special case by reason of its particular difficult heritage.[11] The signs are that many of the heads of state who felt so challenged in the period following the third wave of democracy, and who were essentially on the defensive in those early years, may now feel that the tide has changed in their fervor. Eight heads of state – Ratsiraka of Madagascar, Banda of Malawi, Diouf of Senegal, Kerekou of Benin, Kaunda of Zambia, Sassou-Nguesso of Congo, Pereira of Cape Verde, and Da Costa of Sao Tome – conceded power more or less gracefully as a result of defeat in democratic elections.[12] Moussa Traore of Mali brought humiliation, (and later, conviction in a court of law), upon himself by the mistaken belief that he could sit tight and resist. His violent overthrow sent shock waves throughout the anterooms of power but in the end proved largely to be an isolated case.

Elsewhere, heads of state have shown themselves able to navigate the turbulence of multi-partyism and even to turn it to their advantage. Paul Biya of Cameroon, Omar Bongo of Gabon and others can now feel themselves under less pressure than before, secure as heads of state in multi-party systems after elections which were widely viewed as imperfect and highly flawed, but which were grudgingly accepted by the international community. Former President Moi of Kenya did try to follow the same route, having been re-elected in a multi-party election which international observers considered at the time to have been marred but which nevertheless - so Commonwealth observers maintained – represented the will of the Kenyan people. Moi was then able to argue that he had followed the route set for him by the donor community and that the donors should therefore reciprocate by recommencing payment of the aid money which they had earlier withheld from Kenya.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

There now exists a good number of countries in Africa where some form of democratic transition may be said to have taken place, and which provide more grounds for optimism than the horrors of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Rwanda. In Mali, where hundreds of people lost their lives fighting against tyranny, the international community – and France in particular – has so far failed to produce adequate support. At least in the first year following the overthrow of Moussa Traore, Mali received no extra financial aid from France, it's former colonial master, to help its reconstruction. In the meantime French Ministers conspicuously avoided any symbolic gesture of solidarity with the new regime. It appeared as though the French government, which continues to have close relations with most of its former African colonies, had been in favor of some measures of reform, but not of the overthrow of a tyranny. Such an incidence, in their view, could have worrying implications for French interests if allowed to spread.

More encouragingly, Benin now appears to have passed its transition smoothly and to be enjoying a degree of economic progress, attributed in the main to its economic relationship with its giant Nigerian neighbor.[13] The same can be can be said of Ghana under current President Kufour following the victory of his then opposition party over the ruling party of former President Jerry Rawlings.

Obstacles to Full Democratization: A Pathology of Persistence?

Perhaps nowhere else other than in Africa is the adage that "old habits die hard" best exemplified. In this regard, what is known as the *pathology of persistence* in social psychology can be applied to leaders and politicians who came to power following the new wave of democratization. By this we are referring to the tendency or the desire to perpetuate themselves in power at all costs, just as the old guards before them. Only this time around they pretend to pursue this aim through so-called democratic process. One manifestation of this phenomenon has come in the form of constitutional proposals aimed at extending the term of office of the President just before the end of his last constitutional term. The practice has been to get their cronies both in government and parliament to submit proposals aimed at amending just that section of the constitution limiting the term of the president so as to accord him yet another term. What therefore has come to be known as the "third-term bid" has been exemplified in Zambia, Togo, Namibia, and of late, Malawi. However, the saving grace has come in the form of the active resistance of civil society and the opposition parties to this phenomenon. So it was such that President Frederick Chiluba and his cronies, in spite of all attempts, failed to get the Zambian parliament and people to accede to his desire for a third term. The same can be said for Malawi where recently President Bakili Muluzi and his cronies were forced to withdraw their proposal for a third term upon realization that they could not obtain the necessary two-thirds parliamentary majority.[14]

Another obstacle in the path of full democratization has been the tendency of some incumbent heads of state to single-handedly choose or nominate their successors. With the exception of Levi Mwanawasa who was the choice of out-going President Chiluba of Zambia, the experience proved the contrary, if not a disaster, in the cases involving the preferred choices of Presidents Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and Arap Moi of Kenya.[15]

A final obstacle can be discerned in the constitutions as well as the attitude of top government functionaries. Conventional constitutions in some so-called democratizing African states fail to adequately reflect their new political dispensation within a multi-party context. An example is when the conduct of what is supposed to be free and fair democratic elections are left in the hands of the same old government-created organs.[16] Worse still is the situation whereby senior government functionaries have yet to shed the old one-party mentality in the conduct of government business.

Business as Usual?

The fact that most African politicians are unable to articulate any original or critical view on economic policy, (as a requirement for serious consideration by local and international power brokers), contributes to a sense that there is little to choose between rival parties other than the moral character and competence of the individuals who lead them.[17] It follows that political parties tend to compete for the same social constituencies as their rivals and find it hard to identify and represent any social or economic interest group that has been previously under-represented, unless, of course, such a group is ethnically defined. Hence the tendency for rival parties to recruit ethnic constituencies, just as the barons of the old ruling parties tended to do. One of the few obvious exceptions to this generalization is South Africa where rival parties clearly do represent different social and economic interest groups and different ideological aspirations, in spite of the pressures from some quarters (eg., Buthelezi's Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party) towards ethnic representation.[18]

The relative failure of new parties to find new types of constituency is well illustrated by the contrasting cases of Kenya and Zambia. A comparison between them is particularly instructive because the government of Kenya under ex-President Moi was regarded as one of Africa's most vociferous opponents of multipartyism, whereas Zambians succeeded in smoothly voting then incumbent President Kaunda out of office. The different course of events in the early 1990s camouflages some interesting common features. At that time, opposition parties contesting for power in both Kenya and Zambia had virtually no programme or manifesto beyond the ousting of the incumbent head of state. In Kenya, moreover, so great was the lust for power on the part of the then opposition leaders that they were unable even to form an anti-*Moi* or anti-KANU alliance. This allowed President Moi to win the election on a minority share of the vote.[19] Had the Zambian opposition similarly been unable to unite, Kenneth Kaunda would have still been president today.

In many other African countries the new opposition parties have displayed characteristics similar to those in Kenya in that they too are often led by experienced politicians and former ministers in incumbent ruling

parties but, who for one reason or another, crossed carpet to the opposition. In the case of Kenya there is no doubt that former President Moi virtually created the opposition by the single-mindedness with which he set about expelling his "enemies" from the ruling KANU party. No doubt many opposition leaders believe passionately that their countries need a new team in power. But even if we take a charitable view of their aims, the conversion of so many former government functionaries into "born-again" democrats can look suspiciously like opportunism.[20]

The consequence of having an opposition party with no program beyond unseating the incumbent was clearly manifested in Zambia. Following the defeat of Kaunda, the new President, Frederick Chiluba, was exceptional in that he made his political career outside the ruling party as a trade unionist. But later he gave the impression that he was the prisoner of the experienced political heavyweights who financed and organized his election. The very name of his party, ***The Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD),*** suggests a pressure group rather than a real political party able to articulate the political demands of specific sections of society.

Some Hopeful Signs

Nevertheless, some African countries, including Senegal, Kenya, Botswana, Mali, Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria and Ghana, may be said to represent some sort of functioning democracy, no matter how precarious or imperfect. In each of these countries there are multi-party constitutions and elections, which, although characterized by various shortcomings, are much more than public relations exercises. Yet, in each of these cases a critic might argue that the constitutional form of democracy is used to hide a system so constructed that the ruling party can be confident of being re-elected infinitely, or that a small political class competes for power while the mass of citizens see little relevance in the maneuverings of the elite. This line of criticism is rather more applicable to countries such as Gabon, Namibia and Gambia, and Cameroon.

Basket Cases?

In some cases, political democratization has not taken place at all.[21] Governments have collapsed entirely, and power is in the hands of warlords and personal despots who rule by force. This is not only appalling for the people who have to live under the threat of such violence, but also dangerous for neighboring countries which cannot insulate themselves from the depredations of the warlords and rebels just across their borders, and thereby exposing them to potential destabilization. For countries, such as Somalia, Liberia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and the Ivory Coast, which have fallen into this category of anarchy or control by warlords or rebels, the future seems bleak indeed in the absence of any external intervention aimed at restoring some form of legitimate government.

In other countries where some degree of decentralization has taken place, we may ask to what extent it has led to the improved governance and economic productivity which is the stated aim of the World Bank and which many Africans doubtless desire. There is no doubt that the wave of democratization has had a notable effect on freedom of speech. In countries where criticism of the head of state or ruling party was unacceptable until very recently, such as Togo, Kenya, Malawi and Cameroon, people now publicly talk about their experiences as political prisoners, or of torture or misgovernment.

Freedom of speech now exists in most African countries than there was before the current wave of democratization, although *Amnesty International* still notes that the number of physical attacks on and the murder of journalists have also sharply increased.[22] This suggests that the freedom of the press is still not widely accepted. Recent cases involved journalists in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Liberia and Zimbabwe. But freedom of the press does not necessarily imply a great widening of political access. In Africa today, even the most professionally produced newspapers rarely circulate outside the major towns and cities on account of poor distribution and prohibitive costs. The signs are therefore that in order to survive papers must somehow become the mouthpiece of a specific politician or political party capable of providing financial support.

On Governance

With regard to governance, which is *the ability of the state to formulate and carry out effective policies* (World Bank, 1989), it is hard to discern any meaningful improvement. Free debate is no doubt one component of good governance, as the World Bank argues, but so too are financial resources and the competence and honesty of the government bureaucracy. To date, there are no signs that democratization has recast political constituencies in a new mode. They continue to be formed in terms of clientelism, although the forms

of clientelist recruitment can change, whether based, for example, on party allegiance, ethnicity or some other factor. In any event, when combined with corruption, clientelist networks contrive to hamper the effective design and implementation of state policy.

CONCLUSION

Given this general perspective, Edoho (1997) underscores the fact that global transformation is shaping up new geopolitical and geo-economic frameworks that would interpin both bilateral and multilateral relations in the twenty-first century. Embedded in this framework are the new world order, and the tendencies by which they seek to simultaneously integrate the world politically, fragment it economically, polarize it technologically and differentiate it regionally. Edoho therefore calls upon African states to rise up to the challenges of globalization currently dominating the world. As the second largest continent, Africa contains ten percent of the world's population. Yet she is undermined. Her overall success, he suggests, will reside in her ability to redefine herself in the world.

It is quite widely agreed that the changes that have taken place in Africa since the current wave of democratization are the most momentous since the era of decolonisation and the ascent to independence. In retrospect, however, it has now become apparent, more than ever before, that those changes took place in rather inauspicious circumstances. As always with changes of the magnitude that have been taking place, some of the deeper or more important changes may not be obvious for some time. It is hardly appropriate to attempt to draw more than the most vague conclusions from the present rapid survey of a period of history that is still unfolding over such a large continent. The one thing we may say with confidence is that nothing will be the same in Africa again.

ENDNOTES

[1] Consider the dealings of Western countries with such individuals as Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, Mobutu Sese Sekou of then Zaire, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya, Moussa Traore of Mali and Omar Bongo of Gabon. In fact, in the face of all this then mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, was quoted as saying that Africa was not yet ripe for democracy.

[2] In addition to Toumani Toure of Mali, consider also the case of Brigadier Gen. Julius Mada-Biyo of Sierra Leone, or Gen. Abdulsalimi Abubakar of Nigeria.

[3] This, however, was unfortunately not always the case. Consider some others, (such as Lansana Conte of Guinea, Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia, and Robert Guei of the Ivory Coast), who went on to declare themselves president after rather fraudulent elections which they themselves organized.

[4] Such, for example, has been the case in Cameroon where, eversince the advent of multi-party politics, the ruling CPDM Party has continued to arrogate to itself all former structures located throughout the country including an entire wing of the imposing Yaounde Conference Center.

[5] Certain countries such as Togo, Uganda, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and the Republic of Congo have yet to resolve this problem.

[6] Examples include Hastings Banda of Malawi, Mobutu of then Zaire, Eyadema of Togo, Bongo of Gabon, Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Obiang-Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, and Moussa Traore of Mali.

[7] Consider the case in Ethiopia with the rise to power of the Marxist regime of Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam following the overthrow of the Emperor Haile Selasie.

[8] A case study of the Cameroonian experience succinctly reflects this reality to such an extent that even present administrative officials are unable to give an exact figure of the number of political parties now existing in the country.

[9] Re: The Nigerian and Cameroonian case.

[10] Such as the requirement for the payment of huge sums of money for the registration and legalization of political parties.

[11] This can be explained by the fact that party politics in Ugandan had for a long period of its history been characterized by violent ethnic tensions leading to civil strife. In a bid to curtail this trend and restore stability the current government of President Museveni thought it wise to place a temporary ban on multi-party democracy.

[12] Sassou-Nguesso would later however put to serious question the democratic process of change when he led an armed rebellion against the legitimate government of Pascal Lissouba who had earlier defeated him in transparent and democratic elections. Ratsiraka, for his part, defeated Albert Zafi in democratic elections and was returned to power. But again he had to be forcefully and shamefully chased out of power following his refusal to concede victory and surrender power to Marc Ravalomanana who defeated him in democratic elections in 2001.

[13] Interestingly enough, the same democratic process that led to the ouster of President Kerekou was to see him returned to power a few years later under the new political dispensation. That, however, can sadly be contrasted with the violent means employed by Sassou Nguesso in his bid to return to power in the Republic of Congo.

[14] In Togo and Guinea, however, Presidents Eyadema and Conte have had their way to stay on in power, thanks to the parliament dominated largely by their cronies. However, it will not be an exaggeration to hint at possible foreseeable trouble in such countries if presidents persist with this gimmick.

[15] Rawlings' preferred successor was Prof. John Atta Mills, while Moi single-handedly selected Uhuru Kenyatta, son of Kenya's founding President, as his choice of candidate for the then ruling KANU party. Opposition candidates woefully defeated both.

[16] This, for example, has been a serious bone of contention in Cameroon where, inspite of calls for the creation of an Independent Elections Commission, elections are still being organized and conducted by the Ministry of Territorial Administration.

[17] Note the case of Former President Niciphore Soglo of Benin, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Bakili Muluzi of Malawi, and Frederick Chiluba of Zambia.

[18] The most glaring case here concerns the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (in South Africa) under the leadership of Chief

Mangasuthu Buthelezi.

[19] This situation can equally be compared to that in Cameroon during the first multi-party presidential elections in 1992 when the major opposition parties – the so-called hard core opposition – failed to unite against the ruling CPDM party of Mr. Paul Biya. Under the one-round vote system the nation's Supreme Court declared Mr. Biya winner by a tiny majority of votes cast.

[20] Again Kenya, with the coming to power of the so-called National Rainbow Coalition of opposition parties, can be cited as an excellent example. The majority of the leaders of the Coalition were either former KANU stalwarts, or had at one time or another served in the Moi/KANU government. It is also worth mentioning here the case of Alhassan Ouatarra, (leader of the RDR party), who once a stalwart of the PDCI party and served as Prime Minister under President Houphouet-Boigny in the Ivory Coast. Then too is the case in Cameroon where former party stalwarts such as Sengat Kuo, Adamu Ndam Njoya, Victor Ayissi, and Jean Jacques Ekindi crossed-carpet to the opposition following the advent of multi-party democracy in the early 90s.

[21] Consider the prevailing situation in such countries as Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Central African Republic, Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Liberia, and the Ivory Coast where governments either rule by the naked use of force, or where considerable areas of the country are under the control of rebels or warlords.

[22] Significant to note here are cases involving the yet-unsolved murders of Norbert Zongo in Burkina Fasso, and Carlos Cardozo in Mozambique. Note also the prolonged incarceration of Hassan Bility by the Taylor-led government in Liberia, and the numerous harassment and threats facede by Alfred Tabban in Sudan. Elsewhere in Zimbabwe, the Mugabe/ZANU-PF government of Robert Mugabe has recently institutionalized draconian measures and passed strict laws aimed at muzzling the press and curtailing press freedom.

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